

Cafeteria Chronicles: Newman-Crows Landing Unified School District

Scratch-cooking can be intimidating.

But that didn't stop Newman-Crows Landing Unified School District in Newman, CA. Using Healthy Meals Incentives (HMI) grant funds, Newman-Crows Landing hired Chef Nanci Miramontes to train food service staff, who were mainly used to heating frozen and prepared items that often have higher amounts of sodium and added sugars.

One example of their success was a scratch-prepared sauce for Orange Chicken made from ginger, garlic, orange juice, and orange zest. Other recipes they created include Chicken Tinga, Chicken Pesto and Butter Chicken. Not only do students love the new recipes, but the district was awarded the USDA and Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK) **Lunch Trailblazer, Small and/or Rural Lunch Trailblazer, Innovation in the Preparation of School Meals, and Innovative School Lunch Makeover** HMI Recognition Awards.

Reducing added sugars at breakfast, the district began scratch-preparing baked goods with fresh blueberries, bananas, and strawberries. Students were skeptical at first, but once they smelled the fresh baked items in the oven, they were on board. Participation rates at breakfast went up, demonstrating the students' love for the new recipes. These efforts led to Newman-Crows Landing being awarded the **Breakfast Trailblazer** and **Small and/or Rural Breakfast Trailblazer** HMI Recognition Awards.

See the impact of Newman-Crows Landing efforts in this [video](#).

Promoting healthy eating habits is important at Newman-Crows Landing, so Chef Nanci taught students how to prepare healthy snacks like cucumber cups with chicken salad and beet hummus. Additionally, the district showcases scratch-prepared recipes for families at open houses and back-to-school nights, highlighting the reduced sodium and added sugars they offer. This earned the district the **Innovation in Nutrition Education** HMI Recognition Award.

It's clear the nutrition department at Newman-Crows Landing is key to students' health and academic success, as Chief Business Official Caralyn Mendoza points out.

This material is based upon work supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Administration. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.