

TONKA FRESH

A Monthly Newsletter from Minnetonka Nutrition Services *January 2025*

Welcome to the third edition of Tonka Fresh, the official newsletter of Minnetonka Nutrition Services! This month, our department is kicking off a year of exciting projects to keep our offerings fresh and interesting for students and staff.

Coming Soon: A Brand New Menu To Celebrate the Lunar New Year



With the school year well underway, continuously refreshing school meal menus keeps our cafeterias' offerings engaging and exciting for all who eat school meals! Inspiration for menu updates comes in many different forms, but the Nutrition Services Department often finds that looking to Minnetonka students yields the best ideas.

Since many Minnetonka students spend their days immersed in and learning about Chinese culture as part of the Chinese Immersion Program, the Nutrition Services Department sought to find a way to expand part of that experience to the lunch room for all students. Lunar New Year is an important holiday in Chinese culture, and this year, it will take place on Wednesday, January 29. To celebrate, the Nutrition Services Department will be debuting a new dumpling menu that day, where students may try chicken and vegetable dumplings or vegetable dumplings, rice, mandarin oranges, some of our most popular vegetable mixes and a fortune cookie.

Xuechen Wang, a fourth grade teacher in the Chinese Immersion program at Scenic Heights Elementary, shared more information on the cultural significance of this celebration. "On New Year's Eve, it's common for families to gather and make dumplings together, as they represent wealth and unity," said Wang. He also discussed how the color red has symbolic meaning during this celebration, with many families decorating their homes with red lanterns and banners. Wearing red "symbolizes good fortune and happiness," Wang explained. Kitchen staff will be invited to wear red while serving the new dumpling menu to honor this tradition. All

schools will also be serving mandarin oranges, which represent good fortune and are often seen as a sign of respect.

Be sure to mark your calendars for lunch on January 29! We are so excited for students and staff to try this new menu.

Pictured: Chinese Immersion students perform in last year's Lunar New Year Celebration.

Local Partner Spotlight: Delicious Cheese Made Specifically for K-12 Students

Headquartered right down the road in Chanhassen, Bongards Premium Cheese is where the Nutrition Services Department gets many of the cheese products we serve, including the cheese sticks served at breakfast every week and the sliced cheese available on hamburger days.



Bongards has been a great partner for schools because of the company's dedication to making tasty cheese that fits within the school meal program guidelines. Bongards has formulated cheeses with lower sodium so that students have access to nutritious protein options for breakfast and lunch. These delicious cheeses are a consistent staple for our meals, and we love our partnership with Bongards!

Fresh Vegetable Taste Testing All Month Long



One of our department's projects in 2025 is a district-wide sampling effort to introduce Minnetonka students to new vegetables that have not previously been featured in our school menus.

Based on input from high schoolers, there are a number of vegetables that students would like to see on the menu rotation. We chose three vegetables with the greatest interest, and now the rest of our schools have a chance to weigh in with their input.

Throughout the month, we will be sampling at each of the elementary and middle schools. Students will be able to taste jicama, orange bell peppers and sugar snap peas, and decide which they would like to see added to future menus. We love to involve students in planning menus, and what better way than to try new foods!

Did you miss a previous month's edition? Check out all [past newsletters](#) on the updated Nutrition Services Department website.

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