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United States Department of Agriculture
Bureau of Home Economics
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SCHOOL LUNCH SUGGESTIONS

"Keep the school child growing." A hot lunch every day will help to do that, and now after years of urging, by educators and civic welfare workers, the hot lunch idea for schools is spreading rapidly. Last year, for instance, mothers, teachers, county nurses, and extension workers saw to it that hot lunches were served to the children in many of the rural schools in some 35 States. This year the number of such schools is much greater. City schools, too, are doing it on a bigger scale than ever.

Nor do the benefits stop when the child's immediate needs are satisfied. If the lunches are properly planned and supervised, the child learns the principles of good diet, and forms good food habits which will be useful all through his life. And often the school lunch literally saves the lives of some of those undernourished children that are to be found nowadays in many of our public schools.

The school lunch program in a rural community is often carried on by the Farm Bureau women, or by the 4-H clubs of girls and boys. Sometimes a parent-teachers' organization, or some other local group, is the sponsor and the supervisor. In some schools the older children operate the lunch room as a part of their school work in "food for health" courses. Sometimes the hot-lunch service is made to furnish employment by putting it into the hands of capable person who are out of work. In many communities now it is financed through public relief funds.

In some schools the teachers or the school nurses make a special point of providing hot lunches for the children who are under weight. The extension workers' reports show striking results in the number of children brought up to normal weight after a few months of nourishing food at midday -- 44 children in a class of 58, in one case.

The hot lunch idea is carried out sometimes by supplying the whole lunch at school, sometimes by supplying just one hot dish and milk to supplement the lunch that is brought from home. Space and equipment at the school determine this, for there must be not only a stove and cooking utensils, knives, and forks, and spoons, and dishes, and napkins for the children, but there must be plenty of hot water for washing dishes and for general cleaning up. Even with plenty of hot water, it is a good idea to use paper cups and dishes for the children so far as is possible, with paper napkins in any case, so that everything may be burned after using.

There must be a place to keep food supplies -- a cool, dry, clean place which can be used for such purposes, despite the fact that nothing of this kind was in anybody's mind when most of the present schools were built.

Strictly sanitary handling of the food, and thorough cleanliness wherever it is stored and served are points to be guarded carefully, for makeshift conditions of any sort where food is concerned create a serious danger of spreading disease. The school lunch itself should be planned with reference to the means of serving each particular dish with the utmost sanitary precautions.

Whatever the scope of the lunch plan, however, there is always the question of what to serve, and the Bureau of Home Economics accordingly offers a few suggestions. They are not "fussy" dishes, or hard to make. They are inexpensive, and they can be prepared and served with the simplest of equipment.

Cream soups and chowders are good, as everybody knows, because they are made with milk and can be made so rich in food values. They can be made without elaborate equipment and served with just bowl, spoon, and paper napkin for each child. Bean soup, oatmeal and potato soup, mixed vegetable soup made with meat stock or with milk, cream soups of all kinds -- tomato, split pea, cabbage, carrot, spinach, corn, turnip, onion, celery, peanut butter -- are in this list. Fish chowder, vegetable chowder, corn chowder, and whole wheat chowder, also.

Other dishes which are almost a meal in themselves are Spanish rice, tomato rabbit, corn rabbit, or tomato, corn and cheese on toast, creamed canned salmon, creamed vegetables, or creamed mixtures of vegetables, or vegetables and meat. These can be served on crackers instead of toast, and the cream sauce can always be made richer by adding grated cheese. Then there is creamed chipped beef, with boiled potatoes. If there is an oven available, scalloped dishes are good -- for example, cabbage and apples; cabbage, spaghetti and cheese; onions in tomato sauce; scalloped salmon; potatoes with tomatoes; sweetpotatoes and apples; liver and whole wheat; liver and potatoes; shephord's pie; or a casserole of mixed vegetables with breadcrumbs on top.

Raw shredded cabbage, and carrot sticks or turnip sticks, are cheap and appetizing additions when the hot dish is a soup or chowder or anything in cream sauce. Apples, bananas and oranges and other fresh fruits in season, of course. Canned sliced peaches or pineapple are among the best and cheapest of the canned fruits. Prunes, raisins, and apricots are useful for variety as well as for the iron they contain and for their vitamins.

For school lunch menus, the bureau suggests the following -- a two week's list, which can be repeated or shifted about as desired. Milk, of course, should be provided for every child, at least one glass.

MENUS FOR HOT SCHOOL LUNCHES

Cream of mixed vegetable soup
Cheese sandwiches
Cookies
Milk

Spanish rice (top of stove)
Hard rolls
Cocoa made with milk

Whole wheat chowder
Peanut butter sandwiches
Canned apple sauce
Milk

Creamed hard-cooked eggs
Cabbage and pineapple salad
Bread and butter
Milk

Tomato soup
Minced ham sandwiches
Milk

Tomato rabbit on crackers
Raw apple
Milk

Creamed carrots and peas
Graham crackers
Bananas
Milk

Vegetable soup (made with
meat stock)
Cottage cheese with raisins
Bread and butter
Milk

Meat and vegetable stew
Jelly sandwiches
Milk

Fish chowder
Whole wheat bread and butter
Canned sliced peaches
Milk

SANDWICHES

If a nutritious hot dish is served at school, the children may not need sandwiches also, but merely bread and butter. Lettuce sandwiches are a good addition, however, or sandwiches spread with chopped carrots, chopped cabbage and apples with cottage cheese.

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For sandwiches to carry to school when no hot lunch is served, more substantial fillings should be used, for example:

Scrambled eggs and lettuce

Chopped cold cooked meat, moistened with chili sauce, lettuce leaf

Cottage cheese salted and mixed with any of the following:
Chow chow, chili sauce, chopped dill pickle, green pepper, celery, parsley, onion, or other salad vegetable, chopped nuts

Peanut butter, or ground shelled roasted peanuts moistened with cream or top milk, on whole wheat bread

Dried beef "frizzled" in butter, with lettuce, cress, or chopped parsley

Baked beans on brown bread, the beans moistened with chili sauce or catsup and mashed to a smooth paste

Sliced hard-cooked egg and salad dressing. Thin slices of crisp broiled bacon may be added

Chopped cooked beef, chopped pickle, salad dressing

Broiled diced bacon, chopped raw mild onion, salad dressing

Sliced boiled tongue, a very little horseradish

Flaked salmon, chopped cabbage, a little pickle, salad dressing.