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CAFE CONNECTIONS

CHILD NUTRITION SERVICES MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

2022–2023 CHILD NUTRITION MEAL SERVICE UPDATE

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) are back for the current school year! After a few years of operating under the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), with several program flexibilities in place due to the pandemic, Congress did not renew the United States Department of Agriculture waivers and they expired on June 30th.



The NSLP and SBP are federally funded school meal programs that provide healthy, low-cost or free meals to students. Breakfasts and lunches are planned to meet strict nutrition standards that follow the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Meals include whole grain-rich items, fruits, vegetables, lean proteins and fluid milk. Visit www.Laveen.Nutrislice.com for more menu and nutrition information, including carbohydrate counts, allergens, descriptions and ingredients.

FREE AND REDUCED-PRICE MEAL APPLICATIONS

We are currently accepting applications for Free or Reduced-Price Meals. Families may qualify based on household size and income or by participating in other federal programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Families must apply on an annual basis and returning students who qualified last year will lose benefits on September 19th if they don't reapply.

In addition to school meal benefits, this information may be used for other programs, such as Pandemic-Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT), Federal and State funding for your school, reduced registration fees for academic tests, free or discounted fees for athletic programs, discounted rates for internet service, and other grant opportunities for teachers, schools and our district.

Applications can be found online at www.EZMealApp.com or a paper application can be requested from your school's cafeteria. Applications can take up to 10 days to be processed, so please plan to fund your child's lunch account until you are notified of your eligibility status. The information shared on the application is confidential. For questions, please contact us at (602) 237-9100.

2022–2023 MEAL PRICES

Breakfast is FREE for all students! Join us in the cafeteria 30 minutes prior to the start of the school day. Students at Maurice C. Cash Elementary School, Desert Meadows School and Estrella Foothills Global Academy are served a free breakfast in their classroom at the beginning of each school day.

Lunch costs \$2.50. Students may qualify for reduced-price (\$0.40) or free lunches. Families can load their child's lunch account at www.EZSchoolPay.com or bring cash to your school's cafeteria. Our Unlimited Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Bar is back! Students who join us for lunch are able to fill up on as many FRESH fruits and vegetables as they would like with the purchase of their lunch.

Super Snacks are FREE to all students participating in after-school enrichment or educational activities. Students can join us for the first 15 minutes after the bell rings for a nutritious grab and go meal.

LEMON BASIL PASTA WITH VEGGIES

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound Whole Wheat Spaghetti (or other pasta)
- 1 pound Asparagus
- 6 tbsp Olive Oil (or Butter)
- 2 cups Diced Onion
- 1 cup Diced Zucchini
- 1 cup Frozen Peas
- 4 tbsp Flour
- 4 cups Chicken Stock (or Vegetable Broth)
- 4 oz Light Cream Cheese
- 1/2 cup Grated Parmesan Cheese
- Salt & Pepper (to taste)
- 1 tsp Dried Basil
- 1 tsp Lemon Zest



Photo: LaurensLatest.com

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Wash and dice zucchini and set aside.
2. Bring large pot of water with some salt to a boil.
3. Add whole wheat pasta and cook until al dente.
4. While pasta is cooking, wash the asparagus and cut off and dispose of the bottom of the asparagus stalks. Cut remaining asparagus into 1/4 inch pieces.
5. Add asparagus to pasta 3 minutes before it is finished cooking.
6. Drain water from pasta and asparagus mixture and set aside.
7. Return pot to medium heat and add in olive oil/butter.
8. Sauté zucchini and onion in olive oil/butter with salt and pepper until softened.
9. Add flour to pan and cook for 1 minute.
10. Add in chicken/veggie stock and bring to a boil. Then, reduce heat to medium low and stir in light cream cheese, parmesan cheese, salt and pepper, basil, lemon zest, and peas.
11. Cook for approx. 5 minutes and then stir in pasta and asparagus. Serve immediately and top with parmesan cheese. Enjoy!

Recipe adapted from Lauren's Latest: <https://laurenslatest.com/lemon-basil-whole-wheat-spaghetti-with-spring-veggies/>

MEET OUR NEW REGISTERED DIETITIAN NUTRITIONIST, KATIE CHRISTOPHER!

Katie Christopher started as our new Registered Dietitian Nutritionist this past June. Katie comes to us from Tucson, AZ, after graduating from the University of Arizona's Applied Nutrition Master's Program and Dietetic Internship. Katie is super excited to work with students and create fun, healthy menus that include meals that students love. She believes that school meals allow students to be active participants in the classroom. Her favorite school meal when she was younger was macaroni and cheese with broccoli! Yum!



FROM OUR DIRECTOR



In Good Health,
Jennifer

We're already a month into school and our team continues to adjust to 'the way things were' before the pandemic. As shared above, Congress did not extend the USDA waivers we've been operating under since March 2020 that allowed us to serve free meals to all students, gave us flexibility with menu and meal time requirements, and waived other program regulations. Many of our staff were hired since the pandemic began and are learning a new way to perform their job responsibilities. We know you are feeling the adjustments too and we are working with our families to re-familiarize them with some of the to-dos that impact school meals. First, make sure to complete a school meal application. Not only could your child qualify for free or reduced-price lunches, but this information does help fund so many other programs that benefit our schools. Also, be sure to fund your child's lunch account; even if you submitted a meal application as it could take up to 10 days to process. This can be done online or by visiting your school's cafeteria and adding cash to their lunch account. Cafeteria Managers have begun sending reminders home to families with low or negative lunch balances. Finally, if you have a child who requires a special diet, be sure to reach out to us to get the process started.