

# Menu Core Philosophy

Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) Nutrition Services (NS) values whole, natural, nourishing foods. Since 2015, NS has worked to remove ingredients that adversely affect health, and serve more wholesome foods in their place. This is a commitment that remains a work in progress. Our commitment is the foundation of our Menu Philosophy.

Unwanted List	Watch List
<p><b>Artificial Flavors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Synthetic Flavors</li> </ul> <p><b>Artificial Preservatives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Benzoates</li> <li>● BHA/BHT/TBHQ</li> <li>● Nitrates/Nitrites</li> </ul> <p><b>Artificial Sweeteners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Non-Nutritive Sweeteners</li> </ul> <p><b>Partially Hydrogenated Fats</b></p> <p><b>Artificial Colors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Synthetic Food Dyes</li> <li>● Caramel Color CL 3-4</li> </ul> <p><b>Unnecessary Flour Conditioners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bleached Flour</li> <li>● Bromated Flour</li> <li>● Azodicarbonamide</li> </ul>	<p><b>Artificial Preservatives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Propyl Gallate</li> <li>● Sorbates</li> <li>● Sulfates/Sulfites</li> <li>● EDTA</li> </ul> <p><b>Binders and Fillers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Carrageenan</li> <li>● Isolated Vegetable Proteins and Hydrolyzed Vegetable Proteins (In Meat and Poultry Production)</li> <li>● Inter-esterified oils</li> </ul> <p><b>Natural Flavors</b></p> <p><b>Added sodium</b></p> <p><b>Added sugar*</b></p>
<p><b>Why:</b> Strong evidence supports an association between these ingredients and increased health risks; may cause hypersensitivities in certain individuals; and/or indicate the absence of wholesome ingredients.</p> <p>*<b>Added sugar</b> is covered in more detail throughout this summary.</p>	

## The Process

**Every menu is a collaborative culinary art that must:**

- Include culturally relevant and appealing foods, with a focus on scratch cooking.
- Be conscientious of food allergies, sensitivities, and intolerances.
- Provide locally sourced agricultural products.
- Reflect environmentally sustainable choices for food and supplies.
- Meet or exceed United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) requirements set forth in the Healthy Hunger-free Kids Act (HHFKA).
- Reflect Nutrition Service’s (NS) dedication and commitment to fiscal responsibility.

***Each menu is compared to our menu philosophy to identify potential foods of concern. Things we are striving to avoid:***

- A published meal pattern that customers could reasonably perceive as unhealthy.
- A published meal pattern that would reasonably exceed 16 grams added sugar per day.
- A published meal pattern that lacks good sources of protein for vegetarians and omnivores.
- A published meal pattern that lacks a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables.
  - A published breakfast menu that lacks produce that can be neatly and easily eaten (without silverware) in a classroom.
  - A published menu that lacks exciting produce choices.
- A published menu that exceeds our pre-cost meal targets.

***No new foods or ingredients are added to our recipes or menu that do not meet our menu philosophy.***

***Any items that fall on the Preferred Exclusion List, must be vetted by four team members, including the District Chef, Director, Nutritionist, and Purchasing Analyst. Things these four individuals must answer:***

- Is the ingredient of concern a functional ingredient?
- Is there a similar or alternative item on the market?
- If this item is served, will SPPS students exceed the recommended daily intake (or a scientifically referenced limit) when they consume a typical breakfast and lunch at school?
- Should this food be replaced or removed?

## **The Guidelines**

### **The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act**

Legislative requirements of 2010 were a major milestone in Child Nutrition Programs that required the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to update federal nutrition standards for school meals. The changes included meal pattern requirements and nutrition standards for:

- Fruits and vegetables
  - Minimum serving sizes
  - Daily and weekly offerings
- Whole grains
  - Limits on enriched grain products
  - Proportion of whole-grain foods
- Calories
  - Minimum and maximum calorie limits
- Sodium limits
- Unhealthy fats
  - No added trans-fats
  - Maximum percentage of calories from saturated fat.
- Milk
  - Variety of milk and flavored milk
  - Minimum serving sizes
- Water
  - Access to water

To this day, the meal patterns for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) include menu planning parameters that are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines For Americans (DGAs). The amounts of foods included in the meal pattern were carefully determined through an extensive review and assessment to meet nutrient targets. NSLP and SBP nutrition standards may continue to change as we learn more about health and nutrition.

### **USDA Dietary Guidelines**

The main purpose of the DGAs is to inform the development of Federal food, nutrition, and health policies and programs. The DGAs are a critical tool for professionals to help Americans make healthy choices in their daily lives to help prevent chronic disease and enjoy a healthy diet.

## SPPS Nutrition Standards

At SPPS, we believe in an evidence-based foundation for nutrition standards. As this summary states, our menu choices are driven to meet or exceed menu and nutrient standards. In addition, our team works diligently to stay abreast of current research, which is translated into the ingredients we rate as “unwanted” and “watch”. Added sodium and sugar are two ingredients we watch carefully.

- **Added Sodium-** our approach to whole, natural, nourishing foods is the first defense against added sodium. In addition, our menu standards ensure the following targets are met:
  - **SBP**
    - Grades K-5: ≤540 mg
    - Grades 6-8: ≤600 mg
    - Grades 9-12: ≤640 mg
  - **NSLP**
    - Grades K-5: ≤1,110 mg
    - Grades 6-8: ≤1,225 mg
    - Grades 9-12: ≤1,280 mg
- **Added Sugar-** in order to adhere to the American Heart Association’s recommendation for children between the age of 2-19 to consume no more than 25 grams of added sugar per day, NS plans each menu within the following parameters:
  - **Monitor and actively work to limit to 4 teaspoons (16 grams) per day, and based on typical breakfast and lunch patterns.**
  - **Never added to fruits or vegetables (fresh, frozen, dried, pureed, canned).**
  - **Never added to foods unless it is a functional ingredient for baking or texturizing.**
  - **Limited, and tallied within a full day “typical breakfast and lunch pattern” perspective, when added as a functional ingredient.**
  - **Generally includes the following food choices:**
    - No more than 6 added grams sugar in cereal
    - No sugar or salt added to whole-grains like rice, bulgur, oatmeal, barley, pasta, or noodles
- **Naturally Occurring Sugar-** is also considered throughout the menu planning process to ensure balance, variety and moderation are applied to our menu philosophy. Some specific foods we limit include:
  - 100% Juice
    - No more than 6 oz/day in elementary schools
    - No more than 8 oz/day in secondary schools
  - Plain or flavored yogurt
    - No more than 40 grams total sugar per 1 cup (plain or flavored yogurt)

## References

Fact Sheet: Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act:

<https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2014/05/20/fact-sheet-healthy-hunger-free-kids-act-school-meals-implementation>

Nutrition Standards For School Meals: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/nutrition-standards-school-meals>

USDA Dietary Guidelines For Americans:

[https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/resources/2015-2020\\_Dietary\\_Guidelines.pdf](https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/resources/2015-2020_Dietary_Guidelines.pdf)

FDA Generally Recognized As Safe Inventory:

<https://www.cfsanappsexternal.fda.gov/scripts/fdcc/?set=GRASNotices>