

Cafeteria Chronicles: Innovation in the Preparation of School Meals Award

Adapting to students' meal preferences requires creativity and innovation.

To innovate school meals at **Sinton Independent School District** in Sinton, TX, they launched "Food Fusion Fridays," incorporating fresh, local ingredients into side dish recipes. Some of the new recipes developed include watermelon citrus salsa, tomato basil salad, and pineapple cucumber lime cilantro salad. Students at Sinton now have a positive perspective on their school meals. As Food Service Director, Silke West puts it:

*"...now they look forward to the Food Fusion side dishes.
They're new, fresh, tasty, and delicious."*

See the fresh, local flavors featured at Sinton:



Strawberry Salsa



Corn, Tomato, and Basil Salad

Creative approaches are key to innovation, as the staff at **New Richmond School District** in New Richmond, WI found out. Instead of missing the local tomatoes harvest in summertime, they froze the tomatoes to use later in the school year. The frozen tomatoes were used to make marinara sauce for their scratch-prepared lasagna and baked ziti recipes. Making this switch from canned marinara to scratch-prepared made a noticeable difference, according to Supervisor of School Nutrition, Bobbie Guyette.

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

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.

By collaborating with a chef, the nutrition team at **Selah School District 119** in Selah, WA delivered more scratch-prepared items bursting with flavor. When developing a recipe for Beef Bulgogi, the chef balanced the need for flavor while keeping sodium levels down. Combined with a spicy slaw, this recipe adds color and flavor students love. The Coho Salmon Bowl with Asian Vegetables recipe includes fresh salmon, rice, and a peanut-free dressing to accommodate student food allergies. Clearly a student favorite, the district ran out of samples at the middle and high school while students asked for more!

Check out some of Selah's scratch-prepared recipes:



Coho Salmon Bowl



Beef Bulgogi

Innovation comes in many forms, like a food truck called the “Hot Spot” at **Elmore County School District** in Wetumpka, AL. Staff there received training before testing several new recipes for their food truck. The hard work paid off, and students loved the new recipes such as jalapeno slaw, chicken quesadillas, southern collard greens, and ramen noodles with special sauce, to name a few. Participation rates went up over 10% after the debut of the new recipes! Child Nutrition Director Cacyce Davis attributes success to not being afraid to try something new.



The “Hot Spot” food truck at Elmore County

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.