

Cafeteria Chronicles: Celebrating National School Lunch Week

Food is a gateway to flavors from around the globe, right from the comfort of your school lunchroom! During this year's **National School Lunch Week** (October 13-17, 2025) we celebrate how school lunches can give students a taste of ingredients and flavor profiles from around the world.

Watch school lunches inspired by global flavors in this [video](#).

Working alongside Chef Jamal Hashi, the team at **Saint Paul Public Schools** in Saint Paul, MN developed recipes inspired by East African cuisine. Their Hamari Chicken features a spice rub with turmeric, onion and garlic added to the chicken before marinating overnight with lime juice, olive oil and more garlic. The result is a complex flavor profile students love!



Caption: Seasoning Hamari Chicken

Growing your own ingredients is a great way to engage students in new global flavors. Students at **Marshall County School District** in Guntersville, AL grow cilantro for the black beans and Pico de Gallo recipes on their school lunch menu. When the local tomato harvest is ready, the Pico de Gallo also features Alabama-grown tomatoes!

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Caption: Pico de Gallo

Creating a custom spice blend can introduce global flavors while also reducing sodium. The team at **Minneapolis Public Schools** in Minneapolis, MN developed their own Xawassh spice blend, a traditional East African blend of cumin, turmeric, cinnamon, cardamom and coriander added in their brown basmati rice. Using this spice blend, the district was able to reduce sodium in the rice, which is featured in their Mediterranean Bowl recipe.



Caption: Mediterranean Bowl

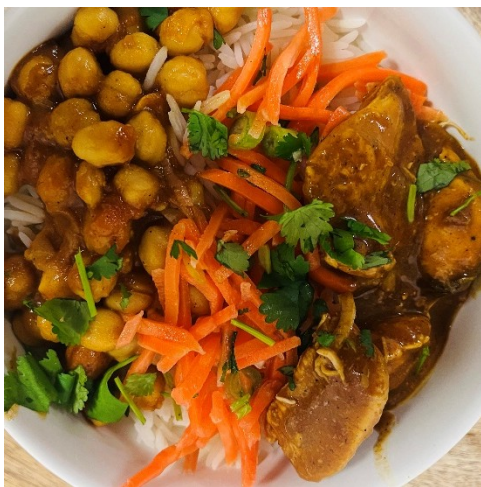
Knowing high school students can handle some heat, the team at **Selah School District 119** in Selah, WA developed recipes for Beef Bulgogi with Spicy Slaw. Their chef modified this traditional Korean dish to reduce sodium, while maintaining a strong flavor profile. The beef marinade includes soy sauce, rice wine vinegar, ginger and sriracha sauce. A spicy slaw featuring Gochujang sauce was paired with the Beef Bulgogi for a splash of color. Students like the dish so much, it was added to the regular cycle menu!

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Caption: Beef Bulgogi with Spicy Slaw

A new commitment to scratch cooking allowed the team at **Los Gatos-Saratoga Union High School District** in Los Gatos, CA to incorporate more global flavors. Their Butter Chicken recipe features ingredients such as garam masala, cayenne pepper, paprika, cumin, turmeric ginger, coriander and garlic. This flavorful dish was served during back-to-school night to demonstrate the district's scratch cooking and get direct feedback from students and families.



Caption: Butter Chicken

These districts plated up dishes to take students on a journey of flavors from around the globe. Let's celebrate these districts during **National School Lunch Week** for leading the way in school nutrition!

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