



Fresh from California

Building Resilient Farm to School Programs
and Serving School Meals Kids Love



CENTER FOR
ECOLITERACY

CALIFORNIA FOOD
FOR CALIFORNIA KIDS®



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Learning in the Real World is a publishing imprint and registered trademark of the Center for Ecoliteracy, a not-for-profit, tax-exempt organization. Created in 1997, Learning in the Real World offers resources to support schooling for sustainability, stories of school communities, and the ecological framework that informs the work of the Center for Ecoliteracy.





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California is a state of remarkable abundance—

geographically, culturally, and agriculturally. From the fertile soils of the Central Valley to the rugged coastlines and dynamic urban centers, each region contributes its own unique character and bounty. Fresh from California celebrates this richness, highlighting the regional connections that strengthen our school meal programs, making them more resilient, and more deeply rooted in the communities they serve.

Every day, school nutrition professionals across California prepare and serve millions of meals, ensuring students receive the nourishment they need to learn and thrive. Through farm to school programs, districts are making significant strides in sourcing more local, seasonal fruits and vegetables and offering freshly-prepared meals that reflect the cultural and agricultural diversity of their communities.

Designed to inspire and equip school nutrition professionals, Fresh from California provides practical strategies for strengthening farm to school connections. Whether you're launching a new initiative or expanding existing efforts, this guide spotlights regional leadership, showcases student engagement in action, and offers culturally relevant recipes that celebrate the incredible variety of fruits and vegetables grown across California.

We hope this guide serves as a valuable resource to support your continued success in bringing fresh, locally-sourced meals students love to your schools. Together, we are building a more resilient food system and a healthier future for our students. Thank you for your dedication, your passion, and your creativity in nourishing California's children.

In partnership,

Alexa Norstad
Executive Director
Center for Ecoliteracy

California's Farm to School Regions



“Supporting local farmers bolsters the regional economy and ensures the viability of small-scale agriculture, which is essential for a resilient food system.”

JOSH GODDARD, SNS
DIRECTOR OF NUTRITION SERVICES
SANTA ANA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



Superior Region

221,580

public school students

33,164,581

school meals served annually

41%

of school food is California-grown



“Since 2012, we have been committed to sourcing organic, locally-grown produce, meats, and grains from farmers within a 150-mile radius. Our cafeterias serve as an educational lab for students, where they learn about the importance of the local food system and the positive impact of choosing fresh, organic, and locally-grown foods.”

KAT SOLTANMORAD, RDN
 DIRECTOR OF FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES
 TAHOE TRUCKEE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



North Coast Region

44,336

public school students

7,285,454

school meals served annually

45%

of school food is California-grown



“We recognize that the food we provide at school is the majority of fresh produce our students eat. Experience has taught us that children are more likely to eat fresh produce if they are educated on its importance, involved in growing it, or know that it is locally-grown. The geographic isolation of our community makes us vulnerable to being cut off in the event of a natural disaster. Therefore, it is essential to support our local farms as a community lifeline.”

PILAR GRAY
DIRECTOR OF NUTRITION SERVICES
FORT BRAGG UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



Bay Area Region

928,631

public school students

116,646,819

school meals served annually

43%

of school food is California-grown



“Our expanding partnerships with local farms enable us to provide our students with the freshest, highest-quality produce. When we incorporate locally-sourced items into our meals, we notice a significant increase in student engagement—more students choose and enjoy fruits and vegetables. These collaborations enrich our students’ meals while supporting our local community and economy; fostering a stronger, more sustainable food system for everyone.”

KAREN LUNA
DIRECTOR OF NUTRITION SERVICES
SANTA CLARA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



Central Region

655,170

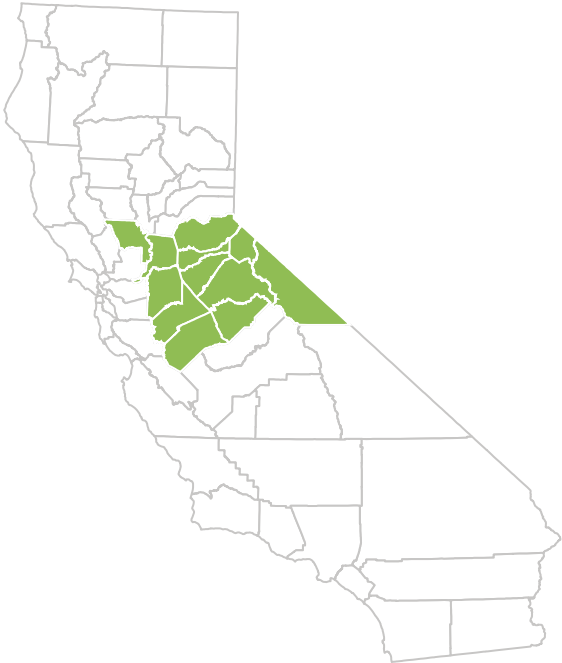
public school students

93,458,070

school meals served annually

47%

of school food is California-grown



“Food connects us. The food we prepare in our central kitchen goes to schools to nourish students, but our program also extends to our farmers. Every dollar we spend on local food supports our community.”

VINCE CAGUIN, MBA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF NUTRITION SERVICES
AND WAREHOUSING
NATOMAS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



San Joaquin Region

574,016

public school students

102,792,663

school meals served annually

48%

of school food is California-grown



“Utilizing fresh, local agricultural products in our child nutrition program not only strengthens our community but also nourishes and grows the future of our community.”

AMANDA HARVEY, SNS
DIRECTOR OF NUTRITION SERVICES
FRESNO USD



South Coast Region

346,813

public school students

57,388,866

school meals served annually

53%

of school food is California-grown



“We are deeply committed to strengthening our local and regional food system. Surrounded by rich agriculture and local family farms, we recognize the immense value of connecting students with fresh, locally-sourced foods. This supports farmers in our community while enhancing the health and well-being of our students, fostering a deeper appreciation for sustainable practices and nutrition.”

JASON CORONA
DIRECTOR OF CHILD NUTRITION
OXNARD UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



Greater Los Angeles Region

2,132,196

public school students

325,498,574

school meals served annually

46%

of school food is California-grown



“Partnerships with small regional family farms leverage our purchasing power to create new and consistent opportunities for growers who may lack the resources to enter the school food market. Through these relationships, our school district can influence farms to grow culturally appropriate foods, adopt regenerative farming practices, and create learning opportunities for students and families.”

JOSH GODDARD, SNS
DIRECTOR OF NUTRITION SERVICES
SANTA ANA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



Southern Region

936,482

public school students

129,060,499

school meals served annually

33%

of school food is California-grown



“The pandemic taught us how fragile our supply chain was. We decided to take control of what we could. In the last four years, we’ve cultivated relationships with California farmers and ranchers who support our vision of providing the healthiest and most nutritious ingredients for our school meals. Featuring these products in our district was the right decision. Our kids are eating more and love what we’re serving!”

ERIC SPAN
DIRECTOR OF NUTRITION SERVICES
SWEETWATER UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT





Resilient School Food Systems

Resilient School Food Systems

California produces nearly half of our nation’s fruits and vegetables, yet students’ access to this abundance is limited in our school food systems. With a robust agricultural landscape and nation-leading investments in farm to school, California school districts can be leaders in advancing the U.S. school food system. Since the adoption of School Meals for All in 2021, all transitional kindergarten to 12th-grade public school students have access to free breakfast and lunch at school, growing our state’s nearly \$5 billion school food industry. Schools have a ripe opportunity to increase local procurement by partnering with local farmers.

FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAMS:

- Support small to midsize family farms
- Strengthen the local economy
- Connect students to the fruits and vegetables grown in their region
- Provide more equitable access to fresh, seasonal produce
- Reduce the environmental impact of the school food system
- Increase students’ participation in school meals





Free Days

Mission Statement

To serve students: attractive, nutritious meals, prepared under safe and sanitary conditions in pleasant surroundings at the lowest possible price and contribute to their nutritional and educational needs by giving them the keys for life long healthy eating habits.

California Food for California Kids Network

California Food for California Kids Network

The Center for Ecoliteracy’s California Food for California Kids initiative promotes equitable access to nutritious food to ensure children are nourished and ready to succeed. The California Food for California Kids Network includes 150 public school districts across the state committed to serving more fresh and local school meals. Together, these districts reach 40% of California students and provide over one-third of the school meals served in California each year.

The California Food for California Kids Network is leading the effort to transform school food.

THE NETWORK REPORTS:

1/3
serve freshly-prepared meals with California-grown ingredients every day

49%
serve produce grown on the school garden or farm

1/2
of food served is freshly-prepared and California-grown

74%
offer students taste tests of menu items

Results compiled from 64 responding school districts reporting on the 2023–2024 school year.

Resources

- [California Food for California Kids](#)
- [Join the California Food for California Kids Network](#)
- [School Food Innovator Series: Celebrating California Food for California Kids](#)
- [School Food Innovator Series: Support Your Team’s Success with Fresh, Local Food](#)





Building Regional Connections

FOOD HUBS

Food hubs are a valuable resource for school districts that are seeking to increase procurement of local fruits and vegetables. They aggregate and distribute food from regional producers, allowing for small and midsize growers to sell to larger institutions, including schools. By partnering with a food hub, school districts can source from multiple local farmers while streamlining the process for their school nutrition professionals. Some food hubs even offer nutrition education resources and activities for students.



Old Grove Orange

Old Grove Orange is a group of over 25 farming families dedicated to making the last small farms in the region sustainable via partnerships with local school districts. They currently serve 45 school districts in the Greater Los Angeles region, offering students picked-to-order produce in school meals and opportunities to meet farmers at mini farmers markets and farm field trips. Old Grove Orange has been farming for five generations and serving local students for two decades.



Spork Food Hub

Spork Food Hub was created in 2021 in response to supply chain challenges that schools in the Sacramento area were facing during the COVID-19 pandemic, and continues to be a solution to ease school food procurement. Spork Food Hub is designed specifically to aggregate produce to schools, and partners with over 60 local farmers and 39 school districts across California.

Resources

- [School Food Innovator Series: Strategies for Freshly-Prepared](#)
- [Community Alliance with Family Farmers: California School District Procurement Guide](#)
- [Community Alliance with Family Farmers: Fresno BIPOC Produce on Food Hub Basics](#)
- [USDA: Regional Food Hub Resource Guide](#)
- [UC Davis: Find A Food Hub](#)
- [CDFA: Contact Christina Harrington of the Farm to Community Food Hubs Program](#)

FARMERS MARKETS

California offers over 700 farmers markets across the state. Local farmers markets are the perfect setting to learn about the fruits and vegetables grown in each region and connect directly with farmers who may be ready to sell directly to school districts. Farmers market networks are state and regional associations that offer opportunities for farmers to sell directly to a wider community.



Pacific Coast Farmers Market

The [Pacific Coast Farmers' Market Association \(PCFMA\)](#) serves more than 200 California farmers by operating and promoting 35 certified farmers markets in the San Francisco Bay Area. PCFMA's farmers markets also feature the Power of Produce Club educational activities for kids.



Agricultural Institute of Marin

The [Agricultural Institute of Marin \(AIM\)](#) serves over 430 farmers, food purveyors, and artisans from over 40 California counties participating in AIM's nine Certified Farmers Markets across the San Francisco Bay Area. AIM also provides hands-on and virtual education and training programs for children and adults.

Resources

- [School Food Innovator Series: Partner with Local Farmers](#)
- [Ecology Center Farmers' Market Finder](#)
- [CDFA Certified Farmers Market](#)
- [Certified Farmers' Market by County](#)
- [Community Alliance of Family Farmers](#)

CDFA Farm to School Program Team

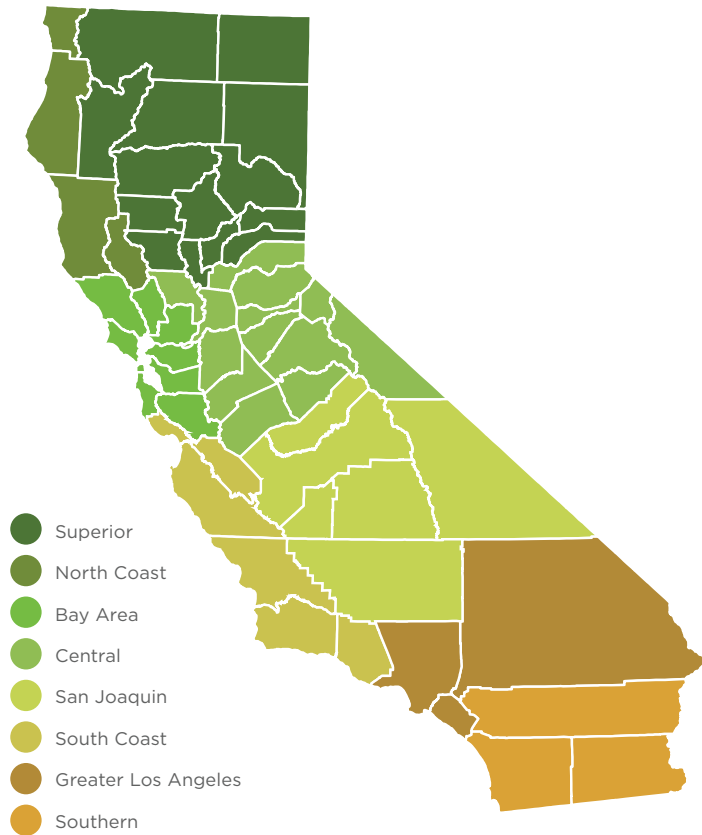
The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Office of Farm to Fork is dedicated to connecting school districts and communities directly with California's farmers and ranchers, aiming to enhance access to healthy, locally-grown foods.

To effectively serve diverse regions across the state, the Office of Farm to Fork has established a regional staffing structure comprising two key roles per region:

- Farm to School Network Regional Leads: These individuals facilitate relationships within the school food ecosystem, supporting farm to school initiatives and acting as liaisons between schools, local producers, and community partners.
- Regional Producer Engagement Specialists: Focused on connecting local farmers with schools, these specialists work to integrate more California-grown foods into school meal programs, fostering direct partnerships between producers and educational institutions.

This dual-structured approach ensures that both educational entities and agricultural producers receive dedicated support, promoting the integration of fresh, local produce into school nutrition programs statewide.

Reach out to the Office of Farm to Fork to connect with your regional staff: cafarmtoschool@cdfa.ca.gov



Read

[CDFA's Planting the Seed: Farm to School Roadmap for Success](#)



Engaging Students in Farm to School

Engaging Students in Farm to School

Promote fresh, locally-sourced food with students to highlight new menu offerings, increase school meal participation, and educate students about the local fruits and vegetables grown around them. California school districts have modeled successful strategies for student engagement. Get inspired by these stories from across the state:



Santa Ana students observe worms breaking down compost at the farm to school festival.

Farm to School Festivals

- Turlock Unified School District put on a twice-yearly “Farm to School Expo” for the school community. The event features local farms, fresh produce, student activities, and tours of the district’s central kitchen.
- Santa Ana Unified School District hosted “Growing Together,” a farm to school festival for the school community. The event celebrated Santa Ana’s thriving foodways with hands-on education, storytelling, taste tests from local farmers, a seed exchange, a farmers market, and more.



Watch Pajaro Valley students taste fresh berries and meet their local berry farmer.

Taste Tests with a Local Farmer

- Alvord Unified School District brought in a farmer from local citrus grower Old Grove Orange to learn about the ‘superpowers’ of local fruits and veggies and taste test oranges. Students then shopped at the “farmers market” for their favorite fruits and vegetables to take home.
- Pajaro Valley Unified School District held a taste test of strawberries and blackberries with a local farmer during the lunch hour. The elementary school and farmer set up a stand at the end of the lunch line for students to pick up cups of berries after they received their lunch, and students got to ask the farmer questions about his business and the health benefits of the fruit they grow.



Napa Valley students investigate the number of seeds in tomatoes grown in the school garden.



Watch Pajaro Valley students and farmers share their inspiration for the Farm 2 Cafeteria program.

Hands-On Education

- Napa Valley Unified School District gathered kindergarten and first-grade students in their “pizza garden” to study plant life cycles, take turns grinding wheat, and guess how many seeds are in a tomato. Students then used garden-grown tomato sauce and an outdoor pizza oven to make and enjoy pizza together.
- San Diego Unified School District creates farm to school connections in the garden, classroom, and cafeteria. Dedicated Farm to School Specialists engage students through the district’s Harvest of the Month program, virtual farm field trips, and nutrition education activities.

Connecting with High School Students

- Elk Grove Unified School District hosted a “Collective Action Day” for high school students to learn about farm to school and how they can advocate for change. Students were offered taste tests of new black bean burgers and pico de gallo and discovered how California farms are making an impact with sustainability and environmental efforts.
- Esperanza Community Farms grew a student-led “Farm 2 Cafeteria” program. When students attending the high school adjacent to the farm visited and voiced their desire to eat the crops at school, farm leaders supported their vision. Students now prepare fresh salads with farm produce for their peers to enjoy as part of the school lunch program.

Resources

- [Plan A Farmer Visit to Your School](#)
- [Eating Learning Growing: A Delicious Guide to Culturally Relevant Farm to School Education](#)
- [School Food Innovator Series: Lead Engaging Student Taste Tests](#)
- [School Food Innovator Series: Promote Your School Meal Program](#)
- [Taste Testing California Fruits and Vegetables](#)
- [Esperanza Community Farms: Farm 2 Cafeteria](#)



School Lunch Recipes

Featuring California-Grown
Fruits and Vegetables





RECIPE

Chipotle, Black Bean, and Sweet Potato Quesadilla

Chipotle, Black Bean, and Sweet Potato Quesadilla

Source: Monterey Peninsula Unified School District

INGREDIENT	50 SERVINGS		100 SERVINGS	
	WEIGHT	VOLUME	WEIGHT	VOLUME
Sweet Potato, Raw, Unprepared	7 lb + 8 oz	-	15 lb	-
Oil, Soybean	-	¼ c + 1 T	-	⅝ c
Paprika	-	⅛ c + 1½ t	-	¼ c + 1 T
Cumin Seed	-	⅛ c + 1½ t	-	¼ c + 1 T
Garlic Powder	-	⅛ c + 1½ t	-	¼ c + 1 T
Salt, Table	-	⅛ c + 1½ t	-	¼ c + 1 T
Onions, Raw	-	1- ⅔ c	-	3⅓ c
Beans, Black, #10 Can, Drained	-	⅞ #10 can	-	1¾ #10 can
Cilantro Leaves, Raw	-	1⅔ c	-	3⅓ c
Chipotle Peppers in Adobo Sauce, 7 oz Can	-	5 peppers	-	10 peppers
Lime Juice, Raw	-	¼ c + 1 T	-	⅝ c
Cheese, Cheddar, Yellow, Reduced Fat, Shredded	4 lb + 12 oz	-	9 lb + 8 oz	-
Tortilla 10", Flour, Whole Wheat	-	50 ea	-	100 ea

INSTRUCTIONS

HACCP Process: #2 Same Day Service

1. Preheat oven to 375° F.
2. Wash sweet potatoes and dry them off.
3. Cut sweet potatoes into long planks. Cut into sticks, then dice into small 1/2” cubes. Toss with oil, spices and salt.
4. Place potatoes onto a parchment-lined sheet pan and roast for 20-30 minutes, until potatoes are tender and lightly crisp. (Potatoes can be roasted earlier in the day and cooled before preparing quesadillas.)
5. Make the chipotle pepper sauce. Mince the chipotle peppers, finely dice the onions, roughly chop cilantro, and add to the bowl. Add lime juice and 2 T of adobo sauce from the can. Stir to combine.
6. Add cooked sweet potatoes and drained beans. Gently stir to combine and dress all ingredients in chipotle pepper sauce.
7. To assemble quesadillas: Lay out tortillas onto a clean work surface. Place 0.75 oz (1.5 T) cheese onto half of the tortilla. Top with heaping #8 (about 5/8 cup) of sweet potato/bean mixture. Sprinkle remaining 0.75 oz (1.5 T) cheese evenly on top. Fold tortilla half over to close.
8. Place assembled tortillas onto a vegetable oil-sprayed sheet pan.
9. Bake in the oven for 5–8 minutes until cheese has melted and quesadillas are lightly toasted.
10. Cut into four quarters and serve (1 tortilla per person).

RECIPE CATEGORY

2 oz eq Meat/Meat Alternate
1/4 cup Red/Orange Vegetable

SERVING INFORMATION

1 Quesadilla



RECIPE

Cucumber Melon Salad

Cucumber Melon Salad

Source: Tahoe Truckee Unified School District

INGREDIENT	50 SERVINGS		100 SERVINGS	
	WEIGHT	VOLUME	WEIGHT	VOLUME
Watermelon, Raw Cubed	16 lb + 8 oz	-	33 lb	-
Cucumber, Fresh	10 lb	-	19 lb + 4 oz	-
Cilantro	-	1 bunch		2 bunch
Mint	-	¼ c	-	½ c
Chili Powder	-	1 ½ t	-	3 t
Limes, Fresh	-	2 ½ ea	-	5 ea
Salt, Kosher	-	1 ½ t	-	1 t
Oil, Olive	-	½ c	-	1 c

INSTRUCTIONS

HACCP Process: #2 Same Day Service

1. Watermelon: If not purchased cubed, remove rind and cut into 1" cubes. Chill while preparing remaining ingredients. CCP: Wash hands thoroughly before handling food. Use a clean pair of gloves when handling raw products.
2. Peel and dice cucumbers.
3. Wash and pat dry cilantro or mint. Remove stems. Finely chop. CCP: Refrigerate until served.
4. Decide how spicy to make the salad based on school site preference; adjust chili powder to taste.
5. In a non-metal pan, gently toss all ingredients. Keep chilled until service. CCP: Hold at 40° F during service.

RECIPE CATEGORY

1/2 cup Fruit

1/2 cup Other Vegetable

SERVING INFORMATION

1 cup (#4 scoop)



RECIPE

Spinach Basil Pesto

Spinach Basil Pesto

Source: Monterey Peninsula Unified School District

INGREDIENT	50 SERVINGS		100 SERVINGS	
	WEIGHT	VOLUME	WEIGHT	VOLUME
Spinach, Raw	3 lb + 2 oz	-	6 lb + 4 oz	-
Basil, Fresh	5 oz	-	10 oz	-
Oil, Soybean	-	1½ pt	-	3 pt
Cheese, Parmesan, Grated	1 lb	-	2 lb	-
Lemon Juice, Raw	-	⅜ c	-	¾ c
Garlic, Raw	-	1½ T	-	⅛ c + 1 T
Salt, Table	-	1 T	-	2 T
Pepper, Black	-	1 t	-	2 t

INSTRUCTIONS

HACCP Process: #2 Same Day Service

1. In a large stockpot, bring water to a boil.
2. Make pesto in batches using a blender or food processor.
3. Fill a container 1/2 full with spinach and basil.
4. Add a drizzle of oil. Process until smooth, adding a little more oil as needed.
5. Transfer to a large container. Repeat with the remaining spinach and oil.
6. When you get to the last batch, add cheese, lemon juice, garlic, and seasonings.
7. Add to large containers and stir well to blend flavors.

RECIPE CATEGORY

1/4 oz eq Meat/Meat Alternate

1/8 cup Dark Green Vegetable

SERVING INFORMATION

1/4 cup (#16 scoop)



RECIPE

Chickpea of the Sea Croissant Sandwich

Chickpea of the Sea Croissant Sandwich

Source: Monterey Peninsula Unified School District

INGREDIENT	50 SERVINGS		100 SERVINGS	
	WEIGHT	VOLUME	WEIGHT	VOLUME
Croissants, Whole Grain, Fully Sliced	-	50 ea	-	100 ea
Lettuce, Romaine, Raw, Chopped	3 lb + 2 oz	-	6 lb + 4 oz	-
Garbanzo Beans, #10 Can, Drained	-	1¼ #10 can	-	2½ #10 can
Mayonnaise, Lite	-	1½ c	-	3 c
Onions, Dehydrated	-	¼ c + 2½ t	-	½ c + 1½ T
Celery, Raw	-	1 lb + 3 oz	-	2 lb + 6 oz
Mustard, Dry, Ground	-	1 T + 1½ t	-	⅛ c + 1 t
Pepper, Black, Ground	-	1¼ t	-	2 ½ t

INSTRUCTIONS

HACCP Process: #1 No Cook

1. Combine garbanzo beans, mayonnaise, dehydrated onions, celery, and spices.
2. Scoop 1/2 cup (#8 scoop) chickpea salad onto bottom half of croissant. Top with chopped romaine.
3. Close croissant, wrap tightly, and hold cold until service. CCP: Ensure cold food is held at a temperature below 41° F.

RECIPE CATEGORY

1 oz eq Meat/Meat Alternate
 1/8 cup Dark Green Vegetable

SERVING INFORMATION

1 Sandwich (1/2 cup mixture (#8 scoop))



RECIPE

Red Lentil Dal Over Coconut Rice

Red Lentil Dal Over Coconut Rice

Source: San Luis Coastal Unified School District

INGREDIENT	50 SERVINGS		100 SERVINGS	
	WEIGHT	VOLUME	WEIGHT	VOLUME
Coconut Rice, Cooked	25 lb	-	50 lb	-
Onions, Raw	-	2 qt + 1 ¼ c	-	5 qt + 2 ½ c
Oil, Olive	-	1 c + ½ T	-	2 c + 1 T
Ginger, Ground	-	¼ c + ½ t	-	½ c + 1 t
Garlic, Raw (Minced)	-	28 cloves	-	56 cloves
Tomato Paste, No Salt Added, Canned	1 oz	-	2 oz	-
Tomatoes, Canned, Diced	-	2 qt + 1 ¼ c	-	5 qt + 2 ½ c
Coconut Milk, Raw	-	2 qt + 1 ½ c	-	4 qt + 3 c
Lemon Juice, Raw	-	¾ c	-	¾ c
Soup, Vegetable Broth	-	2 qt + 1 ¼ c	-	5 qt + 2 ½ c
Cumin, Ground	-	⅛ c + ¾ T	-	¼ c + 1 ½ T
Paprika	-	⅛ c	-	¼ c
Curry Powder	-	⅛ c	-	¼ c
Turmeric, Ground	-	1 T	-	⅛ c
Lentils, Red (Pink), Dry	2 lb + 10 oz	-	5 lb + 4 oz	-
Spinach, Raw	-	2 qt + 1 ¼ c	-	5 qt + 2 ½ c
Garbanzo Beans, Canned, Drained	3 lb + 2 oz	-	6 lb + 4 oz	-
Cilantro	-	⅔ c + 1 ½ t	-	1 ⅓ c + 1 T
Peppers, Sweet Yellow, Raw	-	112 ⅓" strips	-	224 ⅓" strips
Sour Cream, Reduced Fat	-	1 ⅜ c	-	2 ¾ c

INSTRUCTIONS

HACCP Process: #2 Same Day Service

1. Prepare coconut rice. CCP: Heat to 165° F for at least 15 seconds.
2. Wash, peel and dice the onion. Add 2 T of olive oil to a pan at medium heat. Sauté the onion for 5-7 minutes over medium heat in the olive oil. Next, add the garlic and ginger and stir for 1 minute.
3. Add the tomato paste and cook for 1-2 minutes.
4. Blend the diced tomatoes with an immersion blender or robot coupe blender. After the tomato paste has cooked and darkened, add the tomato sauce and cook for 3-4 minutes.
5. Mix the coconut milk, lemon juice, and vegetable broth together and add the liquid mix to the spices. Simmer uncovered for 5 minutes.
6. Rinse the lentils.
7. After rinsing the lentils, add the lentils. Simmer uncovered for 20 minutes. Stir occasionally, making sure to scrape the sides of the pot to make sure the lentils are cooking evenly.
8. Halfway through the 20-minute simmer, add the spinach and the garbanzo beans. CCP: Heat to 165° F or higher for at least 15 seconds.
9. Serve the dal with a side of coconut rice and garnish with cilantro, yellow bell pepper, tomatoes, and a dollop of sour cream.
10. Portion 2/3 cup dal over 1 cup of coconut rice. Serve at 135° F or above.
CCP: Hold at 135° F or above.

RECIPE CATEGORY

2 oz eq Meat/Meat Alternate

2 oz eq Grain

SERVING INFORMATION

2/3 cup Red Lentil Dal

1 cup of Coconut Rice (#4 scoop)



RECIPE

Creamy Chickpea Penne

Creamy Chickpea Penne

Source: Tahoe Truckee Unified School District

INGREDIENT	50 SERVINGS		100 SERVINGS	
	WEIGHT	VOLUME	WEIGHT	VOLUME
Water	-	10 GL	-	20 GL
Pasta, Penne, Whole Wheat, Dry	6 lb	-	12 lb	-
Garbanzo Beans, 10# Can, Drained	8 lb	-	16 lb	-
Spinach, Clipped	2 lb	-	4 lb	-
Butter, Solid, Salted	-	1½ c	-	3 c
Flour, All Purpose	-	2½ c	-	5 c
Salt, Kosher	-	1 T	-	½ c
Mustard Seed Powder	-	1½ t	-	1 T
Pepper, White, Ground	-	1½ t	-	1 T
Paprika	-	1½ t	-	1 T
Oregano Leaf	-	1½ t	-	1 T
Garlic, Granulated	-	⅛ c	-	¼ c
Milk, Whole	-	¼ gal	-	2½ gal
Cheddar Cheese, Shredded	1 lb + 12 oz	-	3 lb + 8 oz	-
Parmesan Cheese, Grated	12 oz	-	1 lb + 8 oz	-
Carrots, Shredded	12 oz	-	1 lb + 8 oz	-

INSTRUCTIONS

HACCP Process: #2 Same Day Service

1. Bring water to a boil and add pasta. Cook uncovered until tender firm, about 10 minutes. Drain and rinse in cold water. Preheat oven to 325° F.
2. Melt butter in a pan in the oven or tilt skillet. Combine flour, salt, dry mustard, pepper, garlic, oregano, and paprika in a bowl. Add to melted butter and cook over medium heat for 2 minutes, stir continuously. Do not brown; avoid clumps in mixture.
3. Heat milk to a simmer, then slowly add and whisk into the flour mixture. Cook until smooth and thick. (Cold milk will make more clumps. White sauce should be a little thick, not too thin.)
4. Add cheeses to the white sauce. Stir until the cheese melts.
5. Add the well-drained pasta, chickpeas, and vegetables to the sauce. Mix thoroughly. Turn off heat.
6. Divide mixture into 8 (12" x 20" x 2-1/2") hotel pans that have been sprayed with pan release.
7. Cover pans with foil and bake at 325° F for 25 minutes, until a temperature of 155° F is reached. Bake an additional 5 minutes, uncovered, until top has become lightly browned.
8. CCP: Hold at 140° F or higher prior to and during service. Serve 3/4 cup.

RECIPE CATEGORY

2.25 oz eq Meat/Meat Alternate

2 oz eq Grain

1/8 cup Dark Green Vegetable

SERVING INFORMATION

3/4 cup (#5 scoop)



RECIPE

Crispy Cauliflower

Crispy Cauliflower

Source: Santa Ana Unified School District

INGREDIENT	50 SERVINGS		100 SERVINGS	
	WEIGHT	VOLUME	WEIGHT	VOLUME
Cauliflower Florets	12 lb + 8 oz	-	25 lb	-
Wet Dredge	-	1 ¼ c	-	2 ½ c
Dry Dredge	-	¼ c + T	-	⅝ c

INSTRUCTIONS

HACCP Process: #3 Complex Food Preparation

1. Process trimmed or whole cauliflower by cutting heads into 1-inch bite-sized pieces. Submerge and clean in water. Drain well. Place in a 400 pan.
2. Pour wet dredge (1/2 cup) over cauliflower in a 400 pan and coat all pieces very well. Pour 3 cups of dry dredge over cauliflower and toss until all pieces are coated evenly.
3. Place breaded cauliflower on two sheet trays with non-stick cooking spray. Roast at 375° F for 15-20 minutes, or until golden brown and crispy. Remove and bring the temperature down to room temperature. Place in cold holding if not using immediately. CCP: Cook above 135° F. Cool below 41° F.

WET DREDGE INGREDIENT	50 SERVINGS		100 SERVINGS	
	WEIGHT	VOLUME	WEIGHT	VOLUME
Flour, All Purpose	-	⅝ c	-	1 ¼ c
Water, Tap	-	1 ¼ c	-	2 ½ c
Pepper, Black, Ground	-	1 ¼ t	-	2 ½ t
Salt, Kosher	-	⅝ t	-	1 ¼ t

INSTRUCTIONS

HACCP Process: #1 No Cook

1. Combine wet batter ingredients well. Use an immersion blender. Blend until homogeneous.

DRY DREDGE	50 SERVINGS		100 SERVINGS	
	WEIGHT	VOLUME	WEIGHT	VOLUME
Panko	1 lb + 14 oz	-	3 lb + 12 oz	-
Corn Meal	1 lb + 9 oz	-	3 lb + 2 oz	-
Cayenne Pepper	-	1/4 c + T	-	5/8 c
Paprika	-	1/4 c + T	-	5/8 c
Pepper, White, Ground	-	1/4 c + T	-	5/8 c
Oregano	-	1/4 c + T	-	5/8 c
Garlic, Granulated	-	1/4 c + T	-	5/8 c
Onion Powder	-	1/4 c + T	-	5/8 c
Chili Powder	-	1/4 c + T	-	5/8 c
Salt, Kosher	-	1/4 c + T	-	5/8 c

INSTRUCTIONS

HACCP Process: #1 No Cook

1. Combine dry batter ingredients well.

RECIPE CATEGORY

1/2 cup Other Vegetable

SERVING INFORMATION

2/3 cup



RECIPE

Chana Masala with Chutney

Chana Masala with Chutney

Source: Mt. Diablo Unified School District

INGREDIENT	50 SERVINGS		100 SERVINGS	
	WEIGHT	VOLUME	WEIGHT	VOLUME
Chana Masala	12 lb + 8 oz	-	25 lb	-
Hourani with White Rice, Cooked	12 lb + 8 oz	-	25 lb	-
Cilantro Chutney	3 lb + 2 oz	-	6 lb + 4 oz	-

INSTRUCTIONS

HACCP Process: #2 Same Day Service

1. Prepare masala, hourani with white rice, and chutney.
2. Serve 4 oz chana masala, 4 oz hourani with white rice, and 1 oz cilantro chutney.

CHANA MASALA INGREDIENT	50 SERVINGS		100 SERVINGS	
	WEIGHT	VOLUME	WEIGHT	VOLUME
Oil, Olive	-	$\frac{3}{8}$ c	-	$\frac{3}{4}$ c
Onion, Chopped	13 oz	-	1 lb + 10 oz	-
Garlic, Chopped	-	$\frac{1}{4}$ c	-	$\frac{1}{2}$ c
Ginger, Fresh, Chopped	-	$\frac{1}{4}$ c	-	$\frac{1}{2}$ c
Spice, Garam Masala	-	1 T + 2 t	-	$\frac{1}{8}$ c + 1 T + 1 t
Turmeric, Ground	1 oz	-	2 oz	-
Cumin, Ground	-	1 T + 2 t	-	$\frac{1}{8}$ c + 1 T + 1 t
Coriander, Ground	-	1 T + 2 t	-	$\frac{1}{8}$ c + 1 T + 1 t
Tomato, Diced	1 lb + 3 oz	-	2 lb + 6 oz	-
Marinara Sauce	3 lb + 3 oz	-	6 lb + 6 oz	-
Garbanzo Beans, 10# Can, Drained	10 lb	-	20 lb	-

INSTRUCTIONS

HACCP Process: #2 Same Day Service

1. In a large rondeau pan over low heat, sweat onions and garlic in oil.
2. Once onions are cooked, add all spices. Mix until paste forms. Cook paste over low heat for 5 minutes, stirring often.
3. Add diced tomato and marinara sauce. Cook over medium heat until boiling. Add garbanzo beans. Reduce heat to low.
4. Simmer on low heat until liquids reduce and sauce thickens.

HOURANI WITH WHITE RICE	50 SERVINGS		100 SERVINGS	
	WEIGHT	VOLUME	WEIGHT	VOLUME
Hourani Wheat Berry	5 lb + 8 oz	-	11 lb	-
Water (For Hourani)	-	3 qt + 2 c	-	7 qt
Rice, Organic Sushi California, Dry (White, Short/ Medium Grain, Regular, Enriched)	4 lb + 4 oz	-	8 lb + 8 oz	-
Water (For Rice)	-	1 qt + 3 c	-	3 qt + 2 c
Salt, Kosher	-	1 T + 1/2 t	-	2 T + 1 t

INSTRUCTIONS

HACCP Process: #2 Same Day Service

1. Prepare rice.
2. Prepare hourani.
3. Combine and add salt.

CILANTRO CHUTNEY		50 SERVINGS		100 SERVINGS	
INGREDIENT	WEIGHT	VOLUME	WEIGHT	VOLUME	
Cilantro, Fresh	-	10 ½ bunch	-	21 bunch	
Oil, Olive, Extra Virgin	-	2 ⅝ c	-	5 ¼ c	
Lemon Juice, Raw	-	⅔ c	-	1 ⅓ c	
Salt, Kosher	-	1 T + 2 t	-	⅛ c + 2 t	
Cinnamon, Ground	-	1 T	-	⅛ c	
Coriander, Ground	-	1 T	-	⅛ c	
Spice, Garam Masala	-	⅛ c + 2 t	-	1 T + 1 t	
Honey, Pure Orange Blossom	-	⅛ c	-	¼ c	

INSTRUCTIONS

HACCP Process: #2 Same Day Service

1. With the bunch still tied, rip stems off cilantro below the twist tie.
2. Wash cilantro and let drain in strainer.
3. Add half of the leaves to a food processor. Pulse, adding half the liquid slowly.
4. Add spices, seasoning, and remaining leaves. Pulse, adding remaining liquid.
5. If sauce is too thick, add 1/4 cup of water.
6. Keep sauce cold.

RECIPE CATEGORY

2 oz eq Meat/Meat Alternate

1 oz eq Grains

SERVING INFORMATION

4 oz Chana Masala (#8 scoop)

4 oz Hourani with White Rice (#8 scoop)

1 oz Cilantro Chutney



RECIPE

Mediterranean Veggie Lentil Bowl

Mediterranean Veggie Lentil Bowl

Source: Monterey Peninsula Unified School District

INGREDIENT	50 SERVINGS		100 SERVINGS	
	WEIGHT	VOLUME	WEIGHT	VOLUME
Rice, Brown, Regular, Dry	8 lb + 8 oz	-	17 lb	-
Beans, Lentils, Dry	3 lb + 6 oz	-	6 lb + 12 oz	-
Bay Leaf	-	5 leaf	-	10 leaf
Green Beans, Cut, #10 Can	-	1 #10 can	-	2 #10 can
Cucumber, with Peel, Raw	9 lb	-	1 lb + 2 oz	-
Tomatoes, Cherry, Fresh	4 lb + 2 oz	-	8 lb + 4 oz	-
Onions, Red, Raw	1 lb + 6 oz	-	2 lb + 12 oz	-
Lemon Juice, Raw	-	1 c	-	2
Oil, Olive	-	1 c	-	2 c
Mustard, Dijon	-	1/3 c	-	2/3 c
Honey	-	1/4 c	-	1/2 c
Parsley, Dried	-	1/4 c	-	1/2 c
Salt, Table	-	1 t	-	2 t
Pepper, Black, Ground	-	1 t	-	2 t
Cheese, Feta, Crumbled	-	1 pt + 1 c	-	3 pt

INSTRUCTIONS

HACCP Process: #3 Complex Food Preparation

1. Prepare brown rice accordingly and chill down. Hold at 40° F or below until assembly.
2. Prepare lentils. In kettle or large pot, boil water. Add lentils and bay leaves. Cook until tender but not mushy, approximately 15–25 minutes. Drain well and cool until 40° F or below.
3. Prepare vegetables. Open and drain green beans. CCP: Wash hands thoroughly before handling food. Use a clean pair of gloves when handling raw products. Replace gloves after handling any other object.
4. Cut cucumber into bite-sized pieces.
5. If using tomatoes other than bite-sized cherry tomatoes, cut tomatoes into bite-sized pieces.
6. Finely dice red onion.
7. Prepare dressing. Whisk together lemon juice, olive oil, mustard, honey, salt, pepper, and parsley.
8. In a large bowl, add cooked and cooled lentils, green beans, cucumbers, tomatoes, red onion, and dressing. Toss gently until combined. Add feta cheese and toss once more. Chill until ready to assemble.
9. For each serving, measure out 1 cup brown rice. Top with 1-1/4 cup lentil mixture. CCP: Ensure cold food is held at a temperature below 41° F.

RECIPE CATEGORY

2.25 oz eq Meat/Meat Alternate

2 oz eq Grain

1/8 cup Red/Orange Vegetable

1/8 cup Additional Vegetable

1/4 cup Other Vegetable

SERVING INFORMATION

1-1/4 cup Lentil Mixture

1 cup of Brown Rice (#4 scoop)



RECIPE

Watermelon Strawberry Smoothie

Watermelon Strawberry Smoothie

Source: Orcutt Union School District

INGREDIENT	50 SERVINGS		100 SERVINGS	
	WEIGHT	VOLUME	WEIGHT	VOLUME
Watermelon, Raw Cubed	7 lb + 8 oz	-	15 lb	-
Strawberry, Diced, Frozen	7 lb + 8 oz	-	15 lb	-
Yogurt, Low Fat Vanilla, Bulk	25 lb	-	50 lb	-
Lime Juice, Raw	-	2½ t	-	1T + 1 t

INSTRUCTIONS

HACCP Process: #1 No Cook

1. If not purchased cubed, remove watermelon rind and cut into 1” cubes. Chill while preparing remaining ingredients. CCP: Wash hands thoroughly before handling food. Use a clean pair of gloves when handling raw products.
2. Add watermelon, strawberries, yogurt, and lime juice into a large mixing container and blend using an immersion blender.
3. Pour 12 fl oz of smoothie into a 14 oz smoothie cup. CCP: Ensure cold food is held at a temperature below 41° F.

RECIPE CATEGORY

2 oz eq Meat/Meat Alternate
½ c Fruit

SERVING INFORMATION

12 fl oz



RECIPE

November Persimmon Salad

November Persimmon Salad

Source: Oxnard Union High School District

INGREDIENT	50 SERVINGS		100 SERVINGS	
	WEIGHT	VOLUME	WEIGHT	VOLUME
Persimmons, Japanese, Raw	6 lb + 8 oz	-	13 lb	-
Apple, Granny Smith, Raw, with Skin	3 lb	-	6 lb	-
Lime Juice, Raw	-	¼ c	-	½ c
Spearmint, Fresh	-	½ c	-	1 c

INSTRUCTIONS

HACCP Process: #1 No Cook

1. Remove seeds from persimmons, dice persimmons. CCP: Wash hands thoroughly before handling food. Use a clean pair of gloves when handling raw products.
2. Remove seeds from apples, dice apples.
3. Mince mint leaves.
4. Gently toss all ingredients together with lime juice. Chill and serve in 1/2 cup portions.
CCP: Ensure cold food is held at a temperature below 41° F.

RECIPE CATEGORY

1/2 cup Fruit

SERVING INFORMATION

1/2 cup (#8 scoop)

Credits and Acknowledgements

ABOUT

The Center for Ecoliteracy provides children with opportunities to thrive using fresh, local food as the cornerstone of their learning. Our core initiative, California Food for California Kids, promotes equitable access to nutritious food to ensure children are nourished and ready to succeed. We partner with school communities to cultivate vibrant learning environments where students engage with smart, vital, and hopeful solutions to educate and nurture the next generation. For 30 years, our work has transformed education in classrooms, cafeterias, and gardens, resulting in hundreds of school districts sourcing more local food, thousands of educators teaching lessons on food and its impact on our environment, and millions of students accessing nutritious school meals.

ABOUT OUR DATA SOURCES

Data on student enrollment and meals served is from the 2023-24 school year. The enrollment data is sourced from the California Department of Education (CDE) data file “[Unduplicated Student Poverty - Free or Reduced-Price Meals Data 2023-24](#).” The meals data includes both breakfast and lunches served under the National School Lunch Program, Seamless Summer Option, and Summer Food Service Program. It was obtained via data requests to CDE (retrieved on October 17, 2024) and data on Child and Adult Care Food Program supper meals at school sites obtained from the California Department of Social Services (retrieved on December 16, 2024). The data on the percentage of California-grown food is sourced from the CDE’s opt-in survey for the Kitchen Infrastructure and Training program in November-December 2022, which included self-reported information from 92% of school districts in California that opted-in to the program.



Scan the QR code for access to the links in this guide.

Credits and Acknowledgements

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