

MIGHTY MINI VIDEO ADDING LOCAL TO THE MENU

**Slide One: Title Page**



**Slide Two: “Local Added” opportunities are everywhere!**

School lunch is just one of many programs operated by school food service. Many districts have a breakfast program, as well as a Fruit and Veggie Snack program. When you consider adding local food to your school program, look beyond school lunch, and consider all the opportunities to incorporate local. Think about the many ways food flows through a school district, then just imagine the possibilities! We will take you through obvious, and less obvious avenues, to incorporate local and regional foods into your school programs. If you can track how food moves through your school, then you can begin to explore the opportunities and possible partnerships within your district. Let’s get started!

We will have full PDF handouts from this presentation available online for you to reference with TONS of information!!

**Slide Three: Salad bars... an easy way to incorporate local!**

Salad bars are an easy first step! We have a whole Mighty Mini Video about salad bars online. Be sure to check it out.

**Bonus Information:** This first example is one of the easiest ways to add local foods into your school meal program. Sourcing local or regional foods for use on the salad bar is quick and easy. If your staff is already prepping raw fruits and vegetables for salad bars, adding local can be seamless. Requesting “seconds” or grade B quality when ordering direct from producers, food hubs and produce companies can reduce pricing for your program. These vegetables do not have to look pretty to be utilized in your salad bar. Odd shapes and overly large, or small, produce will not limit usage. Do you have DOD dollars to spend? Watch for “local” tagged options on your ordering guide.



Reserving a spot for a local vegetable or a local apple on your salad bar is easy. How about a featured veggie or fruit as a Harvest of the Month on your salad bar? Or, buy fresh picked apples from a local orchard for Apple Crunch in October. Be sure to draw attention to the local items with signage. Display fun facts on nutrition and seasonality of those local items. Share farm information and highlight the number of miles that apple traveled vs. an apple purchased conventionally through your primary distributor. Students enjoy learning, especially when it involves a delicious, crisp apple!

**Slide Four: Breakfast can be local, too!**



What’s the most important meal of the day? Breakfast with local added! Breakfast is a great platform to utilize local foods because traditionally this meal lends itself to dairy products and fruits. Whether you’re serving a grab and go sack breakfast, or a hot meal, local can add flair and fresh taste to the meal. It’s easy to hit the mark with student preferred entrees when adding local ingredients. Waffles and frozen, local berries, regional yogurt parfaits, local hard boiled eggs and a fruit filled muffin, or a stuffed breakfast tortilla, with locally made tortillas and a local apple. The combinations are endless! When you slip local ingredients into an entrée you can change the way your students perceive that meal.

In my school district in Wisconsin, we sold local yogurt and fruit parfaits on the middle and high school breakfast menu- and we always ran out of them! They were a great grab and go breakfast item. Since they

were such a huge hit, we decided to sell them after school on our Smart Snack Cart, and made even more money for our program.

Search online for dairies, egg producers, and bakers in your area. Explore your options through conversations with the sales department if it's a large company, or the owners, if it's a small family business. Use creative thinking when reviewing breakfast recipes and packaged entrees to find the best fit for local ingredients. What can you substitute, and what can you add to your best sellers? How can you strengthen entrees that are not as popular? Once you've worked in the local ingredients, advertise the "new and improved" options with farm or business names and descriptions. Photos of your local supplier on the service line will draw attention to your improvements. Be sure to add that connection to local on your menu grid. Create stickers designating "local" to place on bags and on wrapped entrees. Drive sales and interest with fun promotions. Invite your local suppliers to tour your kitchens, or to dine with your students and staff. Develop those relationships, and show your students how food moves through your community, and how food supports that community. Breakfast, after all, can be local, too!

### **Slide Five: Break away from those processed breakfast packs.**

- ▶ Do you live in or near a dairy state? Explore local/regional dairy options including soft and hard cheeses, yogurt, milk, and eggs.
- ▶ Yogurt parfaits are easy to make, and are a delicious breakfast. Localize it!
- ▶ In hot weather, freeze those parfaits and give students a cool breakfast option. Plant a popsicle stick in the cup, freeze and voila- it's a layered, frozen yogurt pop!
- ▶ Berries in season, but school is not? Try dried or frozen berries, chutneys, or fruit butters added to cheese spreads, nut butters, breakfast sammies and parfaits.
- ▶ Local/regional eggs can change up the typical cereal bar breakfast pack routine. Create a special, local breakfast pack with a local, hardboiled egg, a Morning Glory muffin made with local carrots and a piece of fruit. Top it off with milk and you've got a yummy and portable breakfast! Place a local sticker on the bag and advertise that farm and dairy!



### **Slide Six: Lunch...served ala local!**

When procuring locally, lunch is a great place to begin. Local or regional vegetables, baked goods, dairy products and other ingredients can easily be incorporated on the lunch tray. Starting with a blank slate, like a whole grain pizza crust or dinner roll dough, and adding seasonal veggies, an alfredo sauce made with local milk, or locally sourced shredded cheese will help you create a local and delicious entrée. Do you have local apples? How about an autumn apple bake? The smell of cinnamon wafting through the halls will draw your students and staff to the lunch line. Side dishes that qualify for a grain, or a fruit, or vegetable can be stellar with local ingredients. Local dark green and orange/red components can find a place in vegetable dishes and quick salads. Education and excitement go hand in hand when you get creative and source locally! Utilize your kid-approved, popular recipes as a springboard for local items. Add in one or two local veggies or add a local cheese to create a new blended local entrée. Don't forget to advertise that local ingredient. It's a local flavor bump! Create a "local" stamp or icon for your menu grids. Place it on the grid when a local side will be served with the entrée.

Make local an interactive game- Guess the local dish! Send home menu grids with a brief description of the contest. Who can guess which local item will be served on Tuesdays in October? (Could it be apples?) Educate your students, parents and staff on seasonality and fresh taste!

Do you have local resources near you? Why not bid a local bakery or dairy? Do you have a “local preference” purchasing policy in your district? Support your local businesses, and grow your community pride.

Cycle menus are a wonderful tool for school food service managers. But, what if you can't predict local food availability? Can you guarantee you'll have that item on that day in November?

If you are utilizing cycle menus, just leave wiggle room for local. Setting placeholders in your menu grids will allow you to insert local veggies, sides and entrees when they are available. Should the supply be limited that week, substitute a generic veggie for the local one. Alert your customers to a possible “local bump” on your menu grids. And, be sure to advertise when local becomes a part of the meal. Cycle menus created with a little wiggle room to add “drop in” seasonal items will make adding local to the lunch line a breeze!

The more you source locally, the more you should share in your success. Encourage students and staff to find the local ingredients on the menu. Use seasonality as a tool to educate. Can you tie your seasonal lesson to a classroom activity or a class discussion? Can your students play hide and seek with clues on the menu grid? You do have many options when creating a local themed cycle menu.

#### **Slide Six Bullet Points: At lunch... just leave room for local.**

- ▶ Adjust your menus to leave place holders for local/regional items. Cycle menus created with a little wiggle room to add “drop in” seasonal items will make adding local to the lunch line a breeze!
- ▶ Utilize your kid-approved, popular recipes as a springboard for local items. Add in one or two local veggies or add a local cheese to create a new blended local entrée. Don't forget to advertise that local ingredient. Local flavor bump!
- ▶ Create a “local” stamp or icon for your menu grids. Place it on the grid when a local side will be served with the entrée.
- ▶ Make local an interactive game- Guess the local dish! Send home menu grids with a brief description of the contest. Who can guess which local item will be served on Tuesdays in October? Educate on seasonality and fresh taste!
- ▶ Why not bid a local bakery or dairy? Do you have local resources near you? Do you have a local preference purchasing policy in your district? Support your local businesses, and grow your community pride.

#### **Slide Seven: F&V snack programs were made for local!**

Hand-held and portable- local fruits and veggies are an easy addition to your Fruit and Veggie Snack program. While there may be limitations during the winter months- spring, summer and fall were made for local fruits and vegetables. Whether you are sourcing within 50 miles of your district, or sourcing from the great lakes and Midwest region, serving seasonal fruits and vegetables purchased from produce houses, food hubs and farms can be a boost for your snack program.



Adding a touch of education to your snack program can grow interest in the offered fruit or vegetable.

Educating students on how foods are grown, where they come from and when they are in season will spark your students inquisitive side. Sharing a picture of the farm, of your region, or a farmer's market booth will help to develop curiosity about the snack in front of them. What did it look like on the vine, or on the tree? Is it a plant that crawls along the ground? Or, one that shoots up toward the sky? Are there other colors, types or shapes of this fruit? Does this plant like sun or shade?

Field trips are wonderful experiences for students. But, if you can't bring the students to farm, then bring the farm to the students through pictures and live plants to look at and touch. Grow the wonder in young students. Teach students that vegetables have nutrients that give them superpowers! What can a cucumber do for your body? Share the link between cucumbers, potassium and a healthy heart. Did you know cucumbers

have unique anti-oxidant properties? And cucumbers are loaded with vitamin K. Hey! They help build strong bones!

Think...different and tasty. Not in season? Look for regional storage crops- carrots, sweet potato, candy-stripe beets and other sweet roots available through March.

Searching out local possibilities for the following year will give you plenty of planning time, and allow you to build a relationship with local producers or produce houses.

During summer months, visit your local farmer's market and get to know the folks who grow food in your area. Make it a special project- can you involve parents, teachers, administrators and staff in the hunt for local!

Special celebration?

#### **Slide Seven Bonus Bullet Points: What's small, fresh and tasty? A local F&V snack!**

- ▶ Local veggies and fruits make great options for your snack program! Incorporating local farms, farmer's markets and auctions to your F&V snack sourcing can expand your offerings and your student's tastes.
- ▶ Think...different and tasty. Add an educational piece to local kohlrabi, cherry tomatoes or cucumbers. Where did this food come from? How is it grown? Expand your snack program and educate students while handing out their local treat.
- ▶ Not in season? Look for regional storage crops- carrots, sweet potato, candy-stripe beets and other sweet roots available through March.
- ▶ Searching out local possibilities for the following year will give you plenty of planning time, and allow you to build a relationship with local producers.
- ▶ During summer months, visit your local farmer's market and get to know the folks who grow food in your area. Make it a special project- involve teachers, administrators and staff in the hunt for local.

#### **Slide Eight: Make it a regional/local meal day.**

Celebrations and special events are the icing on the cake when it comes to school food. Incorporating these special occasions throughout the school year keeps interest high, and your meal lines busy. If participation is crucial to a healthy program budget, then adding interesting events and eye-catching celebrations to your meal program can not only increase your average daily participation, or ADP, but provide much needed financial support for the program.



Incorporating special foods and events into your meal program will help connect your local community to the school community.

Understanding your student's history as a group or as a community can provide understanding of specialized tastes and preferences. Are there cultural clubs or organizations in your community? Connecting to the many threads of culture that create a community is the first step in understanding your student population. What holidays, festivals or traditional practices are commonplace? What flavors, spices and traditional dishes are served at home? How can you incorporate those tastes into your lunch menus? How about breakfast menus? Search out the foods that make up the region you live in. Then plan a local or regional menu on one day a month. Make it special and give it a catchy name like Midwest Monday or Hometown Tuesday. Every town and every city has a vibrant history filled with many cultures and tastes. What defines your city? Your region? Identifying the traits and tastes in the place you live and work can open the door to favorite cultural dishes, accepted traditions and trusted taste profiles for your students.

Use that favorite dish, or holiday tradition to create a regional or local twist.

Can you source a local pita bread? How about a local yogurt for a Lassi drink? Could it count as a protein alternate on the menu? This traditional Indian yogurt drink may make a fantastic addition to breakfast or lunch. Set up tastings in the cafeteria or on the line showcasing that cultural recipe before you menu it. Success is easy when you plan ahead.

Engage your students, parents and staff. Make your school lunch special!

## Slide Nine: Catering and Fund Raisers

Funding your program using local foods is easy. We will add in a Mini Lesson about it on the Illinois Farm to School Network website soon, so check back for more information!

### Bonus Information:

It's quite simple. We eat to live, and many of us live to eat. Do you offer catering for school groups and staff meetings? Are staff members always on the lookout for healthy, and irresistible fundraisers? You can provide the options they need!

Charles M Schultz once said: "All you need is love. But, a little chocolate now and then, doesn't hurt." It seems a little poetic common sense from the maker of Charlie Brown can go a long way, and can actually improve your bottom line.

People love food. Everyone loves to be catered to. So, what are you waiting for? Add local products to your party trays, to your staff coffee and continental breakfast offerings, and to your special events offerings. Build up your local food connection and be proud of the support you provide for local business by incorporating local ingredients and options into every party tray and beverage service you provide. All you need is a love of local food, and a little initiative!



- Food flows through a school in a variety of ways. Sporting events, band programs and student club events are just a few of the ways food service can offer local foods for catering. And, catering can help to support your farm to school efforts!
- Once you discover where the local foods are and what is available, creating a simple catering menu is the next step. Training staff to "cater" and offering extra working hours is a win/win for your staff.
- Gain the support of administration and staff. Present your program to your school board, on teacher in-service days and to parent groups.
- Promote it. Encourage school groups to utilize school food service for what they do best- prepare food.

### Create a local, healthy fundraiser.

How many farmer's markets do you have in your community? Can't put your finger on the number? Or, do you exactly where each market is located?

Farmer's markets are a great source for locally grown and locally processed foods.

School groups are always on the hunt for a fundraiser that is healthy and irresistible. How about a local foods fundraiser? Honey, coffee, bread mixes, jellies and jams are all produced by local food artisans across Illinois. Setting up a local food fundraiser can fill a niche, and help to support your programs and your local procurement. Selling local products will catch the interest of parents and staff, alike. Give it a try!

- Offer a local foods fundraiser package for school groups to sell.
- Visit your farmer's market to create a portfolio of products produced in your area. Look for local food products such as honey, sauces, popcorn, jellies, etc. that are shelf-stable. Agree on bulk pricing, direct from the producers to your food service. Discuss quantities available.
- Be sure to win support from administration, parent groups, ag groups, and others in your district.
- Create an online brochure or involve your school's art department or tech students to help design one.
- Promote your local fundraiser in August when the teaching staff returns.
- Ask participating fund raiser groups to enlist students and parents to help fill the orders and man pick up days.

## Wellness & Health Driven Family Events.

Every school has a wellness policy. And every wellness policy has a list of required actions to make their school community healthier. Where there are requirements, there are opportunities.

It's a perfect match; health, wellness and local foods. What a great way to show off what your meal program provides for your students and staff! Let local take center stage when you promote healthy menus and provide tastings for parents, siblings and grandparents at health fairs and wellness events. Encourage participation at your table- bring a farmer to the fair. Show off the benefits of local foods on your menus with a Local Flavor Bump! Share recipes and preparation tips for local vegetables and ingredients. Encourage visitors to enjoy local foods.

- ▶ Every school district has a wellness policy which requires specific steps toward a healthier school environment. Why not include healthy, local foods in the plan?
- ▶ Health fairs, wellness events and the like are the perfect platform for local foods and farm to school. What better way to draw attention to your efforts than hosting a table at the health fair?
- ▶ Show school meal programs in a positive light with local veggies and snacks. Humus, veggie entrees and side dishes can take on a local flair at the fair!
- ▶ Share healthy recipes, veggie prep tips and tricks, and local farm stories with parents and staff.

## Slide Ten: School Farmer's Markets

A tisket a tasket, a green and yellow basket. I set up a farmer's market at school, and taught my students to eat healthy!



Set up a farmer's market at school and show students and their families how easy it is to eat for health!

Whether it's the summer bounty from a school garden, or locally sourced seasonal vegetables, displaying, selling and educating are powerful tools when celebrating the harvest with a school-based farmer's market. There are many ways to host a market. From cafeteria displays and education, to garden produce

sales, special seasonal sales, and added donations to local food pantries. Whatever the event, plan to make fresh vegetables the center of it all.

What better way to educate about healthy foods and healthy eating than a farmer's market? A farmer's market event can take on many different shapes and serve many purposes. We have several suggestions for farmer's markets at school.

Student only events: Display local fall veggies and sample to the crowd during lunch or during a free period.

How about in springtime? Are plants budding and growing in the greenhouse? Have a K-5 field day coming up? Perfect!

School family events: If you have a school garden, then you'll have plenty of produce to sell during the summer months and in the fall. Host a farmer's market and then put those profits back into the garden program. Does your school start seedlings in early spring? Plant heirloom seeds and host a vegetable seedling sale in May. Know a pumpkin farmer? Host a pumpkin sale in October and feature pumpkin dishes on the lunch line. Is Homecoming right around the corner? Incorporate a market on game-day, and staff it with team members. Share the profits of the sale with the team and build another partnership!

Partner with your produce hub or vendor and create a school event, or community event. Share knowledge of how fruits and veggies travel across your region or community. Have plenty of tastings- add chalk veggie drawing contests with younger students, or a middle school veggie art contest and display them in the cafeteria. Host a veggie parade on the first day of spring! There are many ways to draw student interest, and help your students to develop a taste for fresh veggies.

**Slide Eleven: End Slide**

Adding local to the menu...easy as 1,2,3!

For tools, recipes and program help visit:

<http://illinoisfarmtoschool.org/>

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:

<http://illinoisfarmtoschool.org/>

Have a great day!

