

Tips for Phasing Out Flavored Milk in School Meals

Transitioning from serving flavored milk to unflavored milk is a single change that can significantly improve the nutritional quality of school meals.

Bulk Milk Grantee Requirement

Schools awarded a Chef Ann Foundation Bulk Milk grant commit to serving only unflavored milk or transitioning to unflavored milk within six months of implementing the Bulk Milk program.

Why Phase Out Flavored Milk?

- ✓ **Reduce added sugars in school meals:** Removing chocolate and other flavored milk can reduce students' daily sugar intake by approximately 3.1 grams per day. The [2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) recommend that children consume zero added sugar and that teens significantly limit consumption of sugary beverages.
- ✓ **Minimize additives:** Unflavored milk contains fewer additives than flavored varieties and better aligns with menus centered on fresh, minimally processed foods.

Steps to Phase Out Flavored Milk

1. **Establish a timeline to remove flavored milk from your meal program:** Implement changes at the beginning of the school year or after extended school breaks to ensure smoother transitions. If you're looking to make changes during the school year, you might consider gradually limiting availability to no more than one or two days per week.
2. **Use a phased approach:** Schools may consider removing it from breakfast first, and then lunch. Another tactic is to remove it from Elementary School first, and then Middle and High Schools on a rolling basis.
3. **Eliminate flavored milk:** Set a target date for full removal from all school meals. If you receive pushback, remember your "why" and stick with it!

Communicating with Your Community

- **Build internal support.** Engage school administrators and food service staff early. Share how this change supports student health and nutrition goals.
- **Inform families and students.** Explain why the change is happening, what the timeline looks like, and how it benefits students.
- **Coordinate with your dairy vendor.** Notify vendors in advance about ordering changes.
- **Use bulk dispensers when possible.** Bulk milk dispensers keep milk tasting fresher longer and support sustainability goals!

Addressing Questions and Concerns

- **How will phasing out flavored milk impact Average Daily Participation (ADP)?**
In an offer vs. serve model, students may select another component and still receive a reimbursable meal. Offering the most delicious and nutritious meal options will have the greatest impact on ADP, especially when milk isn't a required component.
- **Will students still drink milk and get key nutrients?**
[One study](#) found that chocolate milk accounted for 52% of student milk selections, but after chocolate milk was no longer offered, nearly 75% of students continued to select milk. The same study found only a minimal (<1 oz) decrease in milk consumption. Intake of calcium, protein, and vitamin D remained stable, while consumption of added sugars declined significantly.
- **Will the amount of milk waste change?**
[Research](#) shows no increase in milk waste following the elimination of flavored milk.

Adjusting to Change

When responding to questions from the school community, use consistent messaging with a unified voice and emphasize the long-term health benefits of switching to unflavored milk. Over time, concerns typically decrease as the change becomes routine. Phasing out flavored milk is a positive step for school districts to reduce ultraprocessed foods in school meals and improve student health.