

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the mission of the school nutrition program?

The Wallingford Food Service Department is committed to providing a variety of appealing, nutritious, wholesome, reasonably-priced meals. These meals, which are consistent with the USDA's *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, are made and served in an environment that is respectful of each student's needs and differences. We strive to partner in the educational process to assist students in achieving their maximum learning potential through their healthy food choices.

Where can I find the lunch menu?

The school lunch menu is published weekly in the local newspapers, sent home with elementary students, displayed on the local access TV channel, published on the food service's website, and is posted in the cafeteria.

What is the school menu composed of?

The National School Lunch Program is governed by guidelines from both federal and state agencies. Meals are planned based on the USDA's *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The menus consist of a meat or meat alternate, grain, fruit, vegetable, and milk. Choices of fresh fruits and vegetables are offered daily, as well as a variety of whole grain products. We've also added more legumes to our menu as they are an excellent source of protein and fiber.

Is my child getting the nutrition that they need?

Yes. The school lunches are designed to provide at least one-third of the recommended dietary allowances for school age children. Over the course of a week, the meals contain no more than 30% calories from fat and less than 10% from saturated fat. The other essential nutrients in a healthy diet that are regulated in school meals are calories, protein, calcium, iron, vitamins A and C. We are ahead of the trend by working hard to reduce the amount of sodium in our meals for the last 17 years.

My child tells me that the portions are too small. Who decides the portion size?

The portion sizes are established by federal regulations. They are age-appropriate serving sizes based on the aforementioned Dietary Guidelines. All school nutrition programs participating in the National School Lunch Program must meet these requirements.

Does my child have to take all the meal components?

No. The National School Lunch Act introduced the "Offer vs Serve" concept in an attempt to reduce food waste and costs. This provision mandates that students should be allowed to choose—at a minimum—any three of the five food components on the lunch menu. However, for optimum nutrition we recommend that students take one food item from each food group. If a child selects three of the five food components offered, then the meal is considered complete by Federal regulation. It is less expensive for your child to take a complete meal than to purchase the same items à la carte. However, all students have the option to purchase just an entrée or a side dish on an à la carte basis.

My child brings home bags of baby carrots gotten from her friends. Don't kids throw lots of food away?

Sadly, sometimes that does happen. In choosing three of the five items offered on the menu, we encourage the students to try a new food item. Under the "Offer vs Serve" provision, the students get to select what they are going to eat. Keep in mind that if the child does not select three of the five items, they will be charged the à la carte price (which is usually more than the unitized school meal). As a result, students may take a food item that they don't eat just to pay the complete meal price.

Are you still promoting healthy eating when you offer lots of “junk” food?

Yes, because 100% of the snack items offered at the elementary level are approved snacks from the State of CT Healthy Food Certification List. All of the items on the state list are low in fat, sugar, sodium, and contain moderate portion sizes. Please understand that the regulations believe, generally speaking, that all foods are acceptable in a healthy diet in moderation.

Why are adults charged more than children for the same meal?

Federal regulations mandate that the non-student price must cover the full cost of the meal. Adult, and other non-student, meals are not subsidized by any program. Adults do have the option of purchasing an entrée or a side dish on an á la carte basis.