

Cafeteria Chronicles:

Sinton Independent School District

Combining fresh, local produce with on-trend flavors was a winning combination for Sinton Independent School District in Sinton, TX.

The district introduced “Food Fusion Fridays” to give students samples of new recipes combining local fruits, vegetables, and herbs fused with on-trend flavors. Examples of Food Fusion recipes included:

- Watermelon Mint Salad (featuring local watermelon)
- Corn Tomato Basil Salad (featuring local basil)
- Pineapple Cucumber Lime Cilantro Salad (featuring local cilantro)
- Calabaza Con Pollo (featuring local squash, butternut squash and zucchini)



- Citrus Fruit Cups (featuring local oranges)
- Rainbow Swiss Chard (featuring local Swiss chard)
- Watermelon Radish Salad (featuring local radish)



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Students watched as school nutrition staff prepared the recipes at culinary “action stations” which helped boost participation, as some students were initially hesitant to try new foods. These efforts earned Sinton a Healthy Meals Incentives (HMI) Recognition Award for **Innovation in the Preparation of School Meals** on behalf of the USDA and Action for Healthy Kids.

See how fresh, local food won students over at Sinton in this [video](#).

To educate students about healthy food choices and supporting local farmers, the district also hosted a fall event during back-to-school time. After hearing from a local farmer, students sampled pumpkin seeds, pumpkin pretzels, and local gala apples. The event also included fall-themed games and students were given a mini pumpkin to take home.

During a back-to-school night for their community, families and community members were taught about the importance of eating more fruits and vegetables to lower sodium and reduce added sugars in their diets. The event included taste testing of new recipes, such as a blueberry yogurt parfait which featured yogurt lower in added sugars, and watermelon salsa with whole-grain tortilla chips. The event was clearly a success, with parents remarking how much their family enjoyed trying the new recipes. As a result, the district earned the **Innovation in Nutrition Education** HMI Recognition Award.

Other measures to improve the health of their students included switching from canned vegetables to fresh or frozen versions lower in sodium, and replacing cereal and yogurt with versions lower in added sugars. These measures led to the district earning the **Small and/or Rural Food Authority Lunch Trailblazer, Breakfast Trailblazer and Small and/or Rural Food Authority Breakfast Trailblazer** HMI Recognition Awards.

Bravo to the team at Sinton Independent School District for leading the way in school nutrition!

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