



TIP SHEET

Prioritize Whole Fruit



Making fruit available, whether served whole or cut into bite-sized pieces, provides fiber, nutrients, and energy, and helps students build lifelong healthy eating habits. Offering fresh, frozen, dried, or canned fruit without added sugars helps schools meet meal pattern requirements while providing colorful, appealing options kids enjoy and meet one of the goals of the [USDA Pledge for Healthier School Meals](#).

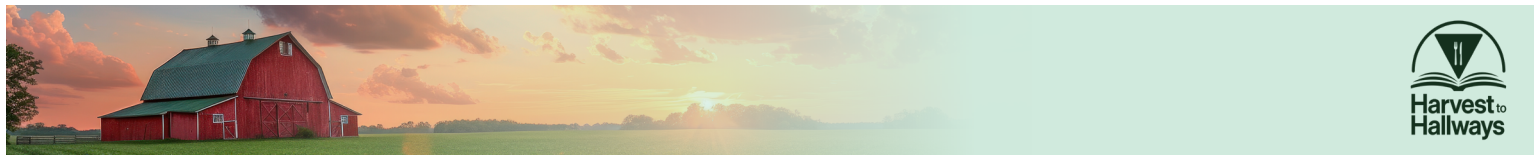
Key Pledge Tips

- **Prioritize whole, ready-to-eat fruits:** Offer whole, ready-to-eat fruits instead of juice or sweetened fruit products.
- **Purchase more seasonal and local fruit options:** Whenever possible, use fun graphics, taste tests, and quick messages that get students excited to eat fresh, local fruit.
- **Include nutrition education with meals:** Connect food choices with health benefits.
- **Participate in food programs:** Federal programs such as the Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program (FFVP) expose students to different fruits.

Simple Fruit Menu Ideas

- Plan menus that include a variety of fruits. Use different colors and shapes to spark curiosity to explore new flavors and build healthy eating habits.
- Make fruit bite size. Small pieces (½ inch or less) help every student enjoy fresh fruit—braces and little teeth included.
- Add a variety of colorful fruits to the tray line and other meal stations that allow students to customize their breakfast and lunch options.
- Place fruits in prominent locations (e.g., front of the meal line, eye level, salad bars, near the register).
- Check out the following recipes tested by schools and approved by students. They include crediting information. Try them out using local foods.
- [Waldorf Fruit Salad](#)
- [Prairie Parfait](#)
- [Seasonal Fruit and Yogurt Parfaits](#)
- [Harvest Spinach and Apple Chicken Salad](#)

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School Spotlights

- Council Bluffs Community School District in Iowa seized the opportunity to expand local purchasing by featuring sliced apples. Now, the district is proudly sourcing 90% of its sliced apples locally.
- Collinsville Independent School District in Texas offers the “Taste Test Heroes” program where they introduce students to new foods, including dragon fruit and kiwi fruit, generating excitement for trying new foods.
- Fayette County Schools in West Virginia energized their local food community by launching a Request for Proposals, forging a partnership with a regional produce distributor to bring fresh produce to students.
- Quitman Independent School District in Texas added a delicious fruit variety to their daily breakfast menus, including fresh berries, melon, and citrus fruit; students also embraced fruit smoothies in the breakfast lineup.
- The Virgin Islands Department of Education established a centralized food hub to address the gap between farmers, schools, and communities. The food hub provides fresh, local produce to schools and supports the creation of value-added products like fruit salsa.

Try It Out!

The following activities are great ways for schools to further enhance their focus on wholesome fruits:

1. **Swap Challenge:** Let fruit shine naturally. Swap fruit with added sugars (e.g., fruits packed in syrup) for fresh, frozen, dried, or canned fruit without added sugars and discover delicious new ways to serve it.
2. **Harvest to Hallways:** Identify three practical ways your school can partner with local farmers or distributors to bring more locally procured fruits to your menu.
3. **Taste Test ‘Try Day’ Event:** Create a colorful tasting table with local fruits organized by seasons or colors: red, orange/yellow, green, blue/purple. Give students a ballot to choose which ones they’d like to see more often on the menu.
4. **Reflection Prompt:** Imagine your school kitchen as a way to make a positive change: What creative steps could you take to further support students in enjoying more fruits?

Helpful Tools

- [Child Nutrition Recipe Box](#)
- [Eat Real Food Toolkit](#)
- [Tips for Procuring Whole Foods](#)
- [Colorful Fruits](#)
- [Procuring Local Foods](#)
- [Taste-Testing Event Resources](#)
- [Crediting Fruits in Child Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Child Nutrition Programs Food Industry Toolkit](#)
- [Using Federal Funds to Purchase Local Foods \(SP 11-2025\)](#)

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