

Cafeteria Chronicles: Staff Training

Training your staff can transform your school's meals.

At **Wonderful College Prep Academy** in Lost Hills, CA, their dedication to scratch-made meals started with comprehensive training for their foodservice team. This included training on culinary techniques, developing standardized recipes and cooking demonstrations of healthy recipes for students. Senior Director of Student Health and Wellness Devinder Kumar shares just how important it was for their district to invest in culinary training:

“we wanted to provide a collegiate dining experience for our scholars...So we immediately start investing in our own people. 14 of our cooks that went to a culinary school, happy to report that all of them are certified chefs. 25% of our team is now certified through a culinary program.”

-Devinder Kumar, Senior Director of Student Health and Wellness, Wonderful College Prep Academy

One example of their scratch-made skills in action is their recipe for “CurryFornia” bowls, featuring quinoa, brown basmati rice, butternut squash, tofu and coconut curry. The bowl is topped with cucumbers, onions and arugula that is grown at the district’s garden. To get students interested in the new recipes, the district hosts live chef demonstrations where they showcase their culinary skills while educating students about the nutritional benefits of the recipes.

See how districts are training staff to transform school meals in this [video](#).

Understanding how to use new kitchen equipment is key for school nutrition staff, as the team at **Cherry Creek School District** in Greenwood Village, CO knows well. When the district set a goal to prepare more scratch-made meals, they started by purchasing new kitchen equipment to allow their staff to prepare fresh produce easier. They recognized their staff would also need training in order to use the new equipment, so they implemented a culinary orientation for their staff. Additionally, they hired a Culinary Trainer to ensure their staff felt confident in their new culinary skills.

Staff Training led to some amazing recipes at Cherry Creek:

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Roasted Chickpea Samples



Smoothie Samples



Street Corn Samples



Teriyaki Chicken Tested in Service

Even with the right equipment in place, giving your staff confidence to use new cooking techniques can take time. For Chef Manager Nanci Miramontes at **Newman-Crows Landing Unified School District** in Newman, CA, taking the time to answer questions made the biggest difference in raising her staff's confidence level. The district trained their staff to prepare fresh ingredients like fresh garlic, ginger, herbs and spices used in their new scratch-made recipes.

"So we let them know that we were going to be here to support at all times to give the help that they needed, the training they needed. So they definitely feel more comfortable after all that discussion."

-Nanci Miramontes, Chef Manager, Newman-Crows Landing Unified School District

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