

On the Pulse of School Meals

Capitalizing on trends in school meals with U.S.-grown pulses

What is Gen Z looking for in school meals?

Plant Forward

Beyond just vegan and vegetarian students



24% of Gen Z identify as **flexitarian**¹



33% of Gen Z **limit meat intake**²

Trend research indicates that increasing numbers of Gen Z are choosing more plant-based meals.² With this trend on the rise, schools must meet the demands of the changing student consumer. More and more districts have implemented Meatless Mondays.

Pulses — or chickpeas, beans, lentils and dry peas — can help schools easily meet this need. With several different varieties of pulses and pulse products available to schools, there are plenty of kid-friendly options to choose from.

Farm-to-Fork

- Pulses are U.S.-grown. Farmers in the Northern Plains, comprised of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and the Palouse, which includes eastern Washington, northern Idaho, and northeastern Oregon, grow many varieties of chickpeas, dry beans, lentils and dry peas.
- Help your students learn where their food comes from by sharing farmer stories and buying local beans, chickpeas, lentils and split peas when possible.

Global Flavors

Students today are spending more time eating from quick-serve and fast-casual restaurants. As a result, they have come to expect the same level of sophistication and range of flavor from school lunch. Pulses can help your districts meet this need daily. As a canvas for a global flavor, pulses can be found in menus and cuisines worldwide.



MEDITERRANEAN

Chickpeas • Lentils • White Beans



ASIAN

Black Beans



FRENCH

Lentils • Split Peas



INDIAN

Chickpeas • Lentils • Split Peas



LATIN AMERICAN

Black Beans • Refried Beans • Pinto Beans



REGIONAL AMERICAN DISHES

Red Beans • Black Beans

PULSES



Good for you, good for mother earth

Pulse crops are sustainable. They have a lower carbon footprint than other crops because they create their own fertilization by using nitrogen already in the air. Pulses also use less water than other proteins and help to nourish the soil for the next crop.



¹ Webster, M. Kids Today: What do they want? Presented at School Nutrition Industry Conference 2019

² Molde M. General Session: From Consumer Attitudes to Menu Trends, Positioning Plant-Forward for Success. CIA Healthy Flavors, Healthy Kids. 2018.

What's trending in the kitchen?



Blending (verb): the art of combining ground meat, chicken or turkey with pulses

On the cutting edge of school foodservice, scratch kitchens are blending meat and pulse products. You might be wondering why a school is taking the time to blend meat and beans or lentils together, but read on for the top reasons to blend pulses and meat into delicious student-friendly meals.

1. Save on food cost

The average cost of pulses in the U.S. is 10¢ per serving. When compared to beef, pork and chicken there is at least a **50¢ savings** per portion.³



2. Provide a tastier product

Blending meat and pulses helps burgers, taco meat and sloppy joes hold moisture

1. According to district leaders implementing these scratch-cooking strategies, there was no change in student acceptability! Kids did not notice a difference and continued to purchase the same items.

3. Improve the healthfulness of their meals

Adding pulse products to hamburgers, tacos, sloppy joes and other menu items can help to reduce the saturated fat content and increase the amount of dietary fiber making for happy hearts and tummies.

Pulses are an excellent source of fiber

4. Introduce students to pulses

Blended products are a great way to get students used to the texture and flavor of pulses in familiar foods.

How can you start blending in your school?

Start by swapping 1 oz of cooked meat in a recipe for ¼ cup cooked pulses. They work well in tacos, sloppy joes and meatloaf! Here is a recipe from the USDA What's Cooking Mixing Bowl to get you started. **Volcanic Meatloaf** is made with a blend of lentils and ground beef.

³ American Pulse Association. Food Service Guide. 2017



For more resources and tools, visit www.usapulses.org/schools.