


The great school dinner makeover

The
took



Burgers, turkey twizzlers and other 'low-quality' meats were struck off the school menu this September in a bid to help tackle childhood obesity. English kids must now be served healthier school dinners and vending machines are banned from dispensing chocolate, crisps and fizzy drinks.

Inspired by TV chef Jamie Oliver's campaign for healthier lunches, the Department of Health's new guidelines rule that every school meal must now include at least two portions of fruit and vegetables whilst deep-fried foods can be served only twice a week.

One school has gone the extra mile by hiring a veggie catering company to take on its school lunch service! The partnership between Glapton Primary School, Clifton, Notts, and Nottingham-based Veggies Catering Campaign was born in October 2005. The School Head was desperately keen to develop a nutritious menu and for more pupils to take up school dinners.

Simultaneously, Veggies were promoting the idea that animal-

free meals are right for all dietary and cultural preferences, reduce the risk of salmonella, listeria and other food poisoning infections and have very low levels of harmful saturated fats. Veggies were also keen to stress that avoiding meat and dairy products spares land, oil and water use and avoids growth hormones, chemical additives, BSE and avian flu. And so a beautiful alliance was formed!

By November, Veggies were serving up freshly made soups, main meals, organic cakes and fair trade drinks two days a week to those pupils who would otherwise take sandwiches. In December, hands-on cookery classes were introduced to give pupils a feel for nutritious cooking.

Both Veggies and the school were keen to tie these cookery sessions in with the school curriculum so when children learned about Egypt in the classroom, they also learned how to cook Kuserie, a traditional Egyptian dish. Come January, the kids studied Ancient Greece and learned to make the popular Greek dip, hummus!

Veggies try to use as much local and organic produce as possible, within the constraints of the school-catering budget. They even use produce from pupils' own gardens and allotments! The idea was a huge success and Veggies were asked to take on the school's entire lunch service five days a week from June.

Supporters Discount Deal

The VVF has teamed up with Viva!, Europe's largest vegetarian and vegan campaigning group, to provide a great new discount scheme for supporters which will save you ££££s. A host of veggie cafes and guest houses, health food shops and B&Bs are eager to offer you cut-price products and services. All you need is a current supporter's card.

A list of participating members can be found on our website at www.vegetarian.org.uk or you can contact the VVF on 0117 970 5190 for a print-out. If you're not already a VVF supporter, don't miss out – join today! It costs just £15 for a full year (£12 unwaged).

A gift of good health!

Help your friends and family to understand the enormous health benefits of a veggie diet. A Vegetarian & Vegan Foundation subscription is a unique and thoughtful Christmas gift that's much more important than glitzy wrapping paper – and it doesn't need batteries. It lasts throughout the year and for just £15 and the recipient will get:

- three copies of the colourful, informative and easy-to-read **veggiehealth** magazine
- five fact sheets in a special folder
- free health advice from our nutritionists at any time

Join online at www.vegetarian.co.uk or call our membership hotline on 0117 970 5190.

government has known for six years that school lunches were a disaster but it a celebrity chef to make them act. By Amanda Woodvine

Despite recent research showing that oily fish and fish oils are all polluted with toxins which outweigh any health benefits, the government still insists on oily fish being served once a week, plus a twice-weekly meat or poultry option, which is done by the school itself. Eventually, Veggies School Catering Project hopes to challenge this policy by demonstrating the health advantages of not offering animal products.

If your kids' school dinners still leave a lot to be desired, why not have a word with the headteacher or even put them in touch with Veggies? If they're really not receptive, follow our suggestions for giving school lunch boxes a nutritional head start that would have both Jamie Oliver and Gillian McKeith doing cartwheels! Contact Veggies at 245 Gladstone St, Forest Fields, Nottingham NG7 6HX. Tel: 0545 458 9595

Boxing Clever!

By Dr Justine Butler

How to make a lunchbox as healthy and tasty as possible.

We reckon that a healthy lunchbox is a vegan lunchbox! It should contain a wide range of plant-based foods, including whole grains, pulses, fresh fruit and vegetables, nuts and seeds. It will provide a rich supply of vitamins and minerals and contains good sources of essential fatty acids, including omega-3). It also provides disease-busting antioxidants and fibre which protect health.

An unhealthy lunch box contains highly processed foods such as crisps, cakes, biscuits and chocolate bars and animal-based foods such as red meat, poultry, eggs and dairy products. They have high levels of saturated fat, animal protein, cholesterol, salt and sugar – associated with obesity, high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes and certain cancers. Sadly, these baddies all too often make up the lunch box, which is part of the reason why today's children are so unhealthy.

The VVF's simple suggestions for improving your kids' lunch.

Ditch the white bread and crisps and switch to wholemeal bread sandwiches, wraps or pitta bread pockets filled with:

- bean or mushroom paté
- smoked tofu
- nut butter (cashew, almond or peanut)
- hummus (chick pea dip)
- spicy kidney beans
- falafel (savoury rissoles made from chick peas)
- avocado and walnut
- left-over nut loaf, sliced

These tasty fillings provide plenty of protein, 'good' fats, complex carbohydrates, B vitamins, vitamin E and minerals including calcium, zinc and iron – nutrients important for growth and development.

Boost the vitamin content by adding any of the following:

- shredded lettuce and other salad leaves such as rocket, baby spinach or watercress

- sliced cucumber
- sliced tomatoes
- grated carrot
- thinly sliced peppers
- coleslaw made with dairy-free mayonnaise (such as Plamil brand, available from special foods section in large supermarkets and health food shops)
- sweet corn
- fresh parsley, coriander or chives

These additions provide fibre and antioxidant vitamins A, C and E that protect health and fight off illnesses and disease.

Other tasty snacks to boost the nutritional value include:

- Vegetable sticks: carrot, cucumber, celery, baby corn, pepper etc.
- A handful of cherry tomatoes
- Dried fruits: mini-boxes of raisins or packets of apricots
- Mixed unsalted nuts and seeds: cashews, almonds, Brazil nuts with sunflower and pumpkin seeds
- Fresh fruit: apple, orange, grapes, apricots, plums, pomegranate... be adventurous!

Drinks – it's very important to keep your child's fluid levels up – secondary schools in particular don't always provide drinking fountains and sugary/fizzy drinks are a major contributor to weight gain and tooth decay. Water is best but home-made fruit smoothies or unsweetened fruit juice are good alternatives.

A nutritious meal will help your child concentrate, will establish life-long healthy eating habits that will protect them from disease both now and in adulthood.

For more information, advice and guidance, contact the Vegetarian & Vegan Foundation at 8 York Court, Wilder Street, Bristol, BS2 8QH, by phone on 0117 970 5190 9am-6pm, Mon-Fri, or by e-mail at: info@vegetarian.org.uk