

Important Note: This activity was developed for the original Green Lunchroom Challenge program, a voluntary pledge program for K-12 schools to improve the sustainability of their food service



operations. The project was coordinated by the [Illinois Sustainable Technology Center Technical Assistance Program](#) with funding from US EPA Region 5.

The following page(s) represent the content of this activity as it appeared on the original project web site, complete with available points and instructions for submitting documentation. **The project is no longer funded and as of June 2018 schools may no longer submit activity documentation to earn points and recognition as described.** The activity is presented for your information to guide your organization's sustainability efforts.

If your school or district implements the suggested activity and wishes to share its experiences, please email [Joy Scrogum](#). Your story may be incorporated into a blog post on this web site, the main ISTC site, or shared on social media to foster networking and inspiration among peer institutions.

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Create a menu that allows multiple uses of key ingredients throughout a week

Activity Category: Menu Planning and Food Preparation

Activity: Create a menu that allows multiple uses of key ingredients throughout a week

Rationale: Creating a menu that allows for the multiple uses of key ingredients throughout the week helps food service managers to lower costs and eliminate waste. It may be cheaper to purchase an item in bulk, but unless menus are planned to use up that item while it is fresh, some may be lost as waste. If the school has a garden or sources from a local farm and bumper crop of a certain vegetable is produced, waste can occur if creative menu planning isn't used to present that locally sourced, fresh material in a variety of ways that will not bore consumers. This type of menu planning



also has potential for time savings in terms of preparation (e.g. if peppers are sliced at the beginning of the week to be presented as part of a salad or vegetable cup one day, and then also used later in the week for a stir-fry, slicing can be done all at once). Finally, this type of planning may encourage food service staff to think in a way that will allow them to reuse or repurpose leftover foods more easily if and when unplanned leftovers occur (see the separate activity "Store unused foods for re-presentation or repurposing" on the [main "Activities" page](#)).

Activity Description: Create a menu in which at least one ingredient is planned for use in at least two of the meal services during one week.

Earn Challenge Points (100 points): Within one Word or PDF file, submit a copy of your "key ingredient" menu for a week, along with a brief description of what ingredient was planned for multiple uses and the different ways in which the ingredient was used. If possible, include a photo of each of the items served which incorporated the ingredient (this can include the ingredient being offered on its own if the ingredient is a fruit or vegetable). Also, provide any thoughts or observations on the effects this planning had on preparation efficiency, meeting National School Lunch Program requirements for food components in reimbursable meals, and

food waste (if you think it had no effect on these factors, please state that). Your document should be 2-3 pages in length and emailed to Joy Scrogum at jscrogum@illinois.edu.

Resources:

-  [ISBE Menu Planning and Meal Pattern Requirements](#) (Note the mentions of “Cook’s Choice” days to use up excess quantities of food, and the fact the fruit smoothies are allowed as fruit components. Dried fruits and vegetables are also allowed as components.)
-  [What’s Cooking USDA Mixing Bowl](#) (Searchable database of recipes; note the “Menu builder” tool that is “coming soon”)
-  [USDA Recipes for Schools](#)
-  [Award-Winning Cafeteria Recipes](#)
-  [Recipes for Healthy Kids Cookbook for Schools](#)
-  [New School Cuisine: Nutritious and Seasonal Recipes for School Cooks by School Cooks](#)

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