

Illinois Farm to School Network

Mighty Mini Video: Scratch Conversion for Schools



SLIDE ONE- Welcome

Hello and welcome to our Mighty Mini Video on Scratch Conversion for School Menus, presented by the Illinois Farm to School Network. My name is Diane Chapeta. I am a former Wisconsin school nutrition director, and the current network coordinator for the Illinois Farm to School Network. I will be your host today as we explore schools converting to scratch cooking.

All of our Mighty Mini Videos are available on our website in a PDF format, as well a presentation format.



SLIDE TWO: Learning a lesson from our history.

To understand the ebb and flow of the popularity of scratch cooking in schools, a little history of the National School Lunch Program is necessary.

The National School Lunch Program was created in 1946, when President Harry Truman signed the National School Lunch Act into law. This legislation was originally created to aid farms struggling with their surplus provisions. Truman intended these meals to promote and protect child nutrition, while also supporting the consumption of American farm products. The National School Lunch Act of 1946 mandated that all participating schools abide by certain nutritional standards while also utilizing surplus agricultural commodities. As a result, early school lunches included such staples as poultry, beef, and dairy products. The National School Lunch Program is, to this day, an agricultural program, operated by the US Department of Agriculture.

School lunch during the 1930's was focused on a more adequate diet for the needy. It also engaged in a school lunch distribution program, the subsidizing of milk sales, and the distribution of food bonuses through local dealers. In smaller locales a kitchen was frequently set up in the school itself. In some of the larger cities a central kitchen was established, and W.P.A. drivers rushed caldrons of hot soup and freshly made desserts to schools at lunchtime. Recipes and meals were planned by expert dietitians who frequently used the publications of the Bureau of Home Economics as guides. Lunch almost always meant a hot dish, milk, a fresh fruit or vegetable, and sometimes included soup and dessert. At the close of 1938 forty-five states and the District of Colombia were participating in the program, and during the five years of operation some 130,000,000 meals had been served. This led to a decrease of school absenteeism and healthier, more alert students.

There were also indirect benefits of the plan. After lunch, short talks on the benefits of fresh vegetables and fruits and milk constituted messages which were carried home to parents who might never have been told why it is wise to choose foods properly, even with the most limited means. This early form of nutrition education was practiced where ever school lunch was served.

Did you know the first chefs-move-to-school program in our nation's capital happened in 1934? This is not a new concept!

As the school lunch program evolved, the late 1950's saw a change in the meal structure of the program. Hot lunches and hot breakfast were out- and cold bag breakfast and lunch became a reality. Many reasons were cited for the change from overcrowded cafeterias, to a so-called "Oslo breakfast" worked out by Norwegian nutritionists for school children, consisting entirely of cold foods.

In the 1960's ala carte selections were introduced slowly to those students with the funds to purchase something beyond a standard school meal. Grades of school meals were now offered- free and reduced children were given one type of meal, while more affluent students were allowed to purchase a different, or ala carte, meal for lunch.

By 1977, school lunch was identified as a source of the rising obesity numbers among K-12 children. A Chicago Tribune article noted nutritional standards varied from meal to meal, and school to school. Processed foods were now the norm, and processor claims were less than accurate when it came to nutritional breakdowns. School children now filled up on pizza, premade burritos, and a number of meals mimicking fast food. Levels of sodium and fat in meals skyrocketed. School kitchens began to use less and less whole foods, as processed foods became the norm. Scratch cooking and raw ingredients represented less than 60% of the menu, down from the previous amount of 96% in 1964. As schools looked for ways to fund their growing programs in a deflated economy, they turned increasingly to private partners such as Sodexo, Aramark, and Compass Group. Simultaneously, the federal government reduced its subsidy for full-price lunches, and state allocations failed to cover the costs of increased participation. School lunch contracts also had direct negative consequences on nutrition. Fast food companies appeared in lunchrooms, and private food-service companies were hired to serve precooked, prepackaged foods that required less preparation. Meals were broken into components, prepackaged and produced at lower costs to provide higher margins. This movement towards mechanized food was proclaimed to be the future of school lunch, and meals began to mimic fast food favorites attracting more students into the lunch lines. Although students had more choices, the focus on nutritional options declined.

By the mid-1990s, the existence of vending machines in the majority of school cafeterias and common areas became a direct deterrent to providing children with nutritious meals.

Fast-forward to 2015- Obesity rates among school-age children hit an all-time high, while schools frantic to follow new regulations and nutrition requirements, make drastic and unpopular changes to the menu. Processed foods are constantly reformulated to keep up with changing nutritional standards. Student participation drops, leaving school lunch programs scrambling to make ends meet.

And that brings us to now...A solution to the ongoing crisis in school lunch is becoming apparent. Across the nation, schools are reverting back to a more nutritious scratch menu, utilizing unprocessed and local foods. Kitchens are being reopened, staff retrained and school nutrition departments are becoming a primary partner in the fight against childhood obesity. Required wellness committees and policies slowly enforce a change in the way schools manage all foods during the school day, not just breakfast and lunch. Grants for gardens, Farm to School programs and equipment purchases increase to assist schools as they revert to old practices.

From the article: "GAO hits school lunch as harmful" "A [Chicago] Tribune investigation of subsidized school lunch programs was printed last February, revealing that the meals generally fell far short of providing minimum nutritional standards, and were higher in fat content than recommended by nutritionists. The investigation, based on independent laboratory analysis of school lunches, also revealed that some of the meals did not meet the processors' claims for vitamin content. The investigation also found that school children left a large amount of their lunches uneaten, resulting in the waste of millions of dollars and a further reduction in nutrition. Reporters found that the waste was due partially to the traditional problem of getting children to eat their string beans and to the unappetizing nature of the mass produced lunches."

Articles Sited:

Cornell University Policy Review, 3/15/2012

Ellett, Ashton, Jan Hebbard, and Kaylynn Washnock. "Food, Power, and Politics: The Story of School Lunch." New Georgia Encyclopedia. 17 July 2015. Web. 04 October 2016.

(GAO hits school lunch as 'harmful,'" Chicago Tribune, August 10, 1977 (p. C12)

SLIDE THREE: Scratch Cooking- What's old is new again!



As schools begin to recognize a need for change in the menu, planning the process, including student education and staff training, becomes a priority. The examples on this slide- show the gradual transformation of entrees and sides served at schools across our region and beyond. These schools have undergone the process to begin scratch cooking, once again. There are hundreds of examples showing the trend toward scratch cooking in U.S. schools online.

When considering converting to scratch recipes, understanding the process behind how schools are making this change will help you to succeed. Successful schools not only keep, but increase their customer base, while improving overall nutrition and program selections. By examining your existing meal program, you can begin imagine your own menu and recipe changes.

The following slides will break down the scratch cooking conversion process into manageable tasks, give you a checklist of the steps involved, and provide you with tools to assist in the process.

So, let's get started!

SLIDE FOUR: The Checklist

This is your checklist for creating a process to incorporate scratch cooking and scratch recipes into your meal program.

Each step will help you to determine what your objectives are, what is needed to obtain them, and how to develop a process to apply them to your program.

All of our Mighty Mini Videos are on our website in a PDF format, as well as a presentation format.

THE CHECKLIST

- Your Vision
- A Program Inventory
- Discovering Needs
- Determining Solutions
- Final Considerations
- Execute the Plan

SLIDE FIVE: Craft Your vision of the future

Your first step: Craft a vision for your program changes.

One of the responsibilities of a food service manager who wishes to make changes in their school program is to share the reasons for change with administration, staff and your customer base. These reasons are the basis for change. Review your program, noting the items and processes that need to be improved or changed, and make a list.

Next, review all the possible benefits you can achieve once your changes are in place. Once you've finished reviewing possible benefits, list them next to the corresponding items that need to be changed. Now you have the basis for your project vision statement. This slide shows an example of items that need improvement and the corresponding benefits associated with scratch cooking in school menus.

Remember, crafting a vision statement for your project takes into account the current status of your program, and serves to point the direction of where your program wishes to go. As a means of setting a central goal that your department will aspire to reach, a project vision statement helps to provide a focus for the mission,

or reasons for your project. A vision statement is not about what your department is currently doing, but what your department hopes to achieve with this project.

Because each school meal program differs, it is important to examine and list what each benefit will look like in your schools, and how each benefit will affect your students and staff. Tying your specific program attributes and your school population behaviors to the benefits obtained when making a menu transformation will support your justification to make these changes.

It is always a good idea to include others in the process such as a lead cook, your kitchen team, a program assistant or regular volunteer, a supervisor, or a like-minded staff member to begin exploring the possibilities and forming your plan for a scratch menu conversion.

After reviewing the information, craft simple sentences outlining your vision of the future of your program. Don't worry about finishing this step now. All of our steps and processes are listed on the PDF version of this training video.

What Needs improvement:

- Excessive use of processed foods
- Expensive prepackaged entrees
- Waste on the lunch line
- Waste in the cafeteria
- Limited menu options for students
- Lack of interest in fresh foods
- Dwindling participation numbers
- Employee disinterest and unwillingness to participation

Benefits of Scratch Cooking:

- Lower Overall Food Costs
- Ingredient and Quality Control
- Nutrition Increased
- Sodium & Fat Decreased
- Allergy Concerns Reduced
- Added Nutrition Education
- Customer Impute on Recipes
- Connection to Local & Seasonal Traditions
- Eye Appeal & Increased Sales
- Ownership of Menus
- Increased Employee Morale & Skill Level
- Adds Credibility to the Profession

SLIDE SIX: Two ways to cook by scratch

Basic Scratch cooking

- Use all ingredients in most basic and raw form
- All cooking and dish assembly takes place on site
- Focus is on full scratch recipes and traditional dishes

Quick Scratch cooking

- Use value-added or minimally prepared ingredients (Pre- chopped, pureed, sliced, and blended ingredients such as raw veggie blends, salsa cruda, etc.)
- Most of the dish assembly takes place on site
- Rely on products available from food vendors, fresh processors and distributors

Step Two: Taking a Program Inventory

Determining how far you will take the scratch process, is the next step in determining the types of entrees and menu options that will fit in your program. It is important to assess all the working parts of your food service and program. There are five primary areas for this inventory: equipment, staff, customers, food safety and meals. All of these inventories, with guided questions for a program inventory, are listed on the PDF version of this presentation. Consider the best fit for your district by considering all valid points.



Take an equipment inventory:

What equipment is available and in good working order?

Is there equipment in storage that can be utilized?

What locations have pertinent equipment on hand?

What pieces are missing?

Do your facilities have sufficient work space for preparing and cooking raw ingredients?

Take a staff inventory:

How is your staff organized? What are their skill levels?

Which staff members have cooking experience?

Can you utilize those experienced staff members as trainers?

Is there a written process that must be followed when changing the duties of staff members?

Can staff hours be increased or adjusted and schedules be changed? What is the process?

Is staff training already required and scheduled at various points during the school year?

Can you piggyback on those training hours and opportunities?

Survey your customers:

What are your customer favorites?

Have you asked if your customers care about healthy, vegetarian or local options? Can you utilize a student survey?

Is the school staff interested in nutrition and healthy meals?

What does your Wellness Plan require and what does it encourage in the “food environment in school” section?

Can you incorporate Wellness Policy points in your plan?

What demographics make up your customer base?

Is there a current nutrition education program at your school? Who runs it?

Take a food safety inventory:

Do you have Standards of Practice (SOP) written for utilizing raw meats, vegetables and cooking processes?

Is your staff regularly trained on new or existing SOP’s?

Consult with your county sanitarian on utilizing raw food products to discover any additional regulations pertaining to this process.

Review the USDA guidelines for cooking from scratch. A link is on the PDF version of this presentation.

Take a menu inventory:

What menu items are 100% processed food?

What menu items can be easily converted to one of the scratch cooking methods listed on this slide (basic or quick)?

What menu items are partially prepared by scratch now? Remember to consider salad bar and breakfast items, as well as, lunch.

Make three lists of menu items: items that can be easily converted, items that are partially scratch prepared, and items that need a complete overhaul or replacement.



SLIDE SEVEN: Steps Three And Four: NEEDS AND SOLUTIONS

Now we move onto step three and four; assessing needs and finding solutions.

Step Three: Determine Needs

Once you've analyzed your program and written your vision, you are ready to determine what is needed to create a scratch conversion process for your school. List your program's areas of need, based on your answers to the questions on the previous slide.

- Equipment Needs – Equipment Grants
- Staffing Needs – Training and Promotions
- Training Needs – Local Chef or Professional
- Facility Needs – Redesigning Flow and Usage
- Food Safety Needs – Writing New SOP's
- Customer Needs – Surveys, K-5 Parent Input, Staff Input
- Funds Needed – Grants and Fundraising
- Budget Constraints – Re-evaluating Menus and Processes

Step Four: Create solutions for your areas of need.

Steps to Create Solutions:

List possible solutions and/or corrections for each need.

Determine which solutions will fit best for your staff and facility and are most practical.:

Determine which solutions, such as additional funding, training or education, are required to fill each need.

Make a list of possible partnerships which can help fill those needs by considering non-profit and government agencies focused on health and nutrition.

Look for grants and funding opportunities for equipment purchases and training.

A list of grant opportunities for schools is listed on the PDF version of this presentation.

2016 NSLP Equipment Assistance Grants: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/2016-nslp-equipment-assistance-grants>

Winston Equipment Grant & Baxter Equipment for Education Grant:

<https://schoolnutrition.org/EquipmentGrants/>

Fuel Up to Play 60 Grants: <https://www.fueluptoplay60.com/playbooks/current-seasons-playbook>

Smarter Lunchroom Grants:

<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentidonly=true&contentid=2015/03/0058.xml>

Fuel Up to Play 60 School Nutrition Equipment Grant: <https://www.fueluptoplay60.com/funding/nutrition-equipment-grant>

Mission Nutrition: Fruit and Veggie Grants for Schools: <http://www.chefannfoundation.org/programs-and-grants/project-produce/>

Walmart Community Grants: <http://foundation.walmart.com/apply-for-grants/local-giving-guidelines>

Action for Healthy Kids Grants: actionforhealthykids.org/grants

Allen Foundation Inc.: <https://www.allenfoundation.org/bulletin/grants.asp>

SLIDE EIGHT: Final considerations for your plan

Now that you know your strengths and needs, and the solutions for those needs, consider these final two points: Budget & Scheduling and Nutrition & Accountability.

Budget & Scheduling: Estimate increased budget expenses using the points on this slide. Be sure to consider longer prep times and clean up times, as well as time to train your staff. Grants will often pick up equipment

costs and training costs for staff. But, equipment maintenance is an added expense which should be added to your budget, if not already included.

Nutrition & Accountability: When considering recipes for the school kitchen, it is important to take into account portion control, recipe consistency, and ease of nutritional breakdowns. Recipes can be convenient, or be an added time drain. Determining the ease of utilizing a recipe at every level will help to make a scratch transition successful.

Budget and Scheduling

Budget forecast for increased labor time (prep, cooking, extra cleaning)

Training and Monitoring

Equipment Maintenance

Nutrition & Accountability

Extra HACCP Training

Portion Control

Product Consistency- Recipe Control

Ingredient Availability

Accrediting Correct Nutritional Values

SLIDE NINE: Now you begin...

It's time to put together your plan for scratch cooking in your schools. Once you've gone through the process and have all your results you can create a plan or process to begin scratch cooking, or add more scratch cooking to your menus.

The five steps in this video are a great way to determine your strengths and weaknesses, and by doing so, you can determine the process that will best fit your school district.

We have added a list of resources for scratch cooking in schools and school stories to provide you with examples and help you along the path to better nutrition and improved quality meals. You can see this list on the PDF version of our video. Good luck!

<https://schoolmealsthatrock.org/>

<http://divafoodies.com/interview-with-chef-johnny-carino/>

<http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/Page/1350>

<http://www.pps.net/Page/944>

http://food-management.com/k-12-schools/k-12-culinary-tips-galley#slide-9-field_images-64111

<http://trythiswv.com/asks-if-school-cooks-use-processed-food/>

https://www.ecoliteracy.org/sites/default/files/uploads/cooking_with_california_food_K-12.pdf

SIDE TEN: Thank You!

Thank you for watching this instalment of the Illinois Farm to School Networks' Mighty Mini Video series. If you have questions, please connect with us online at: illinoisfarmtoschool.org

Have a productive day!

Please connect with us at:

illinoisfarmtoschool.org

harvestillinois.org

illinoisgreatapplecrunch.com