

## **For Food Service Professionals: The Pennsylvania Department of Education Nutrition Standards for Classroom Parties & Holiday Celebrations**

Your school has adopted The Pennsylvania Department of Education Nutrition Standards that apply to foods and beverages available throughout the school day including classroom parties and holiday celebrations. These standards permit up to three foods that contain sugar as a first ingredient, such as cupcakes, but must offer: fresh fruits and vegetables and either 100% fruit juice, milk or water. *By following these standards, your school will receive additional state reimbursements for each National School Lunch Program (and Breakfast Program) meal served.*

Ideally, you, the food expert, should prepare and provide the fresh fruits and vegetables for parties if possible. You are able to get the best available prices on produce and you are trained in safe food handling practices. Here are some fresh fruit and vegetable purchasing and serving tips from other food service directors.

**Dollars and sense.** Carefully monitor produce prices and explain your objective to your produce supplier and ask them to alert you to any special pricing or deals.<sup>1</sup> A partial list of in-season produce follows and more can be found at: <http://www.thefoodtrust.org>:

January: Mangos, Oranges, Peppers, Cucumbers  
February: Apples, Potatoes, Bananas, Mushrooms  
March: Cauliflower, Cabbage, Celery  
April: Artichokes, Avocados, Pineapple, Grape Tomatoes  
May: Asparagus, Spinach, Rhubarb, Strawberries  
June: Green Beans, Peaches, Apricots, Lemons, Limes  
July: Sweet Corn, Blueberries, Cantaloupe, Watermelon  
August: Papaya, Honeydew, Nectarines, Raspberries  
September: Radishes, Zucchini, Tomatoes, Plums  
October: Carrots, Grapes, Jicama, Apples  
November: Pumpkins, Pears, Sweet Potatoes, Cranberries  
December: Broccoli, Tangerines, Kiwi, Grapefruit

**Variety is key.** Work with your produce supplier to expand your options. Instead of just grapes and apples, try cantaloupe, honeydew, fresh pineapple, watermelon, kiwi, clementines, strawberries and peaches—sometimes these can be comparably priced to canned fruit.<sup>1</sup>

**Work smarter not harder.** Train staff on fruit presentation so they understand that they can offer fresh fruit choices such as melons and kiwi without a lot of extra work. For example, watermelon can be cubed quickly and then cupped. Melons can be washed and sliced into 12–16 servings per melon and served with the skins. Kiwi can be served the same way. Strawberries can be washed and served whole.<sup>1</sup>

**Help limit waste by making fruits more appealing.** If you're serving fruit, mix different colored fruit in one bowl or set up a display with all red in one bowl and all orange in the next. Yellow bananas stand out even more when served in bright purple bowls lined with red paper. Serving items that don't have much color? Place them on bright tablemats or put colored tissue paper around the display. Garnish foods with contrasting colors. On holidays, such as Valentine's Day and St. Patrick's Day, add the holiday color to as many items as you can.<sup>2</sup>

**Create a win-win situation.** Let parents know about your healthy snacks by getting articles included in teachers' or PTO letters.<sup>2</sup> Spring Grove Area School District generates revenue for its food service department by selling "healthy birthday baskets." This is a parent time-saver (compared to baking and delivering cupcakes), a treat for students who receive a special delivery to their classroom, and popular with teachers who can distribute the snack items at a time that is convenient. However, the cafeteria server is the "star" because he/she forms a bond with the student receiving the basket.

<sup>1,3</sup> April 30-May 1, 2007 Wellness and Academic Success: From Policy to Action Conference, State College, PA Promising Practices of <sup>1</sup>Meghan Schaper, State College Area SD Food Service Director and Mark Czapp<sup>3</sup> Spring Grove Area SD Food Service Director available at: [http://nutrition.psu.edu/projectpa/wellness/day\\_2.html](http://nutrition.psu.edu/projectpa/wellness/day_2.html); excerpts taken with permission from the Marketing Healthy Foods Toolkit, created by the MA Dept of Education's Child Nutrition Outreach Program at Project Bread. For more outreach materials, please visit [www.meals4kids.org](http://www.meals4kids.org).