

# Cafeteria Chronicles: Innovative School Lunch Makeover Award

Does your school lunch need a makeover?

To build enthusiasm about their lunch makeover, the team at **Watertown Public Schools** in Watertown, CT, named their efforts “Operation Salad Bar!” Students eagerly awaited the debut of the new salad bar, which features a rainbow of colorful choices. Not only is the salad bar visually appealing, but most of the components are lower in sodium, too. Each week, a signature salad is offered, such as the Southwest Salad made with leafy greens, salt-free Cajun chicken, black beans, corn, tomatoes, onions and tortilla chips.

**Makeover meals in action, watch this [video](#).**

To get students interested in the new salad bar offerings, all grade levels at **Watertown Public Schools** in Watertown, CT, are given taste-tests of the new signature salads before adding them to the menu. Further, to give students the chance to see where their food is grown, the Agriculture Science class visited a local farm where some of the salad ingredients are sourced from. The salad bar has been such a hit that the only thing students complain about is how long the salad bar line can be!

Learning new cooking skills was the first step of their lunch makeover at **Trinity Lutheran School** in Cedar Rapids, IA. Using grant funding from USDA’s Healthy Meals Incentives, the nutrition team enrolled in cooking courses to learn how to develop lower sodium recipes. Students get a chance to try these new recipes and provide feedback on “Try It Tuesdays.” New recipe favorites include breakfast pizza, roasted potatoes with fresh herbs, and cheese grits topped with turkey bacon. Students are excited about the menu makeover changes and look forward to voicing their opinions about school lunch.

The school nutrition team at **Carbon County School District 2** in Saratoga, WY, decided a lunch makeover would improve nutrition and meal quality while boosting student satisfaction. To accomplish these goals, they invested in new kitchen equipment that allowed for more scratch cooking. Mashed potatoes, fresh salsa, roasted potatoes, and bison meatballs made with meat from a local ranch are just a few of the new scratch-made, lower sodium recipes the team developed. Students love the new recipes and get excited seeing food from local farms on their lunch menu.

For **Newman-Crows Landing Unified School District** in Newman, CA, changes to a scratch-made sauce for their Orange Chicken recipe decreased sodium while upping

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the flavor. Combining ginger, garlic, orange juice, and orange zest created a bold and zesty new flavor profile. This revamped recipe is now one of the students' favorites based on surveys done after sample tastings. Social media posts and school-hosted events gave the school community an understanding of all the improvements the district made as part of their lunch makeover.

All of these districts earned the **Innovative School Lunch Makeover** Recognition Award, as part of the Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative from the USDA and Action for Healthy Kids.

Congratulations to these districts for leading the way in school nutrition!

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