

WELCOME TO SMART SWAPS

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION CHILD NUTRITION FALL TRAINING

SEPTEMBER 16, 2026



**SMART
SWAPS**



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A LITTLE BACKGROUND



SMART SWAPS

A new National Dairy Council initiative designed to help school nutrition professionals meet evolving meal pattern standards for lower added sugar and sodium while boosting protein.



A BIG TEAM EFFORT

MENUS

WEEK 1	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
ENTRÉE 1	French Toast Sticks sm w/ Peaches n' Cream Dip or Syrup	Breakfast Mac & Cheese sm	Sausage Biscuit sm	Breakfast Bowl w/ Tajin Yogurt Sauce	Chicken & Waffles sm w/ Honey Mustard Yogurt Sauce or Syrup
ENTRÉE 2	Assorted Cereals sm	Very Berry Overnight Oats sm	Strawberry Pancake Yogurt Parfait sm	Assorted Cereals sm	Assorted Cereals sm
FRUIT	Grapes Cubed Honeydew Melon	Bananas 100% Fruit Juice	Apple Slices Orange	Banana Strawberries	Frozen Mixed Berry Cup 100% Fruit Juice
MILK	1% Milk 1% Chocolate Milk 1% Lactose-free Milk	1% Milk 1% Chocolate Milk 1% Lactose-free Milk	1% Milk 1% Chocolate Milk 1% Lactose-free Milk	1% Milk 1% Chocolate Milk 1% Lactose-free Milk	1% Milk 1% Chocolate Milk 1% Lactose-free Milk
DAILY CALORIES & SODIUM	K-8: 402 kcal, 432 mg 9-12: 459 kcal, 502 mg	K-8: 433 kcal, 442 mg 9-12: 450 kcal, 443 mg	K-8: 383 kcal, 442 mg 9-12: 392 kcal, 494 mg	K-8: 472 kcal, 567 mg 9-12: 536 kcal, 634 mg	K-8: 440 kcal, 463 mg 9-12: 459 kcal, 500 mg

RECIPES



RESOURCES



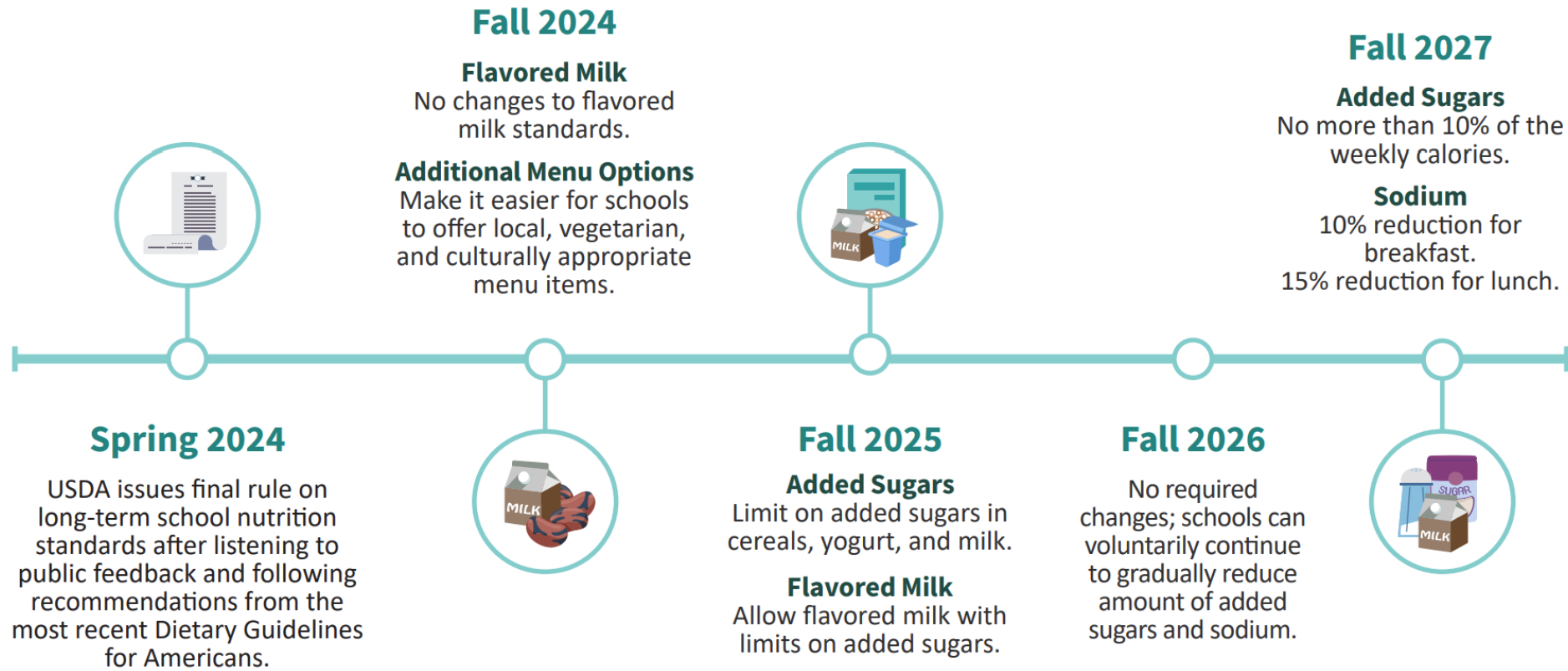
NATIONAL TRENDS

FEDERAL CHANGES



IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE FOR UPDATING THE SCHOOL MEAL STANDARDS FINAL RULE

School meals will continue to include fruits and vegetables, emphasize whole grains, and give kids the right balance of nutrients for healthy, tasty meals. For the first time, schools will focus on products with less added sugar, especially in school breakfast.



CURRENT RULE FOR ADDED SUGARS

- Breakfast Cereals may have no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce
- Yogurt may have no more than 12 grams added sugars per 6 ounces
- Flavored Milk may have no more than 10 grams of added sugar per 8 fluid ounces
 - Flavored milk being sold a la cart for middle and high school may have no more than 15 grams of added sugars per 12 fluid ounces

NEXT STEP FOR ADDED SUGARS

Overall weekly limits to be implemented by school year 2027-2028

School will be required to limit added sugars to less than 10 percent of calories per week in the school lunch and breakfast programs.

This limit is in addition to the product-based limits

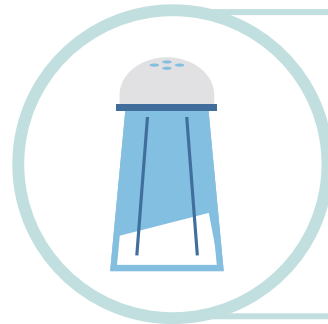
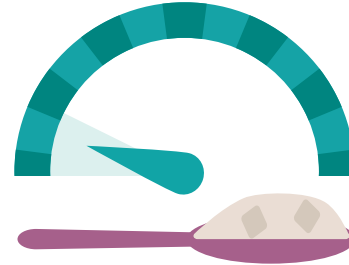
SUGAR & SODIUM STANDARDS



Added Sugars

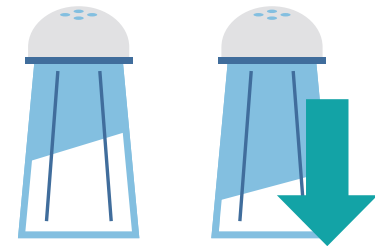
Limit using a phased approach:

- **Phase 1:** Limits on specific high-sugar products (cereals, yogurt, flavored milk)
- **Phase 2:** Overall weekly limits



Sodium

Gradually phase in one reduction of weekly limit



A NOTE ABOUT SUGAR

Added Sugar

Sugar added during processing or preparation

Vs.

Natural Sugar

Occurs naturally in certain foods, such as fruit and milk



**We elves try to stick to the
four main food groups:**



**candy, candy canes,
candy corn and syrup.**

How can I check added sugar amounts?

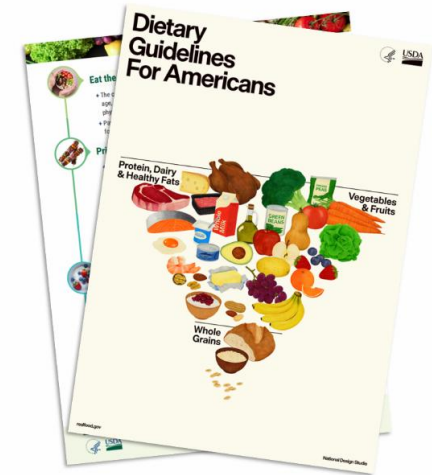


The Nutrition Facts panel lists the amount of added sugar per serving in g

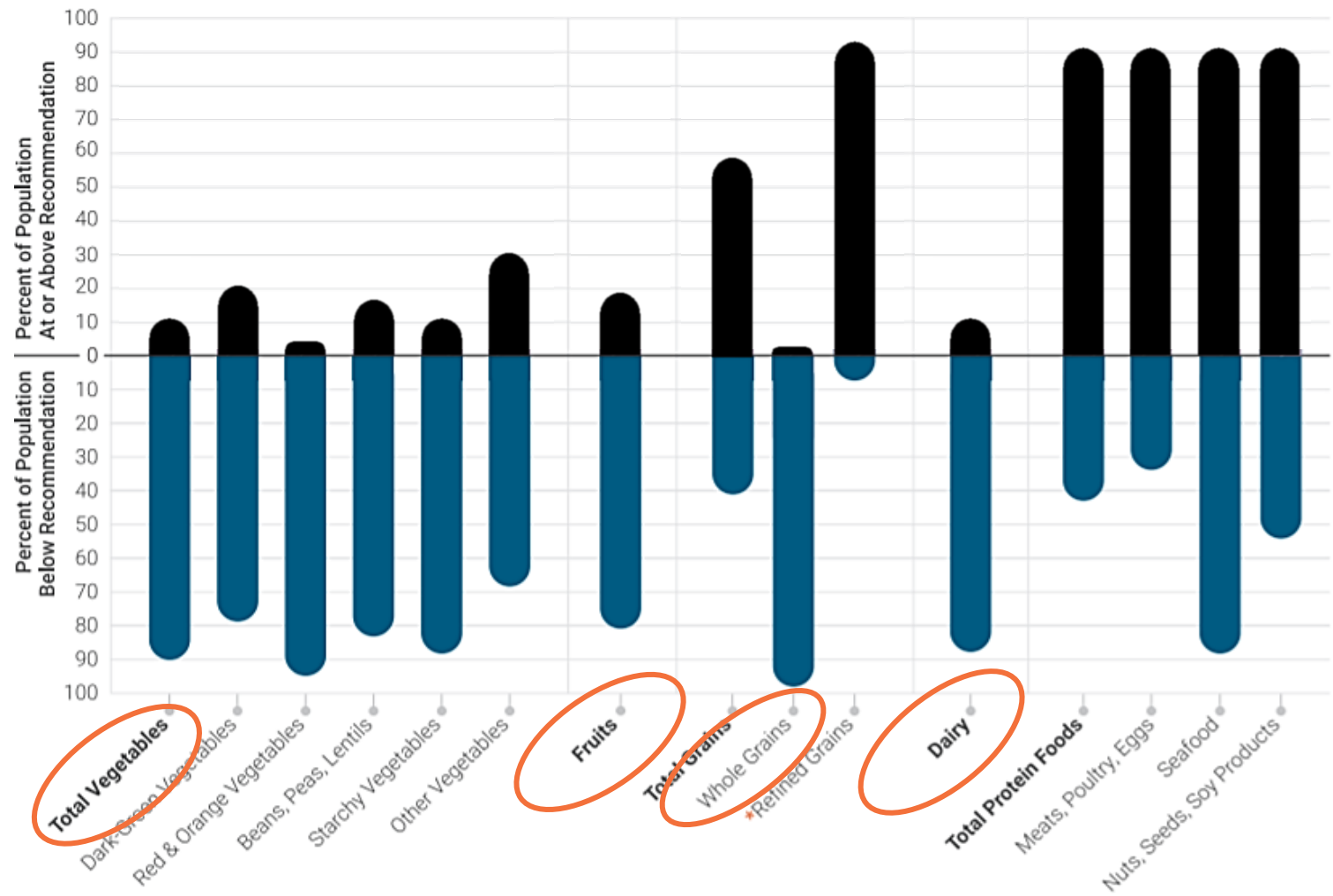
Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	2/3 cup (55g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	230
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 8g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%
* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.	

DIETARY GUIDELINES FOR AMERICANS 2025-2030

- Lots of unknowns with the new US Dietary Guidelines.
- Emphasis on decreasing added sugar, reducing ultra-processed foods, increasing protein.
- Smart Swaps recipes help reduce sugar and sodium, boost protein & focus on real food



MOST AMERICANS ARE FALLING SHORT ON DAIRY, FRUIT&VEGETABLE RECOMMENDATIONS



DIETARY INTAKES COMPARED TO RECOMMENDATIONS: PERCENT OF THE U.S. POPULATION AGES 1 AND OLDER WHO ARE BELOW AND AT OR ABOVE EACH DIETARY GOAL

- Intake At / Above Recommendation
- Intake Below Recommendation

← The center line is the goal. For most, those represented by the dark blue section of the bars can improve their dietary pattern by shifting toward the center line

Source: 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

SMART SWAPS – THE PROCESS

MEET TO TASTE



Chef Vahista Ussery & Chef Lindsay Schoenfeld



Enhanced Nutrition

Based on multiple sources, forecasts agree that consumers will consistently show a preference for foods that deliver nutritional balance with an emphasis on gut health, mental well-being, sustainable energy and holistic wellness. This includes protein and fiber rich dishes, healthy fats (found in olive oil, nuts, seeds and avocados), minimally processed foods, including whole fruits, vegetables and grains, as well as functional beverages that deliver healthful benefits from the use of mushrooms (nootropics), herbs, roots and other plant-based ingredients (adaptogens).

Additionally, statistics presented by Global Nutritionals indicate that 42 percent of consumers are reducing portion sizes while 43 percent are cutting back on sugar, carbohydrates and calories. Coupled with

the rising popularity of GLP-1 medications, there is greater interest in smaller portions and nutrient-dense dishes that offset the nutritional deficiencies this medication creates.

For chefs and restaurateurs, opportunities to engage with guests and respond to these dynamics are considerable. With a little culinary innovation, this can be achieved through expanded menus that emphasize wellness (including ways to vary portion size) and an increased number of dishes that feature plant-based and other "good for you" ingredients. Think chickpea pasta with Greek yogurt-based sauces or dishes that incorporate nutrient-rich ingredients. This could include tofu, beans, watercress, kale, konjac or quinoa, each presented in distinctive, flavorful applications.

It's also important to remember that while your menu may offer dishes that support healthy living, the ambience, level of service and hospitality your guests' experience should complement this agenda and contribute to their overall sense of well-being.

43% of consumers are cutting back on sugar

Healthy fats trend as diners prioritize wellness

42% of consumers are reducing portion sizes

Top 10 chart-topping trends

What can we expect on restaurant menus in 2026? Flavor, dishes, and experiences that take us out of the "day-to-day" and transport us somewhere, sometime, or both—without breaking the bank. This quest for comfort, nostalgia, and "flavor-escape" intersects with an ever-present search for healthy options and value, as restaurant operators seek out the dishes that satisfy consumers' cravings.

- 1 Local sourcing
- 2 Comfort foods
- 3 Value menus and options
- 4 Smashed burgers
- 5 Clear menu labeling, icons, and cues
- 6 Allergen-friendly menus
- 7 Global comfort foods
- 8 "Cleaner" recipes, additive- and dye-free, or less processed menu items
- 9 Proteins as add-ons
- 10 Compostable and reusable packaging

THEIR APPROACH TO RECIPE WRITING

Use:

- Fruit for natural sweetness
- Flavor focus
 - spices, herbs, vanilla, citrus
- Balance m/ma and grains for satisfaction and well-balanced meals



RECIPE STANDARDIZATION PROCESS

Built to:

- Match purchasing (cases, #10 cans, etc.)
- Work with existing equipment + labor

Tested:

- Small and large batch
- Consistency across kitchens varies
- Student acceptability

- ☐ **2 lb** Cream cheese, low-fat
- ☐ **8 lb** Yogurt, Greek, vanilla, low-fat
- ☐ **#10 can** Peaches, sliced, canned, in juice, drained



MENU WRITING

What Chef V & Chef Lindsay found:

- Pre-made means flexibility is lost
- Speed scratch and scratch gives control over added sugar and sodium
- Heat & serve items have sugar built in
- Easier to adjust recipes than replace products
- More room to balance meals across the week
- Gradual reductions = less shock to students



SMART SWAPS – THE FEATURES



RECIPES

- Student Tested & Approved
 - 25 Fresh, Protein-Packed Breakfast
 - 21 Globally-Inspired, Flavor-Forward Lunch
- Nutrient Analysis
- Crediting Components
- Critical Control Points
- Step-by-Step Photo Guides



MENUS

Sample Menus that meet the new sugar & sodium limits.

Breakfast & Lunch

- Grab & Go
- Heat & Serve
- Speed Scratch
- Quick Prep



TRAINING

- Video Tutorials
- Webinars
- **NEW THIS SCHOOL YEAR!**
In-person trainings in the
Child Nutrition Culinary Classroom
 - December: Smart Swaps Breakfast
 - January: Smart Swaps Lunch

Keep an eye on the Thursday Update for
registration!



SMART SWAPS SEARCH



- Find one breakfast recipe you would consider trying with your students
- Find one lunch recipe you would consider trying with your students
- Find one resource you would share with your staff



WWW.SMART-SWAPS.COM

BRINGING
SMART SWAPS
TO LIFE!

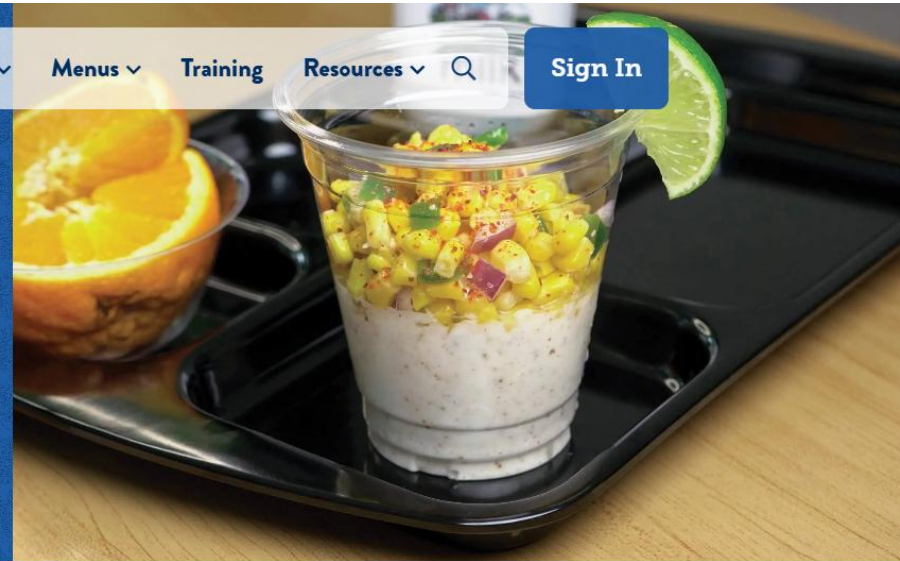
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ESQUITES - MEXICAN STREET CORN

created by: American Dairy Association Mideast



Recipe Category: Lunch, Grab & Go, Speed Scratch

Cooking Process: #1 No Cook

Total Time: 50 minutes

Meal Pattern Contribution: 1 oz eq m/ma, 1/2 cup other vegetable

[Save](#)[♥ I Made This](#)

DOWNLOAD:

[Step by step recipe](#)[Recipe card](#)

Inspired by Mexican street fare, this layered cup pairs sweet corn, parmesan and a squeeze of lime with a tangy chili-yogurt sauce. A dash of Tajín and fresh cilantro finish the dish. Each convenient cup offers ½ cup vegetable, 1 oz eq m/ma and nearly 10 grams of protein per serving.

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Thaw corn overnight.
CCP: Hold at 41° F or below.



SMART SWAPS PILOT LEARNINGS

Start early -- before changes are required

Patience -- Give your program time to test, adjust, and build acceptance

Targeted Sugar Reduction -- Focus on a few high-frequency menu items to reduce added sugar with minimal disruption



Plan for Participation Dip -- Expect and manage short-term participation dips -- particularly with younger students -- after menu changes through clear communication with staff.

Consistency Over Time -- Maintain menu consistency to stabilize student engagement and encourage repeated exposure.

Preserve Familiarity -- Keep core meal components familiar to maintain student acceptance during menu changes.



LET'S EAT!



SMART SWAPS QUESTIONS?

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SCHOOL NUTRITION QUESTIONS?

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