



# How School Lunch Stacks Up to the Competition

## A Lunchtime Comparison

Parents have so much to think about when it comes to planning their kids' school lunches. What do the kids like? What's good for them and what's not? Should they take a home-packed lunch, or should the kids eat in the school cafeteria? And what will it cost? With all these things to consider, it would be good if you could help parents out. After all, you want them to put school foodservice at the top of their consideration list. Arm yourself with some important facts as you plan to grow your meal participation.

**4 Decisions Factors**  
Parents ask themselves:

- Is the food high quality?
- Is the option convenient for them and their child?
- How much will the meal cost in comparison with other options?
- And how much control will they have over the quality and quantity of food their child will eat?

### 30.4 Million

The number of children who participate in the National School Lunch Program. According to the USDA, five (5) billion lunches were served in 2016. Three-quarters of these were free or reduced-price meals.

Source: USDA

## A Cost Comparison

When it comes to price, parents may wonder how school lunches stack up to other options they can choose from. Although component prices may vary in different regions of the country, experts have found that a basic lunch composed of comparable items might be priced as follows:

Average cost of a school lunch .....	\$2.50
Average cost of a comparable home-packed lunch .....	\$4.00
Average cost of a comparable fast food meal .....	\$5.00 to \$7.00

Sources: U.S. News & World Report; Business Insider

40%

The number of students who bring a packed lunch to school each day

Source: CBS News

## A Nutrition Comparison

After the new meal requirements were implemented, people began to wonder, are school lunches as good as something packed at home? Several observational studies have been carried out in different parts of the country to see how lunches packed at home compared with lunches served by school foodservice. Here is what researchers found out:



### School Meals

- Higher nutritional value
- More fiber, fruit and vegetables
- More protein, calcium and vitamins

**BUT**

Less control over options and choices

### Packed Lunches

- More unhealthy fats and calories
- More sugary treats and beverages
- More high-fat salty snacks



More personal control over what to eat

Source: Reuters

Good nutrition is very important. That's what the new meal requirements are all about. But as a business that wants to keep its customers happy, you also need to think about how to appeal to your customers' tastes and preferences. Then you can sell them on all the benefits of eating a healthy school lunch.