

# School Lunch: Good for Kids and Good for Your Wallet



*As the cost of everything increases – there is one meal that is still a great value: both nutritionally and economically! School lunch is still an incredible bargain at less than \$2.08 nationally!*

## Every School Lunch Includes Five Great Choices:

- Milk – Fat free or 1% - flavored or regular
- Vegetables – From jicama slaw to fresh carrot sticks
- Fruit – Everything from kiwi to locally grown apples; often fresh
- Grains – More whole grain items like rolls or sandwich bread
- Meat or meat alternate –White meat chicken, bean chili, lean beef

## Save Money: Eat School Lunch

- On average it costs less to buy a school lunch than to bring a lunch from home.
- The estimated national average of a school lunch from home was \$3.43 last school year.<sup>1</sup>

**School Lunch vs. Bagged Lunch**  
**\$2.08                      \$3.43**

*(comparison of national averages)*

## There *is* Such a Thing as a Free Lunch (and a Reduced Price One Too)

- All children at participating schools may purchase meals through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).
- Families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the poverty level are eligible for free meals.
- Families with incomes between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals; these students can be charged no more than 40 cents.
- Contact your school nutrition department to fill out a school meal application.



## Healthy Meals Feed Eager Minds

- Meals served under the NSLP must meet nutrition guidelines based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
- No more than 30% of calories can come from fat and less than 10% from saturated fat.
- School lunches provide one-third of the Recommended Dietary Allowances of protein, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, iron, calcium and calories over the course of one week of menus.
- Students who eat school lunches consume less calories from fat than students who bring lunch from home.
- Compared to lunches from home, school lunches contain:
  - Three times as many dairy products
  - Twice as much fruit
  - Seven time the vegetable amounts
- NSLP participants have substantially lower intakes of added sugars than do non-participants.

For more information contact your district's school nutrition director or the School Nutrition Association: [servicecenter@schoolnutrition.org](mailto:servicecenter@schoolnutrition.org) (703) 739-3900

<sup>1</sup> According to a meal cost analysis by Alice Jo Rainville, PhD, RD, CHE, SNS of Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI