

# Seasonal Foods of Winter

Children should have access to healthy food and be able to make healthy food choices wherever they are – at home, in school, and in the community. Improving the health of the nation's children and reversing the childhood obesity epidemic is a shared responsibility and will take the commitment of parents, the foodservice industry, the media, and schools working together. The vision of USDA's School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children is to improve the health of school children through better nutrition. Implementing the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* in school meals will have important health benefits for children.

## Focus on Food

### Farm to school

Farm-to-school programs connect schools with local farms and producers with the aim of serving healthy meals in school cafeterias, providing health and nutrition education, and supporting local small farmers.

Through farm-to-school programs schools can:

- Buy and feature farm fresh foods and products such as fruits, vegetables, eggs, honey, meat, rice, and beans while keeping money in the local economy.
- Incorporate nutrition and agriculture-based curricula.
- Provide students hands-on learning opportunities through farm visits, gardening, composting, and recycling programs.

Programs will vary according to the resources in their regions. Some aspects to consider are

- **Seasonality of crops:** Determine what foods are produced locally and when the foods are available. Consider how you might process foods that are abundant when school is not in session.
- **Food distribution systems:** Identify various systems for getting local products into the cafeteria.
- **Farmers and producers availability:** Tie a name and place to the products you are serving. Consider inviting farmers and producers to the school to meet the students. Place a farm bio on the serving line to introduce them to the students.
- **Food Safety:** meat and egg inspection.

## Resources

National Food Service Management Institute. (2009). *Culinary techniques for healthy school meals*. University, MS: Author.

National Food Service Management Institute. (2005). *Healthy cuisine for kids*. University, MS: Author.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2007, January). *The road to SMI success-A guide for school food service directors*. Washington, DC: Author.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2000). *A step-by-step guide on how to bring small farms and local schools together*. Washington, DC: Author. [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Lunch/Downloadable/small.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Lunch/Downloadable/small.pdf)

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2005, December). *Eat smart—farm fresh! A guide to buying and serving locally-grown produce in school meals*. Washington, DC: Author.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2007). *HealthierUS school challenge: Recognizing nutrition excellence in schools*. Washington, DC: Author.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. *Include fiber-rich foods for healthier school meals*. Washington, DC: Author.

The USDA Commodity Food Network (CFN)  
<http://www.commodityfoods.usda.gov/>

## Focus on Nutrition

### Fiber

Most Americans eat only half the recommended amount of dietary fiber each day.

- Foods that are good sources of fiber, such as whole grains, dry beans, fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds, also tend to be rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.
- Eating more fiber-rich foods as part of a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet can help lower blood cholesterol, which reduces the risk of heart disease.
- The *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend a dietary fiber intake of 14 grams per 1,000 calories per day. This translates to about 7-12 grams of fiber at lunch.
- Schools can help students get more fiber every day by offering more whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and dry beans and peas in their menus.

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# Recycling Focus: School Gardens

School gardens serve as exciting living laboratories and children learn a great deal from growing their own fruits and vegetables. The lessons that can be taught in the garden are unlimited and school gardens are an asset in any school. Starting a garden is a big task. These 6 steps help manage the project.

## Step 1--Form a garden committee.

School nutrition staff, teachers, school administrators, community volunteers, parents, and students can all be a part of the garden team.

## Step 2--Define the purpose and objectives of your garden.

Clarify the curriculum that the school garden will support - nutrition, math, natural science, language arts, social studies or all curriculum. Will foods, such as herbs, grown in the garden support the foodservice department? Every school garden should fulfill some need or objective.

## Step 3--Layout your students gardening activities.

This will help you determine how bed space will be allocated. Think about how many students may be in the garden at one time, where they may sit, and what they might do.

## Step 4--Define a year-round garden plan.

Plan for what part of the garden will have annual plants and what part will have perennial. Think about how the garden will be maintained when school is not in session.

## Step 5--Choose a permanent garden site and design your garden.

Sunlight, soil drainage, proximity to water, electricity, and accessibility to students, volunteers, and teachers, and the cafeteria are considerations in selecting the site.

## Step 6--Build your garden according to plan!

## Nutrition benefits of school gardens:

- Children will be excited about eating fruits and vegetables that they grew themselves.
- Students will obtain a greater appreciation for how their food is grown.
- Gardens can be used to teach food safety through proper harvest, processing, and storage.
- Children may have the opportunity to practice preparing nutritious foods and to try new foods to expand their diets.

## Suggestions for types of garden beds:

- Pizza bed - include tomatoes, peppers, and basil
- Three sisters garden - include corn, beans, and squash
- Salsa garden - include tomatoes, peppers, onions, and cilantro
- Salad garden - include lettuces, radishes, cucumbers, and tomatoes
- Pioneer or native plant garden - include plants native to your area
- Herb garden - include basil, parsley, mint, or other favorite herbs
- Perennial fruit garden - include blueberry bushes, strawberries, or grapes

### For more information:

The ABC's of School Gardens, Texas A&M University. *Texas Agricultural Extension Service*. <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/kindergarten/child/school/sgintro.htm>

Gardens for Learning: Creating and Sustaining Your School Garden, California School Garden Network, [www.csgn.org](http://www.csgn.org)  
Kids Gardening, [www.kidsgardening.org](http://www.kidsgardening.org)

## Seasonality

### Fruits and vegetables that may be available during the winter:

Bananas	Pears
Grapefruits	Potatoes
Kale	Rutabagas
Lemons	Sweet Potatoes and Yams
Mushrooms	Turnips
Onions and Leeks	Winter Squash
Oranges	

#### To learn more about using seasonal produce:

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.  
SNAP- Ed Connection, Nutrition through the seasons,  
[http://snap.nal.usda.gov/foodstamp/nutrition\\_seasons.php](http://snap.nal.usda.gov/foodstamp/nutrition_seasons.php)

### Ways to celebrate seasonal foods:

#### January:

National Fiber Focus Month	National Wheat Bread Month
National Oatmeal Month	Pear Month
National Soup Month	Prune Breakfast Month

#### February:

American Heart Month	Potato Lover's Month
Bake for Family Fun Month	Agricultural Week
Canned Food Month	(1st week)
National Cherry Month	Kiwi Day (2nd)
National Grapefruit Month	
National Snack Food Month	
National Sweet Potato Month	



# Student Activity

## Fruit and Veggie Sticks

Children love dipping finger foods. These fruit and vegetable sticks are a flavorful and fun alternative to traditional fries and will help students break the fry routine. The dips are versatile and easy to make.

### Oven Baked Seasoned Potato Sticks

Serves 8

For the seasoning try taco seasoning, dry ranch seasoning, Italian herb mix, or your favorite blend of herbs and spices.

#### Ingredients

Potatoes, well scrubbed	4 large
Cooking spray	as needed
Salt	1/4 teaspoon
Seasoning blends	as needed

1. Preheat oven to 450 °F.
2. Cut each potato into eight lengthwise wedges. Place potatoes in an ungreased baking pan. Spray potatoes evenly with cooking spray.
3. Bake 20 minutes. Remove potatoes from the oven, turn them over using a spatula, and return the potatoes to the oven to bake an additional 10 minutes, or until golden.
4. Season with salt and seasoning blend and serve hot.

### Savory Dip

Yield: 1 1/3 cup

Serve this dip with carrots, celery, cucumbers, red pepper, or jicama sticks.

#### Ingredients

Lowfat yogurt	1/4 cup
Lowfat mayonnaise	1/2 cup
Parsley, fresh, chopped	1/3 cup
Chives, fresh, chopped	1/4 cup
Salt	1/4 teaspoon
Black pepper	1/4 teaspoon

1. Stir together yogurt, mayonnaise, parsley, chives, salt, and pepper in a bowl until combined well. Chill dip, covered, until slightly thickened, at least 1 hour (for flavors to develop).
2. Serve dip with vegetables.

### Oven Baked Sweet Potato Sticks

Serves 8

Sweet potatoes are a real hit with children. Try seasoning them with cinnamon, nutmeg, or pumpkin spice mix.

#### Ingredients

Sweet potatoes, well scrubbed	4 large
Cooking spray	as needed
Salt	1/4 teaspoon
Seasoning (cinnamon, nutmeg)	as needed

1. Preheat oven to 450 °F.
2. Cut each sweet potato into eight lengthwise wedges. Place potatoes in an ungreased baking pan. Spray potatoes evenly with cooking spray.
3. Bake 30 minutes. Remove potatoes from the oven, turn them over using a spatula, and return the potatoes to the oven to bake an additional 10 minutes, or until golden.
4. Season with salt and seasoning blend and serve hot.

### Sweet Dip

Yield: 1 cup

Serve this with watermelon, apple, pear, strawberries, or other firm fruit.

#### Ingredients

Lowfat yogurt	1 cup
Sugar	4 tablespoons
Vanilla extract	1 teaspoon

1. Stir together the yogurt, sugar, and vanilla in a small serving bowl. Chill dip, covered, until slightly thickened, at least 1 hour (for flavors to develop).
2. Use as a dip for fresh fruit.



# Vegetable Lasagna

Serving Size: 1 piece    Number of Portions: 50  
 1 piece provides 2 ounce equivalent meat/meat alternate, 3/4 cup of vegetable, and 1 serving grains/breads

*This lasagna will be enjoyed by vegetarians and non-vegetarians alike. The vegetables can be varied according to student likes.*

Ingredients	Weight	Measures	Instructions
Water, boiling		4 1/2 gallons	1. Add salt to boiling water.
Salt		3 tablespoons	2. Slowly add lasagna noodles and return to boil. Cook for 10-12 minutes, until tender. Drain.
Enriched lasagna noodles, uncooked	2 pounds 12 ounces		3. In a pan, heat vegetable oil. Add zucchini, mushrooms, and onions. Sauté for 3 minutes, until tender. Stir in flour and cook for 3 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside.
Vegetable oil		1/4 cup	4. Place broccoli in steamtable pan (12" x 20" x 2 1/2"). Steam for 6 minutes, or until tender. Drain well and set aside.
Zucchini, fresh, sliced	1 pound		5. In a steam-jacketed kettle, heat the tomato sauce and tomato paste. Add the oregano and granulated garlic. Simmer, uncovered, for 30 minutes.
Mushrooms, fresh, sliced	12 ounces		6. Add sautéed vegetables and steamed broccoli to tomato sauce. Stir to combine. Simmer for 10 minutes.
Onions, fresh, chopped	9 ounces		7. In a large bowl, combine cottage cheese, parsley, granulated garlic, and bread crumbs. Mix well.
Flour, all-purpose, enriched	2 ounces		8. Combine Parmesan cheese and mozzarella cheese.
Broccoli, frozen, chopped	2 pounds 8 ounces	1/4 cup, 2 tablespoons	9. Spread 1 cup of vegetable sauce on the bottom of each steamtable pan (12" x 20" x 2 1/2") to prevent sticking. For 50 servings, use 2 pans.
Tomato sauce	8 pounds, 4 ounces	2 teaspoons	<b>Assembly:</b>
Tomato paste	1 pound 9 ounces	1 gallon	<b>First layer:</b>
Oregano, dried		1/4 cup	9 1/3 lasagna noodles
Garlic, granulated		2 teaspoons	1 quart 1/2 cup cottage cheese mixture
Cottage cheese, reduced fat, drained	8 pounds	2 cups 2 teaspoons	1 quart vegetable sauce
Parsley, dried		1/4 cup	2 cups 1 Tablespoon Parmesan mozzarella cheese mixture
Garlic, granulated		2 teaspoons	<b>Second layer:</b> Repeat first layer
Bread crumbs, enriched, dry	8 ounces	2 cups 2 teaspoons	<b>Third layer:</b>
Parmesan cheese, grated	2 ounces		9 1/3 lasagna noodles
Mozzarella cheese, part-skim, shredded	1 pound 14 ounces		2 1/2 cups vegetable sauce
Parmesan cheese, grated	4 ounces		Sprinkle 2 ounces of Parmesan cheese over each pan of lasagna. Cover with foil.

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## Vegetable Lasagna, continued

Ingredients	Weight	Measures	Instructions
			<p>10. Bake:                      Conventional oven: 375 °F for 50 minutes                      Convection oven: 350 °F for 40 minutes                      CCP: Heat to 165° F or higher for 15 seconds.</p> <p>11. Remove from oven and allow to set for 15 minutes before serving.                      CCP: Hold for hot service at 135 °F or higher.</p> <p>12. Cut each pan 5 x 5 (25 portions per pan).</p>

### Nutrients per serving

Calories	278	Saturated Fat	2.6 g	Iron	2.9 mg
Protein	21.3 g	Cholesterol	11 mg	Calcium	268 mg
Carbohydrate	36.4 g	Vitamin A	1669 IU	Sodium	1016 mg
Total Fat	5.7 g	Vitamin C	27.2 mg	Dietary Fiber	4.1 g

**Source:** Adapted from Vegetable Lasagna, D-50, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service & National Food Service Management Institute (2005).

### For additional recipes:

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services, & National Food Service Management Institute. (2006). *USDA recipes for schools*. University, MS: Author.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services, & National Food Service Management Institute. (2006). *USDA recipes for child care*. University, MS: Author.



# Mashed Butternut Squash

Serving Size: 1/2 cup      Number of Portions: 50  
 1/2 cup provides 1/2 cup of vegetables

Most children love mashed potatoes. The mashed butternut squash is sweet and colorful and sure to please children. This can be done with a variety of vegetables. Try sweet potatoes, acorn squash, or cauliflower.

Ingredients	Weight	Measures	Instructions
Butternut squash, peeled, halved or cubed 18 pounds 10 ounces, as purchased	15 pounds 10 ounces, peeled and cut or 6 ounces	3/4 cup	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Steam or roast squash until soft. Time will depend on how small the pieces are and the type of steamer or oven used, 10-30 minutes.</li> <li>2. Mash butternut squash in a mixer or food processor until smooth.</li> <li>3. Mix in butter, brown sugar, salt, cinnamon, and pepper CCP: Hold for hot service at 140 °F or higher</li> </ol>
Butter		3 tablespoons	
Brown sugar		2 teaspoons	
Salt		1 teaspoon	
Cinnamon		1 teaspoon	
Pepper, black			

## Nutrients per serving

Calories	76	Saturated Fat	1.8 g	Iron	0.9 mg
Protein	1.4 g	Cholesterol	7 mg	Calcium	42 mg
Carbohydrate	13.1 g	Vitamin A	2023 IU	Sodium	120 mg
Total Fat	2.9 g	Vitamin C	17.5 mg	Dietary Fiber	2.2 g

**Source:** Adapted from Mashed Butternut "Potatoes," Fresh from the farm: The Massachusetts farm to school cookbook. Cotler, Amy & Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (2007).

## For additional recipes:

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services, & National Food Service Management Institute. (2006). *USDA recipes for schools*. University, MS: Author.  
 U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services, & National Food Service Management Institute. (2006). *USDA recipes for child care*. University, MS: Author.



# Italian Dippers

Serving Size: 1 stick      Number of Portions: 45  
 1 stick provides 1 1/4 servings of grains/breads

Served with marinara sauce, this school-made Italian dipper bread sticks are a favorite of all students. For an added bonus they are made with Montana grown flour!

Ingredients	Weight	Measures	Instructions
Bread flour	1 pound	3 1/2 cups	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mix dry ingredients</li> <li>Add water to dry ingredients and mix until dough pulls away from the bowl, 8 to 10 minutes.</li> <li>Run through a sheeter or roll to fit a full sheet tray. Cut into 45 portions (15x3).</li> <li>Brush with butter, sprinkle with parmesan and garlic Romano seasoning.</li> <li>Place in a proofer and let rise until doubled in size.</li> <li>Bake at 325 °F for 15 minutes.</li> </ol>
Whole wheat flour	1 pound	3 1/2 cups	
Yeast, SAF instant	1/2 ounce		
Bun dough base*	7 1/8 ounces		
Salt	1/4 ounce		
Water	1 pound 5 ounces	2 2/3 cups	
Butter or margarine, melted		1/4 to 1/3 cup	
Parmesan cheese		1/4 cup	
Garlic Romano seasoning		2 tablespoons	

\*Bun dough base can be found through your distributor or a commercial bakery supply company.

## Nutrients per serving

Calories	102	Saturated Fat	0.9 g	Iron	0.9 mg
Protein	3.2 g	Cholesterol	3 mg	Calcium	12.7 mg
Carbohydrate	16.9 g	Vitamin A	33.6 IU	Sodium	135 mg
Total Fat	2.2 g	Vitamin C	3.2 mg	Dietary Fiber	1.6 g

Source: Missoula Public School District

### For additional recipes:

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services, & National Food Service Management Institute. (2006). *USDA recipes for schools*. University, MS: Author.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services, & National Food Service Management Institute. (2006). *USDA recipes for child care*. University, MS: Author.

