

# The Healthy Family Newsletter

A Newsletter from the Food and Nutrition Service Department  
Willmar Public Schools and Community Christian Schools

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## December Highlights

December 4<sup>th</sup> - National Sock Day  
December 19<sup>th</sup> - Ugly Christmas  
Sweater Day  
December 21<sup>st</sup> - First day of Winter  
Solstice  
December 25 - National Pumpkin  
Pie Day

## No School dates:

### WILLMAR

December 22-31, 2025

### COMMUNITY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

December 19, 2025 Early Dismissal  
December 22-31, 2025



Check out the Breakfast  
and Lunch menus on  
your District Website



Follow us on Facebook

## Growing Healthy Habits

Recent research published in the International Journal of Child Health and Nutrition highlights that increasing fruit and vegetable consumption among children works best through a multi-faceted approach — connecting school experiences with support at home and in the community. When children see healthy foods as both familiar and fun, they are more likely to explore, taste, and enjoy them.



In the schools we offer a variety of vegetables and fruits at breakfast, lunch, snack and through our Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program brings this idea to life with our monthly tasting calendar. Each month, elementary students are introduced to a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables — from red bell peppers to a variety of juicy melons. These experiences help children build curiosity and comfort around healthy foods. Research also shows that exposure alone isn't enough. Positive reinforcement, repeated tasting, and family engagement make a big difference. Children are more likely to choose fruits and vegetables when they see parents and caregivers enjoying them, help prepare meals, or can talk about what they've tried at school.

You can support these healthy habits at home by:

- Starting a conversation: Ask, "What fruit or vegetable did you try today?"
- Trying new foods together: Make small tasting plates at home and vote for your favorites.
- Keeping healthy options visible: Set out fruit bowls or add vegetables into favorite dishes.
- Celebrating success: Praise your child for being adventurous with new foods.

Together, schools and families can help children build lifelong habits that support strong bodies and healthy minds. Every conversation, taste, and shared meal helps make fruits and vegetables a natural and enjoyable part of daily life.



## Locally Grown, Locally Served

Your school district is always looking for ways to support local growers, farmers, and businesses by serving locally grown foods on our menus. On November 6th, we proudly featured an entire meal sourced from our local partners—a true celebration of our community's harvest.

Potatoes - Kirick Gardens, St. Joseph MN

Turkey - Jennie-O, Willmar, MN

Carrots - Lismore Gardens, Clinton, MN

Dinner Rolls - Pan of Gold Bakery, St. Cloud, MN

## Fun Fact

Did you know? Kids need at least 1½ cups of fruit and 2½ cups of vegetables each day for a healthy diet.



## 2025-2026 Meal Prices:

### Willmar

|         | Breakfast | Lunch  |
|---------|-----------|--------|
| PK-12th | Free      | Free   |
| Adult   | \$2.50    | \$5.05 |
| Milk    | \$0.65    | \$0.65 |

### Community Christian School

|         | Breakfast | Lunch  |
|---------|-----------|--------|
| PK-12th | Free      | Free   |
| Adult   | \$2.60    | \$5.15 |
| Milk    | \$0.65    | \$0.65 |



### Why Hydration Matters in Winter

Cold weather can make it harder to notice when you're thirsty, but your body still needs just as much water in winter as it does in summer. Drinking enough water helps support your immune system, keeps your energy and focus up, and prevents dry, irritated skin.

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## Feta and Cranberry Chickpea Salad

Portion size: ½ Cup Yield 6 Servings

### Salad Ingredients:

- 1 can of chickpeas (15 oz.), drained and rinsed
- ½ cup crumbled feta cheese
- ¼ cup dried cranberries
- 2 tbsp chopped walnuts or pistachios (optional)
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley

### Dressing Ingredients:

- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- ½ tsp honey (optional for extra sweetness)
- ⅛ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp black pepper



### Directions:

1. Drain and rinse the chickpeas thoroughly under cold water to remove excess sodium. Pat dry with paper towel.
2. In large bowl, combine the chickpeas, cranberries, chopped parsley and nuts. Toss everything but the feta cheese together to evenly distribute the ingredients.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together olive oil, apple cider vinegar, honey (if using), salt and black pepper. Pour over the salad.
4. Sprinkle crumbled feta on top and mix lightly to maintain its texture.

Let the salad sit in the fridge for 15-30 minutes before serving to allow the flavors to meld together. Enjoy!

Did you know...  
People around the world clean their hands with water, few use soap. Using soap removes germs.

Did you know...  
Improper handwashing is the cause of illness for 1 out of 3 young kids who get sick with diarrhea.

Did you know...  
Washing hands reduces the spread of infectious diseases.

### Know when to wash your hands



[www.cdc.gov/handwashing](http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing)

