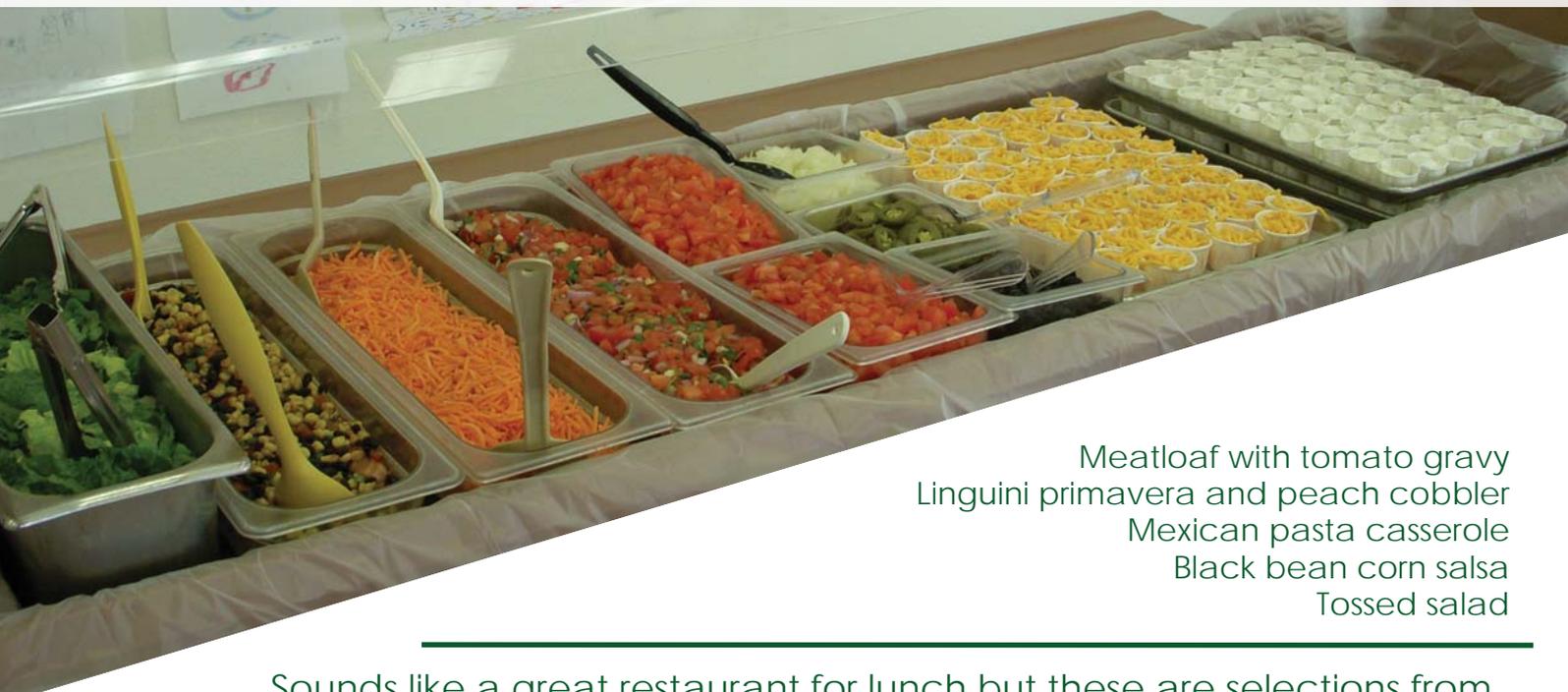


Changing the Taste of School Lunch

By Vicki Bovee, MS, RD, LD, and Chef Dave Fouts



Meatloaf with tomato gravy
Linguini primavera and peach cobbler
Mexican pasta casserole
Black bean corn salsa
Tossed salad

Sounds like a great restaurant for lunch but these are selections from the lunch menus at Cross Timbers Elementary School in Edmond, Okla. This is not your typical school lunch menu anymore.

Changing the school breakfast and lunch program at Cross Timbers did not happen overnight. In 2006, Chef Dave Fouts had an idea to promote healthy eating in the school system by developing a week-long event that included school events focusing on health and nutrition and a lunch prepared 100 percent from scratch.

In spring of 2007, “Chef Dave’s Healthy Kids Week” was held at Orvis Risner Elementary in Edmond. The response was a resounding success and the following year more schools wanted to participate.

Thanks to the generosity of the Woodward Grant through the *Walk from Obesity*, in 2008 five schools and more than 6,000 kids were able to join in “Chef Dave’s Healthy Kids Week,” with a focus on nutrition education.

In addition to school assemblies which featured healthy cooking demonstrations and poster contests, Chef Dave also provided information sessions for parents and food service personnel. One of the big hits of the week was the special lunch prepared by Chef Dave and the cafeteria staff. The menu was a “Fiesta Bar” that included Mexican turkey, black beans, rice, homemade salsa, and plenty of freshly cut vegetables for topping. Grant money was used to provide healthy snacks during a fitness walk and toward physical fitness equipment.

“Chef Dave’s Healthy Kids Week” Catches on

“Chef Dave’s Healthy Kids Week” became a community affair. Local businesses became involved with donations. The local newspaper, *The Edmond Sun*, ran feature articles and the University of Central Oklahoma provided dietetic interns to help prepare and serve food and answer questions from the kids.

In July 2009, Chef Dave Fouts and dietitian Vicki Bovee submitted a proposal to Edmond Public Schools that would take healthy school meals to the next level. This proposal was for the Edmond School District Nutrition Pilot Program. Gone would be the “reheat and eat” that has pervaded school lunch programs everywhere. Not only would the food change, but the whole lunch program would be transformed.

The Edmond School District Nutrition Pilot Program had four objectives:

1. To increase participation in number of meals served, increase nutrition education in the classroom and parent involvement within the school nutrition program
2. To improve the quality and nutritive value of breakfast and lunch foods served
3. To promote the Pilot Program on campus and within the community
4. To provide development for food service personnel

Funding was approved by the school board and Cross Timbers Elementary School was selected to start the program.

Below are three menus from the Pilot Program and the Food Based lunch served on the same day other elementary schools. While the Food Based menus are required to include specific food components and meet certain nutrient standards, no computer analysis is required. These lunches are typically higher in calories, fat, sodium and sugar than the Pilot Program lunches.

| Food Based Lunch Menu | Pilot Program Lunch Menu* |
|--|---|
| Mini Corn Dogs (frozen) Caesar Salad Orange Wedges | Meatloaf with Tomato Gravy Linguini Primavera Peach Cobbler |
| Popcorn Chicken (breaded, frozen) Texas Toast Seasoned Diced Potatoes (frozen) Watermelon | Mexican Pasta Casserole Black Bean and Corn Salsa Tossed Salad with choice of Ranch or Balsamic Dressing |
| Macaroni and Cheese (frozen) with Lil' Smokies Breaded Okra (frozen) Applesauce with sweetened gelatin powder Cowboy Coffeecake | Chicken Stir Fry Stir Fried Rice Tropical Fruit Salad Fortune Cookie <i>*All items, except fortune cookie, prepared from scratch including salad dressings.</i> |

Child Nutrition Services Staff required special training to make the adjustment from feeding ready-to-serve processed foods to hands-on food preparation. Two professionally trained chefs were hired and went to work side by side with the kitchen staff. The chefs continue to mentor the staff in knife skills, equipment usage, food safety and preparing fresh ingredients.

As with Chef Dave's Healthy Kids Week, response has been tremendous from the students, parents, district staff and community. According to Shelly Fox, Child Nutrition Supervisor, student participation in the lunch program has increased by 18 percent from last school year.

Students are not the only ones eating at Cross Timbers. Faculty, employee, and guest meals have increased by 132 percent. Many of the faculty are no longer going out for fast food and are eating the meals served in the cafeteria. More parents are coming to school to eat lunch with their child.

Other schools in the district are eager to have the Pilot Program come to their school. Plans are being developed to expand to other elementary schools in the near future. Our hope is that this program of healthier foods will no longer be a Pilot Program, but a standard for feeding our children.

About the Authors:

Chef Dave Fouts is known as the world's premier culinary expert for weight-loss surgical patients. Chef Dave can be found speaking around the country. Chef Dave is a member of the OAC Advisory Board.

Vicki Bovee, MS, RD, LD, has been working in the field of weight management for more than 20 years. She is the clinical dietitian for Western Bariatric Institute in Reno, Nevada. Vicki is a member of the OAC Advisory Board.



ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



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