



More fruit, veggies in school lunches

My daughter says students at her school throw away a lot more cafeteria food these days because they get too many vegetables. Why serve a food if kids just throw it away?

A lot of people had this fear when new U.S. Department of Agriculture guidelines for school meals went into effect in 2012. Those new standards are required for the 100,000-plus schools taking part in the National School Lunch Program. The rules mandate schools offer more whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and require students to select either a fruit or a vegetable as part of their lunch.

Even though many people complain the result is more food waste, some new research indicates that's not the case. A study in the April issue of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* compared the amount of food thrown away in the cafeterias of four low-income schools in Massachusetts before the new rules went into effect and afterwards.

They found that the amount of food wasted in these school cafeterias remained about the same, and serving more fruits and vegetables led to higher consumption of produce. For example, the number of children choosing fruit at lunch increased from 53 percent to 76 percent after the rules went into effect, but there was no increase in the amount of food thrown away, meaning the children were eating more fruit.

In addition, among children

choosing vegetables at lunch, the percent of vegetables consumed increased from 25 percent to 41 percent, and the amount increased from about one-eighth of a cup to one-third of a cup a day. These children also tended to eat more of their main entree.

Interestingly, another recent study looked at the effects of local bans on chocolate milk in schools. The goal of such bans is to reduce the calories and added sugar in children's diets: a cup of chocolate milk has about 25 grams (over 6 teaspoons) of sugar, compared with about 12 grams in white milk. But a study conducted by Cornell University and published in the journal *PLOS ONE* on April 16 found that such bans in 11 Oregon elementary schools led to students drinking 10 percent less milk and wasting 29 percent more milk.

Although the students consumed less sugar and calories, they also consumed less protein and calcium.

Researchers suggested ways schools could encourage plain milk over chocolate milk instead of outright bans, and ways to serve other healthy offerings that might have better results. See more at foodpsychology.cornell.edu/op/chocomilk and smarterlunchrooms.org/.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences and its outreach and research arms, Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1043, or filipic.3@osu.edu.



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AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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By **Martha Filipic**
614-292-9833
filipic.3@osu.edu

Editor:

This column was reviewed by Carol Smathers, field specialist in Youth Nutrition and Wellness with Ohio State University Extension, the outreach arm of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences.

College Communications
2021 Coffey Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1043
614-292-2011

208 Research Services
Building
1680 Madison Ave.
Wooster, OH 44691-4096
330-263-3780

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