

Incorporate local foods

Strategies for incorporating local foods into your school's meal plan must be practical and may require creativity. Adding local foods incrementally will allow trial and error without unnecessary risk and will help you work toward changes that may be more sustainable in the long run. We recommend you start slowly the first year by substituting locally grown items for one or two products you typically use. It's better to start small and succeed than to make too many changes too quickly.

Explore menu options

Many schools have found creative ways to integrate local items while working within their budget and labor constraints. Replacing unprocessed fruits or vegetables such as apples or potatoes with locally sourced substitutes likely entails a manageable degree of change and effort. Minimally processed, locally sourced products like carrots sticks or broccoli florets—if they are available in your area—can be substituted for existing menu items.

Other options for integrating local foods may require more staff training and adjustment time. Light, on-site processing such as chopping veggie sticks or roasting potatoes requires up-front effort. But examples from other schools show that, once systems are in place, overall labor hours may not necessarily increase.

On-site processing may require new equipment and staff training. The **list of recommended kitchen equipment for light processing** suggests equipment that may increase your efficiency.



Tool

List of recommended kitchen equipment for light processing

New recipes that include local ingredients may require cooking from scratch. Menu items cooked from scratch with local product might include pasta and pizza sauces made from local tomatoes, roasted chicken wrap sandwiches with grated, local vegetables, coleslaw, soups and chili. This option requires the most planning and development, but may result in delicious, nutritious additions to your menu that you and your staff will take pride in. The **list of recommended kitchen equipment for from-scratch cooking** suggests tools to make your work more efficient.



Tool

List of recommended kitchen equipment for from-scratch cooking

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Visit these websites to explore tried and tested recipes:

The Lunch Box: scalable recipes with nutritional analysis
www.thelunchbox.org/menus-recipes

Minnesota's Farm to School Food Service Toolkit: product-specific recipes
www.mn-farmtoschool.umn.edu/

Massachusetts Farm to School Cookbook: school-friendly recipes
www.farmtoschool.org/files/publications_134.pdf

Consider incorporating a salad or fresh fruit and vegetable bar to easily serve seasonal produce while avoiding the problem of having to announce specific product in advance on lunch menus. Fresh fruit and vegetable bars provide menu flexibility. Local, seasonal product can be highlighted when available, while fresh produce can be offered year round. Students can freely choose healthful items at a produce bar.

Based on the experience of participating schools, a fresh fruit and vegetable bar can be efficient, cost effective and central to a farm to school program. **Fresh fruit and vegetable bars: a how-to guide** offers steps to thinking through your bar set-up, including strategies to make it a manageable part of your program. The **fresh fruit and vegetable bar production log** can be used to effectively plan and track costs and consumption patterns in your salad bar.

*Get creative with **recipe development**—ask staff to bring in their favorite recipes, or hold a contest with prize incentives for staff, students or people in the community! This is a win-win: gather recipe ideas AND build involvement and enthusiasm for your program. See page 18 for more information about cooking contests.*



Tool

Fresh fruit and vegetable bars: A how-to guide



Tool

Fresh fruit and vegetable bars: Production log

Although it may require more advance planning than a salad bar, a Harvest of the Month program is a way to both structure your procurement program and promote local foods—and the farms that grow them—on your menu. Harvest of the Month highlights one local product a month, utilizing it in multiple ways. The

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Harvest of the Month sample calendar suggests how you might organize your program. For more information on this model, see page 18. Additionally, there are lots of valuable Harvest of the Month resources available at www.harvestofthemonth.com.



Harvest of the Month sample calendar

*During implementation, farm to school programs report an **increase of fresh fruit and vegetable consumption of 25 to 84 percent.** **

Work with staff

Training employees to handle fresh produce or other local food fits within the parameters of their job descriptions and is one way to engage them in the process of building a farm to school program.

Encouraging staff to take ownership and pride in their work will support your farm to school efforts and all aspects of your school's nutrition program. Each staff

member can assist with program development and problem solving to achieve your farm to school goals. In general, involving staff throughout the process of developing a farm to school initiative, rather than just including them in its implementation, will increase their investment and improve your odds of a successful, sustainable program. Tips for involving staff:

- Train staff to “work smart,” utilizing their time efficiently. Match skill levels to jobs.
- Work out production schedules for local items. Know and respect the limits of your staff (and yourself) when considering labor and time management.
- Provide training and encouragement when making production changes.
- Develop master recipes with staff input to guarantee labor costs for entrees, side dishes and scratch items.
- Monitor progress of the program, including labor hours, on a weekly basis.

“Incorporating farm to school into our program has actually been a fun and invigorating addition to my job over the past three years. I am proud of what we have accomplished. The most rewarding part is seeing the kids catch on and enjoy the healthy, local foods we can offer. We are all benefitting.”

— Nutrition program staff member, Chilton, WI

*Joshi and Azuma, 2009

Recommended Kitchen Equipment for Light Processing

Fresh Fruit and Veggie Prep Made Easy

Many hands make light work. Well-trained staff and proper equipment also lighten the work load in the kitchen when preparing local, raw fruits and veggies.

1) Salad Spinners

http://www.novon.com/dynamic_salad_spinners.html

World Cuisine 5.5 Gl # a488820

2) Chef's Knives

Mundial

Knife Chefs 8" SCW5610

Knife Paring 4" # SCW0547

R.H. Forschner

Knife Chef 5" Mini #47552

Creative Products Hand held Knife Sharpener #V-3095

3) Cutting Boards

Katchall Industries Cutting Boards

Poly White 15X20x.5 #CB-1520-1/2

Poly White 18X24x.5 #CB-1824-1/2

Also available in multiple colors for HACCP color coding

4) Wedge Makers / Fry Cutters

Sunkist Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Sectionizer

<http://www.centralrestaurant.com/Fruit--Vegetable-Wedger--Slicer-c83p6403.html>

Wedge Maker Insta-Cut

<http://www.foodprepworld.com/lincoln-instacut.html>

Nemco Easy FryKutter

(used by REAP Food Group in Madison to prep 500+ lbs of carrot, sweet potato, or kohlrabi sticks weekly)

<http://www.zesco.com/products.cfm?subCatID=611&PGroupID=060110MZ01>

5) Fresh Fruit Preserver

Nature Seal -- <http://www.natureseal.com/>

6) Food Processor

<http://www.robotcoupeusa.com/>

Food Prep recommended model numbers:

R2c Dice

RGX

R301

R301R4n

7) Mandolines

Jaccard #200441 tabletop stand complete with seven blades for julienne, grate, fine grate.

Lincoln-Redco 4 slicing blades available



Recommended Kitchen Equipment for From-Scratch Cooking

Scratch Cooking Wonders

High-quality equipment is available to improve production times and flexibility when incorporating scratch recipes into your program. Whether you choose local potatoes, culinary sauces and seasonings, cheeses or meats, having the right equipment can help the transition to scratch cooking.

1) Wedge makers/fry cutters

Sunkist Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Sectionizer

<http://www.centralrestaurant.com/Fruit--Vegetable-Wedger--Slicer-c83p6403.html>

Wedge Maker Insta-Cut

<http://www.foodprepworld.com/lincoln-instacut.html>

Nemco Easy FryKutter

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<http://www.zesco.com/products.cfm?subCatID=611&PGroupID=060110MZ01>

2) Tilt skillets

Great for boiling potatoes and pasta, stir fry, batch cook recipes, grilled sandwiches and more.

Cleveland floor model: SEL30T1, SEL40T1 gas, table top model; SET15 gas

Vulcan-Heart floor model (VE30): 30 gal V-Series electric

Southbend: 30 gallon gas w/open leg frame base #BGLT-30 (NG)

Market Forge: 1200-TILT, Electric, 23 Gallon Capacity, Counter Top Model 301-1200

3) Steamers and combi/convi ovens

A wonderful addition for steaming or browning potatoes, meats, processed items and homemade pizza

Blogett BCX-14 series full size combi ovens

Cleveland 10 pans-full size boiler-less electric OES-10.20 Convothem

Cleveland OES-6.10 Convothem "The Mini"

Hobart Boiler-less steamers HC24EA3 and HC24EA5

4) Waring Immersion Food Blender

http://www.waringproducts.com/com/catalog/index.php?cat_id=21

Recommended: 18" harm # W5B65

5) Panini/clamshell grills

Step up your sandwich offerings utilizing fresh, local ingredients in a hot, grilled sandwich

Cadco Unox CPG-10 single sandwich grill w/ribbed plates

CPG-20 double sandwich grill w/ribbed plates

Waring (WPG150) 12" grooved full-top panini grill, Panini Perfetto series

Star (GX10IS) 15 3/4" Grill Express™ smooth two-sided grill

6) Mixers

Mashed potatoes cooked from scratch are only the beginning!

Hobart Legacy Mixers, countertop, 12 and 20 quart



Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Bars: A How to Guide

STEP ONE: ORGANIZE

- TYPE OF BAR
- MEAL COMPONENT, MEAL SOURCE OR EXTRA PURCHASE?
- PRODUCE SOURCES

STEP TWO: SET UP

- COSTING
- LABOR CONTROLS AND TRAINING
- EQUIPMENT
- MARKETING
- EDUCATION
- WASTE CONTROLS

STEP THREE: ADDITIONAL HELP

- ADDITIONAL INCOME AND GRANTS
- STUDENT VOLUNTEER HELP

STEP 1: ORGANIZE

1. **Decide on the type of bar to incorporate into your program.** You may choose to base this decision on:
 - Survey of student and/or parent preferences: student (5-12) or parent (K-4) surveys. *This strategy can help build buy-in and enthusiasm, as well as provide new knowledge about changing preferences and new trends.*
 - Observations of successful bars at neighboring schools. *Viewing a successful bar in action can be very helpful—you do not need to reinvent the wheel.*
 - Known likes and dislikes of your student population. *Managers and nutrition teams know what their students like best. Working from this knowledge to create a healthy, desirable bar is a sensible approach.*
2. **Decide if your bar will be a meal component, meal source or extra purchase. Popular bars that can bring local produce and good nutrition to the forefront include:**
 - **Fresh and Green Bar:** Fresh, mixed greens with assorted veggies and toppings such as sunflower seeds, garbanzo beans, lentils, croutons, shredded cheese and eggs. *This is a*



Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Bars: A How to Guide

great way to incorporate those dark green veggies and legumes now required for school lunch.

- **Fresh Fruit and Yogurt Bar:** Utilizes low-fat bulk yogurt and a combination of seasonal, fresh fruits and dried or canned commodity fruits, with a focus on color and texture. *Providing a rainbow of colorful fruits will supply a rainbow of vitamins and added calories on lower count menu days.*
- **Fruit and Veggie Bar (Seasonal Locavore Bar):** A mix of fruits and veggies purchased locally and in season (when available) will give students the opportunity to taste and enjoy new items. When items are not available locally, the bar can continue with produce purchased through existing, year-round vendors to maintain consistency. *If the local items are promoted with signage at point of service, this is a great way to tie in the educational component of a farm to school program. Remember, repetition is needed when teaching young students to eat fresh foods.*
- **“Green Corner,” “Lighter Side of Lunch,” “Salad Sensations”:** This type of bar is a countable meal following the USDA meal pattern and is served as a secondary option for the standard lunch line. Incorporating local products following the offer versus serve rule can be beneficial to your meal count, as well as help increase student interest. If you build the bar using your meal costing process, because students will be allowed to take this bar as a standard reimbursable meal, you can gain more access to the entire student population. Be sure to provide:
 - Protein (cheese, cottage cheese, eggs, legumes, diced ham or turkey)
 - Bread (pasta salad, leftover spaghetti, rolls, crackers)
 - Local, fresh produce (when available).

These bars are easily themed: taco salad, julienne salad, Cobb salad, chicken fajita salad or Greek or Italian cold bars. Create your own theme or research ideas on the web.

- **Salads and Sides Bar:** This bar provides the two remaining components of a claimable meal when served alongside a main entrée (including a bread serving) and milk. Consider pairing this bar with a low-cost commodity entrée. Combining homemade salads with fresh fruits and veggies in a bar that supplements the main entrée will give students the opportunity to make choices based on eye appeal, taste and portion size. Bright, colorful salads such as carrot slaw with currants, raisins, cherries, spinach and strawberry salad, broccoli and cauliflower salad, revised lower fat seven layer salad or fresh cucumber salad can draw students into taking healthier side options. You can run homemade salads throughout the week, interchanging them with fresh fruit, veggies and green salad. *This is a great way to reduce the amount of potatoes and other starchy vegetables now being limited in school lunch.*



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3. **Sourcing local produce.** There are many ways to search for local producers. Below are several approaches:
- Savor Wisconsin: This search engine has a good-sized data base and is easy to use. Search for producers in your area based on product and your zip code.
<http://www.savorwisconsin.com/default.aspx>
 - Local Dirt: Another search engine listing local producers. This site ties in cell phone apps, such as Locavore, and provides access for cooperatives and farmers' markets.
<http://localdirt.com/>
 - Local Harvest: Online food guide geared toward regional areas with farm listings.
<http://www.localharvest.org/search.jsp?m&lat=44.275220&lon=-88.395755&scale=8&ty=0&p=1>
 - Contact the manager of your local farmers' market. This is a great place to connect with farms and groups growing locally, and those willing to sell to institutions. Sample the wares at the market and start up conversations with the growers. This is a wonderful way to get to know your farm partners and learn about the growing process from their perspective.
 - Smaller schools can purchase from the farmers' market directly or utilize the harvest from a school garden for the lunch line. Follow HACCP procedures for bringing in and handling fresh fruits and veggies. List the varying produce prices at the stalls you visit as your method of procurement when buying directly from a farmers' market. Fill out your procurement list weekly throughout the season and keep it on file with a description of your local procurement process.
 - Advertise in your local paper(s) for growers interested in selling to institutions. Be sure to follow the USDA guidelines for procurement. Request that interested parties contact your office for a synopsis of your program and grower requirements.
 - Contact your UW-Extension office. Knowledgeable and well-versed in local producers, these offices may be able to provide you with a list of growers in your area.
 - Wisconsin's Farm Fresh Atlases are free publications listing farms, farmers' markets and food businesses. There are unique atlases for different regions of Wisconsin; each lists products and services offered by individual producers. You can download the atlases for free at <http://www.farmfreshatlas.org/>

STEP 2: SET UP

Set up a price per serving limit and a staff time limit for items on your bar. This strategy will save money down the road. Counting the pounds going in and the pounds left over versus the meal counts will help keep spending under control. Here are a few rules to follow:

- **Set a top price** per serving which applies to every item on your bar. Follow the USDA portion sizes for the items you are incorporating into the menu, and keep your cost at or



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below your comfort level. In other words, do not create a salad or side that is too costly for your lunch tray. More strategies:

- Shop for the best price. Buy fruits and veggies in season when prices are at their best.
 - Place mid- to higher-priced items with cheaper items on the bar to even out the overall cost.
 - Balance the work load, and you will balance the cost of labor. Utilize “work free” items such as bagged baby carrots in tandem with product with higher labor requirements, such as whole, local watermelons that must be cut.
- **Cost out bars daily, weekly and monthly** as you learn to balance prices and labor. Utilizing a fruit and veggie production log, such as the log included in this toolkit, that includes information on your costs will give you a snapshot of cost per serving and total servings taken. When you divide total servings by total meals purchased per day and per line or age group, you will have participation rates for your fresh fruits and veggie bar. These percentages will help you map increases and decreases, control costs and give you solid numbers to convey when promoting fresh, local fruits and veggies to administrators and parents. It is important to develop a system that addresses costs as well as student interest and improved nutrition. Publishing increased fruit and veggies consumption by age group can give your program a positive PR boost.
 - **A well-trained labor force** is an efficient, less expensive labor force. Teaching your teams or crews to work together may at first appear to be a daunting task.
 - Take it slowly and involve employees in the process.
 - Explain your vision for the program to the staff and instill interest by incorporating their recipes and ideas into the overall structure of the bar(s). When staff take ownership of the program, they work together to make it a reality.
 - Provide appropriate training for staff. Make training fun and worthwhile. Consider providing incentives.
 - Be sure to incorporate cross-training for team building and long-term sustainability.
 - **Tools of the trade** are important when teaching new skills. You cannot expect staff to cut veggies without appropriate knives or other equipment necessary to complete the task. Ensure you have provided the proper equipment.
 - Smaller schools may start with several cutting boards and appropriate knives for produce.
 - Larger schools should review available pieces of equipment on the market and choose carefully, based on a coordinated effort of staff in the kitchen. (See the “List of recommended kitchen equipment for light processing” tool in this toolkit.)
 - Do not rush into large or costly purchases without first reviewing time constraints and reorganizing the flow of production in the kitchen(s).



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- Consult with staff to work through production and time limitations. Involve the staff in decisions whenever possible to increase ownership of the program and changes.
- **Marketing and promoting** the new bar is as important as providing the tools necessary to succeed. If you do not encourage and educate students, parents and staff, your healthy options will not be accepted and participation may be poor. Make your healthy program changes and farm to school the star of the show. Advertise! Publicize!
 - Create simple point-of-service signage displaying the farm and produce items that week. (See the “Where does your food come from?” tools in this toolkit.)
 - Provide information about the farm to school program and the new bar on the school website, in the monthly newsletter and in the daily announcements.
 - Call the local newspaper; send a blurb to the internet news source serving your area. Local television stations are a great partner for getting the word out to parents and the community.
 - If you have added support from a community partner or project intern, creating these promotional materials and opportunities is a great way for them to support the school food service.
- **Controlling waste** is an important factor when planning a fresh bar. There are several methods for waste control. Following are a few strategies:
 - Watch your bar carefully, noting which items are popular and which items are less so. Teach staff to match container size to item popularity. In other words, if carrots and kohlrabi are popular, place these items in larger containers, producing more for consumption. If mixed greens and pickled beets are not so popular, create less and place in smaller containers. Your goal is to throw away the least amount of cut-up produce and fresh salad possible.
 - Develop a process for re-using whole produce. Yes, this is possible and approved by state sanitarians, and a good way to save on food costs. Write a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) detailing how your team will rewash whole items such as apples, oranges, pears, bananas, etc. Discuss this with your state sanitarian, making sure to include all the required steps, and then post the SOP above the fruit and veggie work station and cover it in a training session. List all your steps in your HACCP plan.
 - Do not replace containers on the bar until they are empty. Though half empty containers are less attractive, high waste costs are far less attractive and more damaging. Consider making the bar self-serve, which will free up staff and allow for a floater who can oversee the bar, refilling when necessary.
 - Be sure to post signs explaining portion sizes and options. Educate the staff and students about the serving process to guarantee cooperation.



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STEP 3: ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Additional income to help with costs is always welcome. There are grants available to help with bar equipment and expenses. Here are a few:

- <http://saladbars2schools.org/guidelines>
- <http://www.schoolgardens.org/index.php/sgn-grants>
- <http://saladbarproject.org/Salad-Bar-Project-FAQ.pdf>
- <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/fns/ffvp.html>: USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program for schools with at least 50 percent free and reduced populations.

Involve student volunteers

Consider incorporating older students as volunteers or interns in your program, both for the educational opportunity and as a labor boost:

- All college-bound juniors and seniors are in need of volunteer hours in and out of school. This is a great opportunity for after school fresh produce prepping sessions. Farm to school looks great on a college resume.
- Do you know any students contemplating a career in restaurant and hospitality or the culinary arts? Advanced Foods classes are a great resource for students willing to earn a credit working in the kitchen for a day or two a week. This can provide an extra set of hands in the kitchen and training for the students.
- How about a marketing class in need of a project? Promoting the farm to school program can provide an interesting challenge for these students. By connecting with individuals, classes and groups you can extend farm to school from the cafeteria into the classroom, and the community as a whole. Making connections will strengthen your program.
- F.A.C.E. (Family and Consumer Education) classes already have a food, nutrition and hands-on focus. Many F.A.C.E. teachers encourage educational connections to farm to school programs.
- Similarly, many schools have nutrition or garden clubs. Club members may be interested in service hours.



**Middleton Farm To School – Harvest of the Month
NorthSide and Sauk Trail Elementary Pilot Promotion Plan, 2008-09**

Objective:

To pilot a partnership program educating students and parents about the availability, flavor profile and nutrition of locally grown products.

Method:

MCPASD Food service will partner with the REAP/UW-CIAS Farm to School Coordinator, Doug Wubben, and volunteer parents to provide a tasting each month to expose students to locally grown product. Local farm and nutrition information and recipe uses will be provided with each tasting to teachers and parents. Food service will follow up by incorporating the product in the elementary menu later within the target month.

Month	Product	Tasting Activity	Menu Integration
September	Melons, Tomatoes	Stop & Go Melon kabobs, tomato tasting	Fresh melon during week
October	Spinach	Fresh spinach incorporated into carrot-kohlrabi-apple salad	Baby spinach added to green salad bars following tasting
November	Apples	Apple quarters of three varieties of apples	Whole small apples twice during November
December	Sweet Potatoes	Sweet Potato Fries	Sweet Potato Fries on menu
January	Carrots	Roasted carrot coins? Raw?	Menu?
February	Potatoes	Roasted red, white, and blue potatoes	Roasted potatoes on menu? Local baked potatoes?
March	Cranberries	Dried cranberries	
April	Yogurt	Vanilla yogurt	
May	Lettuce or Asparagus	Various lettuce types for make your own salad cup	Add baby lettuce blends to salad bar