

Dump the Canned Fruit Cocktail

Less than 58% of Cheyenne students enjoy school lunch. Even then, they have some scathing remarks about the grub. It's clear---drastic improvements must be made.

Has the American cheese single: sticky, artificial, and disillusioned, become the next metaphor for school lunches?

Suffocated under two slices of white bread and deceitfully processed ham, schools across the nation are feeding kids fabricated meals.

For too long, kids have chucked mealy apples, dumped botched attempts at tomato soup, and flung dry, crusty sandwiches into the trash. The issue is sloppily served to us on plastic trays, disguised with grease-laden pepperoni pizza and sugary chocolate milk, hiding behind a thin carrot stick or two.

Pizza classified as a vegetable is wild enough. Eating a kitchen sponge for a patty and drinking milk at 12 pm to soak up the anguish is inexcusable. Milk in schools has been federally subsidized since the 1940s due to government surplus, eliminating the problem by [shoving cardboard cartons](#) onto styrofoam trays. Regardless of excess, more than [\\$20 million taxpayer dollars](#) were spent exclusively by the USDA on unhealthy dairy products, including cheese, flavored milk, and rainbow-colored yogurts.

Schools need to re-evaluate the relationship between food and their students' learning. A few apple slices doesn't cut it, and while a [50 percent whole grain](#) bun satisfies the few nutritional guidelines in place, it's not satisfying or healthy to their main consumers.

The nutrition fueling young minds has gradually and strenuously improved to fit new guidelines, but it's not enough. While menus include higher percentages of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, they're still saturated in factory-farmed animal products, like dairy and cuts of cheap meat. They're highly processed and mass-produced into corn dogs, pizza, and chicken nuggets.

The power held within a fresh dish is insurmountable, especially in battling teen obesity. Kids consume up to [50 percent of their daily calories at school](#), providing ample opportunity to make each bite count. The [availability of healthier meals](#) and a larger variety of different foods led to an improvement in consistent eating habits with a [9.3 percent increase in choosing fruits and vegetables](#).

In a study by the [National School Lunch Program](#) in 2014, schools are reimbursed \$2.93 for free lunches, \$2.53 for reduced, and \$0.28 for paid. Marginally higher, dark green vegetables, real fruit, and lowfat milk cost only nine cents more per meal. Since then, little has changed. So, why are we feeding students canned corn and french fries when the price is modest?

Colorado has [no legislation regarding outreach](#) programs for lunches or incentives for locally grown food, suppressing overlooked opportunities for decreased meal costs, a healthier community, and higher quality food.

Further, cafeterias have no competitors, forcing hungry students to eat a mediocre meal. Often on pennies and government granted food, low-paid chefs are left to serve and comply.

More students would be inspired by the passion chefs have for their work, and a male-dominated sector of jobs could be balanced, done with a fresh meal.

Students are [340% more likely to retain information](#) when they eat a full meal during lunch. If we spent more time, effort, and passion into an overlooked sector for decades, fueling cognitive thought is easier than ever.

When kids heard they were being served bagged lunches during the pandemic, they didn't expect it was going to be bags of diabetes. A 2009 investigation by USA Today discovered [meat served](#) in U.S. schools didn't meet the quality or safety standards of fast-food restaurants like McDonald's or Burger King.

To meet nutritional needs and cutting government waste, the [Reagan Administration](#) in 1981 [destroyed school lunch spending](#), slashing meal portions, cutting [children in poverty](#) out of the deal, and proclaimed that [ketchup was a vegetable](#). This still rings true today in schools across the country, who view their young learners as profit.

A school's business is their students. Aramark, a food provider for businesses across the nation, is attentive in expansion and profit, dominating the market with cheap, accessible food processed by the dozen and sent rapidly. Luring superintendents and faculty with economical prices, it's tempting to take the bite on *fresh* fruits and vegetables, but when the rose-colored glasses come off, there's only canned applesauce and brown salad.