The Healthy Family

A Newsletter from the Food and Nutrition Services Department

Willmar Public Schools and Community Christian Schools

Volume 22 Issue 2

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Bobbi Varichak DTR, SNS, MBA
Assistant Food Service Director
Willmar Public Schools
Editor

Para traducción, llame 320-231-7860

October Highlights

- National Pasta Month
- National Pizza Month
- National Chili Month
- National Apple Month
- National Tomato Month
- Great Apple Crunch Day October 14, 2026
- National School Lunch Week October 12-16, 2026

No School Dates:

Willmar Public Schools:

- October 14-16, 2026

Community Christian School:

- October 14-16, 2026

Check out the Breakfast and Lunch menus on your District Website

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National School Lunch Week

Welcome to the Cafeteria Circus!

Step right up, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls!
The big top is going up, the lights are shining, and the most important show of the school year is about to begin!

Welcome to **National School Lunch Week: October 12–16!** This year, we are celebrating with a **Cafeteria Circus**, but behind all the fun and excitement is a story that goes back generations.

Since 1946, the National School Lunch Program has provided essential nourishment for students. In 1962, President John F. Kennedy established National School Lunch Week to recognize how healthy meals fuel learning in the classroom and beyond. Today, the program serves nearly 30 million children every school day.

Every meal starts in our communities. Local farmers care for the land and raise the food that keeps our future leaders, teachers, and thinkers healthy and ready to grow. Behind the circus magic, everyone plays a role:

- Cafeteria Staff: Our ringmasters keeping things running smoothly.
- Cooks: Our food artists preparing healthy dishes.
- Farmers: The unsung heroes growing our ingredients.
- Students: The true stars of the show!

We are proud to offer free meals to all students, ensuring every child has access to well balanced, nutritious food. Join us in celebrating our cafeteria teams, local farmers, and eight decades of helping children thrive!

National School Lunch Week Menu

Featured Entrees at the PK-5th Elementary Schools

Monday: Mini Corn Dogs, Baked Beans, Baby Carrots, and Chilled Strawberry Sices

Tuesday: Local Pulled Chicken Sandwich, Local Roasted Tri-Color Potatoes, Celery Sticks with Homemade Ranch Dressing, Fresh Local Apple

Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday: No School

District Wellness Committee

Your district has a wellness committee that meets 2-4x/year or as needed. This committee focuses on student wellness promotion throughout the district which is a requirement of Minnesota Department of Education. If you would like to be a part of this committee, please contact your district for further information, meeting dates, and times.

2026-2027 Meal Prices

Willmar:

	Breakfast	Lunch
PK-12th	Free	Free
Adult	$2.55	$5.30
Milk	$0.75	$0.75

Community Christian School:

	Breakfast	Lunch
PK-12th	Free	Free
Adult	$2.65	$5.40
Milk	$0.75	$0.75

Farm to Table Food Items:

September and October

Corn on the Cob
(Green Leaf Farms)

Apples
(Carlson Orchard)

Tri-color Potatoes
(Kirick Gardens)

Shredded Chicken
(Happy Halal Meats)

Beef Patty (High School Only)
(MN Beef from Rancher's Legacy)

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What's on the Menu?

One Pan Dirty Spaghetti

(New take on a Cajun Classic)

Servings: 4
434 Calories

Ingredients:

- ½ Cup of Celery, diced
- 1 Medium Onion, diced
- 1.5 Cup Green Pepper, diced
- ½ Pound, Ground Beef
- 4 oz Andouille Chicken Sausage, diced
- ½ Pound Spaghetti Noodles, uncooked
- 2.5 Cups Low Sodium Beef Broth
- 1 Green Onion, sliced (if desired)
- ½ teaspoon Onion Powder
- ½ teaspoon Garlic Powder
- ½ teaspoon Black Pepper
- 1 teaspoon Paprika
- 1 teaspoon Cumin
- ¼ teaspoon Oregano
- ¼ teaspoon Dried Thyme
- ¼ teaspoon Cayenne Pepper

Directions:

- Dice the onion, celery, green pepper, and andouille chicken sausage. Set aside.
- In a large skillet pan, brown the ground beef on medium heat, breaking it apart as it cooks.
- Add the diced onion, celery, green pepper, and andouille chicken sausage to the skillet. Add all spices and stir to combine. Continue cooking on medium heat for approximately 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- Pour the beef broth into the skillet and stir. Bring to a simmer.
- Break the spaghetti noodles and add to the skillet. Stir well, making sure the noodles are submerged in the broth and not clumped together.
- Cover the skillet and cook for 2-3 minutes. Remove the cover and stir the noodles. Repeat until the spaghetti noodles are tender and has absorbed most of the beef broth. Remove from heat and stir.
- Dish up and garnish with a small amount of sliced green onions if desired. Enjoy!

Update on MN Free School Meals Program 2026

Since July 1, 2023, the MN Free School Meals Program provides state reimbursement to schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program so that students can receive one breakfast and one lunch at no cost each school day. Here are some questions and answers regarding this program families should be aware of:

What is included in the MN Free School Meals Program?

- At Breakfast, students are offered 4 items. Students must choose at least 3 items to be counted as a Free reimbursable meal. One of those 3 items must be a ½ cup serving of fruit and/or vegetable as part of their breakfast.
- At Lunch, students are offered 5 components. Students must choose at least 3 components to be counted as a reimbursable meal. The student must choose a ½ cup serving of fruit or vegetable as part of their lunch.

What is NOT included in the MN Free School Meals Program?

Single item purchases, such as a carton of milk, a second entree at breakfast or lunch, snack bar items (like chips or cookies), or meals served to adults.

Do I still need to complete the Application for Educational Benefits?

Yes! While students receive breakfast and lunch at no cost through the Minnesota Free School Meals Program, completing the Application for Educational Benefits may help eligible families access additional benefits such as SUN Bucks, test fee waivers, tutoring and after-school programs, internet and utility discounts, and other local benefits. The application also helps schools receive funding for important programs and student services. We encourage all families to complete a new Application for Educational Benefits as soon as possible.