

## Cafeteria Connection

Connecting you to your child's school lunchroom

### Bag lunch versus school lunch – which is better?



Many students who bring a lunch from home every day or even some days may do so because of their parents' perceptions of school lunch. Maybe they recall boring and tasteless meals from when they were in school. Maybe they believe school lunches are not as healthy as what they can pack from home.

If these perceptions have you filling an insulated lunch bag for your child every day, you may want to reconsider, assuming your child does not have a highly specialized diet. School lunch generally offers your child a wide variety of delicious foods to hold their interest and better nutritional content over home-packed lunches. Not to mention, school lunch is the convenient choice for busy parents.

#### Better Nutritional Content

A Virginia Tech University study comparing 750 school lunches with 560 packed lunches for preK and kindergarten students found that brown bag lunches were higher in calories, fat, saturated fat and sugar, and had less protein, sodium, fiber, calcium and vitamin A. The packed lunches observed by researchers tended to include more desserts and sugary drinks, and less fruits, vegetables and milk than school lunches.

The lunches we serve at your child's school comply with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's nutritional guidelines for school meal programs. These guidelines ensure our students consume a variety of fruits and vegetables, and whole-grain-rich foods each week. They also limit calories, fat, saturated fat and sodium in our meals. The guidelines were developed to help stem the rising number of overweight and obese children in the United States.

#### Nutritious and Delicious

If all this talk of nutrition makes you think our meals are boring and taste like cardboard, think again! Our meals are restaurant-quality meals, with recipes developed by culinary experts. We creatively incorporate herbs and spices, vegetables and grains into entrees kids love. Would you imagine school lunch to include taco in a bag, crunchy chicken tender wraps, ravioli in red sauce or sesame popcorn chicken? Those are just some of the delicious entrees your child may enjoy at school. You must admit, these entrees sound far better than a juice box and a stack of crackers.



If you are packing a lunch every day, give yourself a break for one week. Test school lunch and see if it appeals to you and your child.

**NutriStudents K-12®**

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