A Word About Lemons... Nutrition

One of the most frequently asked items about our fresh fruit and vegetable offerings we get is “why have you put lemons on the offering bar?” This is usually followed up with the assumption that the citric acid in lemons are bad for your teeth’s enamel. Lemons are an excellent source of vitamin C, which is one of the 8 required nutrients that our menus have to meet to be in accordance with USDA regulations. This time of year oranges are not in season and they are a creative alternate source of the nutrient. Speaking of acidity, the pH level of a lemon is actually LOWER than oranges, grapefruit and pineapple!

The myth that they will corrode your teeth is only valid in countries that don’t have fluoride in their toothpaste or water and are consuming over 9-10 lemons a day. Despite their high content of citric acid, once ingested, lemons help to increase the pH of body and keep it from being in an overly acidic range.

What’s New: Achievement

It’s been a busy time of year. Then again, what part of the year isn’t busy?

This Winter, our Assistant Director, Javier Lopez took another job in Minnesota. Since then, the normal day to day operations have been covered by Rick and Nicole. They are currently in the middle of finding their third team member at the time of this writing. It has been challenging to cover all 40 buildings with just the two of them. The third member will be a welcome addition!

Now that next years’ staffing cafeteria scenario has been finalized, they can continue to fill positions that have not been filled.

Here’s a rundown on some things that have happened at 4J since our last issue:

• Meal changes: in a continual attempt to improve, we are always trying to find the balance between what’s popular and the food that’s the healthiest for our students. In this mind, we’ve tried to add some popular favorites back to our menu mix, at the same time introduce some entrees that are from scratch, and less processed. One of these kid-tested and approved items appears on page 2.

• Earth day is just around the corner. We have some exciting events planned for that day as well as ongoing events that are in line with our core values to be better stewards to our environment. There are a few articles scattered around this issue to reflect that, including a new partnership we’ve just formed with one school’s green class to find out how far we can take environmental responsibility!

Take a tour around this issue to see what else we’ve been up to. Now that it is Spring, maybe we can get some actual Spring weather!
**Ask the Dietitian**

**Nutrition**

This Month’s We picked three questions out of our “ask the RD” binder to share:

**Why did you change chocolate milk?** - Bill Grade 4

Good question! The chocolate milk we used to serve had high fructose corn syrup as the sweetener where the new chocolate milk uses table sugar, also known as sucrose. High fructose corn syrup is used to sweeten many foods and drinks that have no or very little nutritional value, such as soda and candy, and had a tendency of making chocolate milk look like an unhealthy product as well. When you look at the nutrition label of flavored milk versus soda, milk has 8 essential vitamins and minerals that growing bodies need where soda has zero, making flavored milk a nutrient dense beverage choice.

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**Why can’t we have chocolate milk in the mornings?** – Evan, Grade 3

Despite its nutritional benefits, we cannot avoid the fact that chocolate milk still contains chocolate syrup which adds sugars. Because of this, chocolate milk should be looked at as a treat, not something that is consumed daily with each meal like white milk. A majority of students who participate in the breakfast program also eat lunch and would typically drink chocolate milk at both meals. School meals are designed to teach students good eating habits that they will use throughout life and eating foods in moderation is one of them. This is also why cookies are offered every other Friday and not weekly.

**Why can’t we have syrup with French Toast Sticks?** – Ethan, Grade 5

Syrup is a condiment that has no nutritional value and only provides your body with empty calories. Like chocolate milk and cookies, this is another food that should be enjoyed in moderation and viewed as a treat, not something you eat everyday first thing in the morning. Luckily our French Toast is so delicious, it can be enjoyed without syrup or with warm fruit topping!

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**Program Spotlight:** Fresh Fruit & Veggie Program

**Activity**

A wonderful new program was introduced this year, with plans for expansion

The USDA is providing a Fresh Fruit and Veggie Program that is separate from the National School Lunch Program we participate in.

The program provides reimbursement for a fresh fruit or vegetable snack in schools that qualify. The qualification process begins in the Spring. The schools that qualify have to be in a high “free and reduced” area, and there should be a system in place to ensure that the students are delivered the fruits and vegetables.

The produce must be served raw and close to its original form. This means that they want the produce not to be cooked and not processed. This is because the program administrators want to make it where the kids recognize the produce on their trips to the grocery store, encouraging them to say, “hey, I had that in class!” Studies have shown that in lower socioeconomic areas, children just do not get the opportunity to consume fresh fruits and veggies. This is a perfect way to find a good system that won’t disrupt the building. If that works, we can then apply to the USDA for expanding the program.

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**New Menu Item:** Homemade Cheese Sauce

Nutrition

In April, 4J’s very own Homemade Cheese Sauce was served up in cafeterias around the district with huge success:

Cheese Nachos and Made to Order Nacho Bars have been a very popular entree option offered in all grade levels for some time now. In 2009, the decision was made to eliminate the popular canned cheese sauce based on its source of hydrogenated oil, and high content of sodium per serving. The product was first removed from the elementary school’s Cheese Nacho recipe and replaced with refried beans and shredded cheddar cheese to ensure that the students were getting a good source of protein. Unfortunately, this change caused a lot of disappointed students and the popularity of the entree to drop dramatically. With the goal in mind of removing it from the middle and high schools as well, it was decided that a scratch based cheese sauce was going to be used to in its place to assure that the popularity of the “build your own nachos” line would not take the same hit as the cheese nacho recipe did in the lower grades. With help from Patty Rigsby, 4J’s Caterer, a béchamel based cheese sauce recipe that calls for four different types of real cheese, hot sauce, green chilies, and the perfect combination of spices and seasonings was created.

The development of this recipe went through many different stages starting with feedback from kitchen staff. Once a final recipe was perfected and priced out for affordability, it went to 10-12 elementary, middle, and high schools around the district for the student’s feedback and revised one final time. So far the word is that the kids absolutely love it! This new recipe contains 75% less sodium per serving, contains all real ingredients, and tastes better, which makes this a win-win for everybody!
Spring Promotions! Activity

- Earth Day is Friday, April 22. Join us in the cafeteria for a Meatless menu featuring Homemade veggie stir fry with yakisoba noodles! Check out our website on the “our food” tab for a complete menu.
- BBQ season is here! A new feature on our website lists the BBQ’s going on at all the schools. To see the list, go to www.4j.lane.edu/BBQ
- Our BBQ’s will feature a local harvest menu once again with fresh produce from local farms.

Audits and Awards Achievement

Under the Microscope

An audit by the State of Oregon department of Education Child Nutrition Services was just completed. This audit takes place every three years and is in two parts. The first part is a Consolidated Review Effort, in which the auditor spends a week going through all records to ensure that we’re claiming the meals correctly.

The second part of the review is the School Meals Initiative, where the auditor takes all the nutritional data for the current year and goes through it to ensure that the food we serve is in compliance and serving the correct amounts of nutrients.

We’re pleased to announce that not only did we pass the audit, but the auditor wrote in the report that we were to be commended for running an outstanding operation.

Each year Sodexo contracts with the National Safety Foundation (NSF) to conduct surprise cafeteria audits. These audits are very intense, and usually last a couple days, and consist of a physical safety audit as well as a food safety audit. A “gold status award is 98% and above. The standards are extremely high, as it takes just a couple of missed areas and you can fail the audit. We’re pleased to announce that for the third year in a row we received perfect scores on all schools audited! For a complete list of the awards, go to our website and click on the “our people” link.

We also get two yearly inspections at every kitchen from our local Lane County Sanitarian. Earlier this Spring he presented one of our kitchens with a “Certificate of excellence” for a job well done at Camas Ridge Elementary.

Back to School Environment

Shouldn’t Every Day be Earth Day in Eugene?

Please join in on congratulating Rick for passing his Master Gardener’s final exam after 3 1/2 months of coursework. He just needs to complete his volunteer service at the extension office to get his Master Gardener’s badge. With 14 school gardens, it was clear to Rick that this would be a good opportunity to gain and then lend some expertise in gardening. When asked, Rick stated that the course didn’t make him an expert, but rather showed him how much he DIDN’T know, however gave him tools to find answers!
Sustainability  Environment

Local Event and Partnership  
Formed with Nutrition Services and Spencer Butte’s Green Class

On Thursday, May 19th, Spencer Butte Middle School is having a very important assembly. They are celebrating the fact that they have just received “Premier” green school status. This is a very rare honor, as not many schools have reached that level in Oregon.

To kick off the premier green school status, Spencer Butte is having an assembly where the Mayor of Eugene has been invited, along with local media. The event is centered around a partnership between their green class and Nutrition Services. The green class is in process of growing vegetables to be served in the cafeteria, and is working on utilizing safe and responsible composting techniques to ensure that food scraps are recycled in a sustainable fashion in their garden system. This “safe and responsible” system has a twenty-point checklist that the teacher and students fill out everyday and keep on hand for any health inspection. There are items on the check list such as “double handwashing” and taking temperatures to ensure killing of pathogens in composting.

Eugene is fortunate enough to have almost half of its schools listed as a green school, but the “merit” and “premier” levels are achieved by going above the call of duty in environmental responsibility. For a complete list of all 4J schools on the green list, go to 4J’s nutrition services website and click on the “green cafeterias” as well as criteria established for the three levels.

Local Partner Spotlight  Community

Megan Kemple of the Willamette Farm & Food Coalition

Megan Kemple is the Director of the nonprofit group Willamette Farm & Food Coalition

We partner with Megan to plan and implement the Harvest of the Month program, which highlights a local farmer by featuring their food in the cafeteria each month.

She’s worked there for the past four and a half years. During this time, she applies for grants to fund such things as “tasting tables” where some lucky schools get to find out where fresh fruits and veggies come from by connecting with local farmers.

What Megan finds most rewarding is supporting the local farms and seeing the kids make the connection that food comes from the ground, and not a package when she takes them to the farm on field trips. “It’s so great to see kids get excited about that,” she said. Conversely, the difficult thing about her job is supporting the local farms while dealing with limited funding for all schools. Currently, Megan is only able to do her tasting table at two 4J schools due to funding.

For more information of what Megan is up to, check out the WFFC’s website at www.lanefood.org

Megan dressed up as a pea pod during one of her “tasting tables”

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