

Meal Talk: Taste-Test Events

Child Nutrition Programs
USDA Food and Nutrition Service

▶ Meal Talk Webinars



United States Department of Agriculture

The Team Nutrition Initiative Supports the Child Nutrition Programs by:



1

Developing nutrition education resources to help children make healthy food and physical activity choices as part of a healthy lifestyle

2

Providing training and technical assistance for child nutrition professionals to enable them to prepare and serve nutritious meals that appeal to participants

3

Providing technical resources to support healthy school & child care environments



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Celebrate Lunch Trays Many Ways

National School Lunch Week



TeamNutrition.USDA.gov



New Materials for School Lunch

- School Meals Trays, Many Ways
- Taste-Testing Materials
- Celebrating the Flavors of School Meals
- New Recipes



fns.usda.gov/tn/school-lunch-resources



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How Are You Celebrating National School Lunch Week?

Choose all that apply

- A. Decorating the cafeteria/school
- B. Preparing special meals/items
- C. Dressing up
- D. Hosting special event(s)/theme day
- E. Other ideas



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Today's Speakers



Mimi Wu, MS, RD
USDA Child Nutrition Programs



Gina Giarratana
Pennridge School District, Pennsylvania



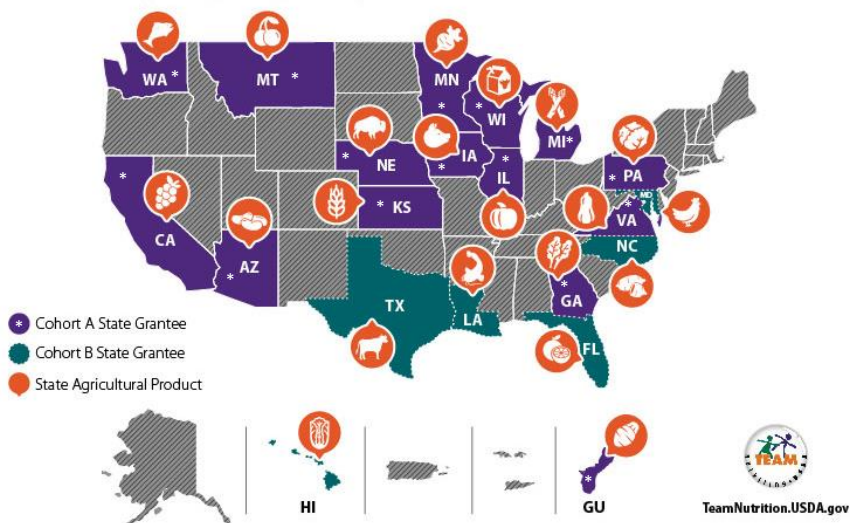
Chef Rafael Juarez
Kern County Superintendent of Schools,
California



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Fiscal Year 2021 Team Nutrition Training Grant

Grantees will create new school meal recipes using local agricultural products.

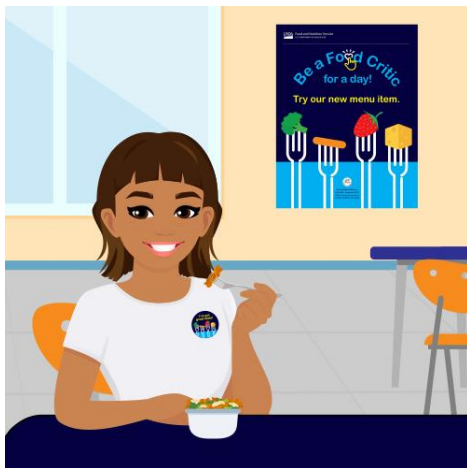


Do you hold taste-test events at your school/school district?

- A. Yes, I have held taste-test events before, or plan to hold one at our school/school district.
- B. No, we have not held taste-test events at our school/school district.



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Benefits of Taste-Test Events

- ✓ Introduce Potential Menu Items
- ✓ Create Excitement for New Menu Items
- ✓ Give Students a Voice in Menu Planning



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New Resources for Taste-Test Events

Posters



Social Media Images



Newsletter



fns.usda.gov/tn/taste-testing-event-resources



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TASTE TEST EVENTS

Gina Giarratana
Director of Nutritional Services
Pennridge School District
Perkasie, Pennsylvania

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- PA Harvest of the Month Recipe Standardization Grant Recipient
- Local PA Vegetables
 - Cabbage
 - Squash
- Middle School Focus
- Taste Testing Requirement

KEYS TO SUCCESS:

1. PLANNING

- Communicate plans with principal first
- One grade level/small group then increased amount of students
- Partnered with Family & Consumer Science (FCS) instructor
- Allergies were identified
- Parents emailed
- Taste Testing occurred during the class period in the cafeteria

2. PRESENTATION

Display



Full Size & Ingredient list



3. FEEDBACK

Sample Cup Collection



Student Reaction



FEEDBACK FORMS

Elementary

Taste	 Loved It	 Liked It	 Not For Me
Texture	 Loved It	 Liked It	 Not For Me
Appearance	 Loved It	 Liked It	 Not For Me

Middle School FCS

Taste Test

Name: _____

Directions: Sample each of the three products and describe their smell, appearance, taste, and texture on the table below. Be sure to use adjective words to your description and note any differences between the products that you detect.

	Small	Appearance/ Color	Taste	Texture
Product A				
Product B				
Product C				

USE FEEDBACK

Original Recipe



Tweaked Recipe



4. SOCIAL MEDIA & COMMUNITY

@PSD_Cafeterias
@PennridgeSD



LESSONS LEARNED

- Start with small groups
- Don't give too much information before they try the new item
- Assign someone to take pictures
- Use age-appropriate feedback forms
- Communicate taste test event in advance
- Decorate & Have Fun



THANK YOU

Rafael Juarez

Director of Food & Nutrition Services

Kern County Superintendent of Schools
(California's Kern COE)

Cooking Demos + Student Engagement = Successful Taste Testing Events

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Important things to think about when planning a taste testing event :

- Identifying a taste testing team
- What is an appropriate recipe
- What will you need to cook it onsite
- How can you engage students
- What can you do to make it fun
- How to provide some nutrition education
- How to survey your students
- What to do with your results

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Your taste testing team...

- Presenter
- Cook
- Nutrition Education Staff
- Other school staff or other stakeholders



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What's an appropriate recipe...

- Grade levels
 - Lower Grades = require recipes with less steps and easier to make and follow
 - Using plastic knives or simply using your hands
- Hot vs Cold Recipes (non-heated, fresh from school gardens)



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Cooking Demos...

- Very impactful with students.
 - The taste testing becomes an experience.
- No special equipment is needed and can be done anywhere.



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Student Engagement

- As appropriate, have students jump in.
- It's empowering!



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Make it fun...

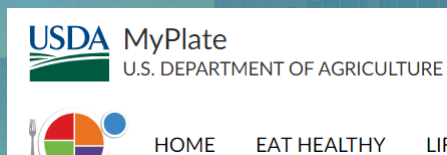
- Your presenter, cook and all staff involved must be passionate about what you are doing.
- Your recipe should taste good, but more important the more fun and energizing you make it, the more encouraged your students will be to taste something different.



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Nutrition Education

- Keep it simple.
- Invite your school nurse or any staff to help.
 - The mere modeling of tasting the recipe will motivate students.
- As you give out the samples, have a short script.



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Surveys...

- Google forms - older grade levels
 - Ask questions & provide the opportunity to make suggestions.
- Paper Surveys - simple half sheets with happy, unsure and not so happy emojis will work for the the younger grades.

TASTE TEST
* Please Check the box and return your card

School: _____ Menu Item: Garlicky Chicken Ratatouille Date: _____

☐ Don't Like!
 ☐ Don't Know?
 ☐ I Like!

Comments: _____

Student Taste Test
Please provide us with your honest feedback about our newest recipe - Cheesy Beef Spinach Pasta

How was the texture of the Cheesy Beef Spinach Pasta?

☐ Too Firm ☐ Just Right ☐ It was not the best is ☐ It is decent ☐ It was ok ☐ Never tried it ☐ I didnt eat it ☐ i didnt try it

Would you choose a different type of meat for the Cheesy Beef Spinach Pasta?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered Yes, what type of meat would you choose?

☐ Chicken ☐ Pork ☐ Turkey

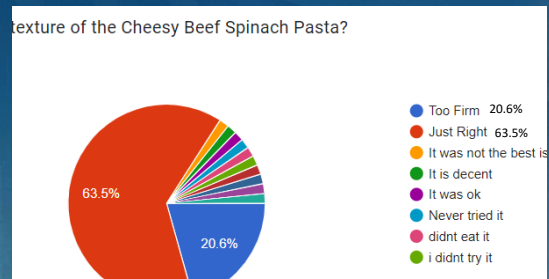
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Results...

To menu or not to menu?

- Rework the recipe and re-test.

Alternatively : try the recipe on the menu first. If acceptability was low, conduct a fun cooking demo and taste-testing event to get feedback and gain some buy-in.



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Questions?

Please Contact:

Rafael Juarez, Director of Food & Nutrition Services

Kern County Superintendent of Schools

rajuarez@kern.org

Phone: (661) 852-5930

Thank you

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**How do you handle food
safety and allergy concerns
when conducting taste
tests?**



**How do you involve
parents and others in the
school community in
taste tests?**



**What are your three
biggest tips/takeaways for
anyone hosting a taste-test
event at their
school/school district for
the first time?**



After today's webinar....



- **October 13:** All who registered for this webinar will receive an email with the websites mentioned today.
- **October 26:** All who attended this entire webinar will receive a **certificate of attendance** via email.
 - If you watched this webinar with others, you may print out a certificate for each person.
 - This webinar may count toward USDA Professional Standards for School Nutrition Programs. Suggested Key Area: 4000 Communications and Marketing and Key Topic 4130: Customer Service
 - This email will include information on how to receive Continuing Professional Education Credits from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.
- **In a few weeks:** All who registered for this webinar will receive an email once the **captioned recording of this webinar** has been made available on the Team Nutrition website.



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