

Cafeteria Chronicles: Vegetarian Meals

Whether it's for health, religious, animal welfare or environmental reasons, vegetarian eating patterns are on the rise. To meet these requests, school districts are incorporating vegetarian meal choices at lunch. Let's hear from school districts that earned Healthy Meals Incentives (HMI) Recognition Awards and how they successfully added vegetarian meals to their lunch menu.

Check out these amazing vegetarian meals in this [video](#).

When the team at **District of Columbia Bilingual Charter School** in Washington, DC began preparing scratch-made recipes, they included tofu as a vegetarian option in several new recipes. As a result, 75% of their students and staff rated the new dishes (including those featuring tofu) positively, and participation rates increased 10% when new dishes were served on the menu. The district was awarded the Innovation in the Preparation of School Meals HMI Recognition Award for their efforts.

RSU 10 Western Foothills in Rumford, ME introduced students to Chickpea Masala, a vegetarian recipe. To build interest for the new recipe, they used posters on the serving line and social media posts. Their strategy worked, and students now ask for this vegetarian meal on a weekly basis! This district was also awarded the Innovation in the Preparation of School Meals HMI Recognition Award for their creative recipe development.

When **Boston Public School District** in Boston, MA decided to transform their pastelón recipe into a vegetarian version featuring black beans, they were overwhelmed to see 90% of students try the new dish. As an added bonus, this vegetarian version of the recipe had 5 additional grams of dietary fiber and 500 milligrams less of sodium per serving! This earned them the Innovative School Lunch Makeover HMI Recognition Award.

Providing a flavor packed vegetarian meal won students over at **Ithaca City School District** in Ithaca, NY. Their recipe for Bombay Beans and Potato Aloo includes local potatoes with beans, tomatoes and onions seasoned with a spice blend. The recipe is also gluten-free, making it an inclusive option, and a favorite among students. It's no wonder the district earned the Innovation in the Preparation of School Meals HMI Recognition Award.

After seeing the popularity of Asian-inspired dishes at their back-to-school event, the team at **Richland Bean Blossom Community School District** in Edgemoor, IN created a new vegetarian recipe called Power Bowl with Tofu. They paired this with two recipes

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from Chef Ann Foundation's The Lunch Box: [Eat-a-mame Salad](#) and [Brussels Sprout Slaw](#). During the taste test, 167 middle school students and 89 high school students tried these new recipes. These efforts led to the district earning the Innovative School Lunch Makeover HMI Recognition Award.

Each month, the nutrition team at **Coronado Unified School District** in Coronado, CA sets up a taste test for students, which has recently included vegetarian options like hummus and vegan enchilada bowls. The district also educated students on the benefits of eating beans, offering samples of hummus and roasted garbanzo beans with recipe cards to take home. These efforts led to the district earning the Innovation in Nutrition Education HMI Recognition Award.

Let's celebrate these districts for recognizing the importance of offering vegetarian meals and earning HMI Recognition Awards!

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