

Creating a healthier canteen menu – information for schools

The School nutrition and healthy eating policy and guidelines¹ have been developed to ensure all students have access to healthy foods and drinks and a consistent approach to the availability and sale of food and drinks in Northern Territory Government schools.

Creating a healthier menu

Foods and drinks categorised as **green - always on the menu** and **amber - select carefully** may be sold through the school canteen. Think of these foods as sitting on a spectrum from healthy to never to be sold. The aim is for all foods and drinks sold in the canteen to be as close to the healthy end of the spectrum as possible.

What you should do

Making food in the canteen from scratch	Make sure most of the ingredients come from the list of foods categorised as green - always on the menu .
Criteria	Compare products that meet the criteria and choose the one with the least amount of saturated fat, sodium and energy, and the greatest amount of fibre.
Promotion	Focus on foods categorised as green - always on the menu in meal deals and any marketing to students as foods that are promoted and are presented in an attractive way, at the correct temperature, are more likely to be purchased and eaten.
Serve size	Keep the serve size small, especially for foods categorised as amber - select carefully .
Sandwiches, rolls, wraps, burgers	Choose wholegrain, wholemeal or multigrain bread and add vegetables to sandwiches, for example tomato, lettuce and shredded carrot, as each additional vegetable pushes the sandwich closer towards the healthy end of the spectrum and choose low or reduced fat cheese.
Cheese	Choose low and reduced fat cheese.
Pasta	Choose fresh tomato or vegetable based sauces as they are the best choice with plenty of added vegetables, and choose low or reduced fat cheese.
Pizza	Use pita bread as a base and top with lean meat and plenty of vegetables, and choose low or reduced fat cheese.

¹ <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/health-safety/school-nutrition-and-healthy-eating>

Muffins	Reduce the amount of sugar used, replace with pureed apple, mashed banana or berries and replace half of the flour with wholemeal flour.
Milk drinks	Choose low or reduced fat milk when making up milkshakes and smoothies and add low or reduced fat yoghurt and fruit.
Soups	Choose low or reduced salt stock, flavour with herbs and spices instead of salt, and add plenty of vegetables and serve with wholemeal or wholegrain bread.
Flavour	Use herbs or spices instead of salt.
Sauces, mayonnaises	Choose products that are low or reduced fat, low or reduced salt or no added salt, and use sparingly.
Breakfast cereal	Serve with low or reduced fat milk.

Reference

Australian Government, National healthy school canteens guidelines for healthy foods and drinks supplied in school canteens, 2010 - <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-healthy-school-canteens-guidelines-for-healthy-foods-and-drinks-supplied-in-school-canteens?language=en>