



**Feeding Bodies. Fueling Minds.™**

**Comments of  
School Nutrition Association President Becky Domokos-Bays, PhD, RD, SNS  
Before the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine  
Committee to Review the Process to Update the Dietary Guidelines for Americans  
January 10, 2017**

Thank you for the invitation to speak on behalf of the 57,000 members of the School Nutrition Association (SNA), who plan, prepare and serve school meals to more than 30 million students each school day.

Every year, more than 5 billion school lunches and 2.4 billion breakfasts are served to America's school children, and federal regulations mandate that all of these meals be prepared in accordance with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs). Given this tremendous impact, SNA has emphasized that the DGAs cannot be influenced by personal bias, outside influence or unsubstantiated research. The DGAs must be based on sound science - peer-reviewed, published research specific to the age group, with a sufficient sample size to allow for generalizations to the intended population - especially in the case of decisions that impact K-12 school age children.

We greatly appreciate today's opportunity to discuss the DGAs' influence on school meals, but we strongly recommend that the Committee membership permanently include a school nutrition practitioner. School nutrition professionals have a unique perspective to offer – we are on the forefront of the effort to turn these Dietary Guidelines into lifelong dietary habits for future generations. We have encountered a number of complexities and challenges firsthand in this mission that can inform the Committee's work in the future. As the Committee knows, the current dietary habits of most American families, as well as popular offerings in most American restaurants are not in line with the DGAs. As such, school nutrition professionals must encourage students to adjust their eating habits and preferences. It's more than just offering – we have to entice them to choose nutritious, well-balanced school meals, based on the DGAs.

We utilize many strategies to overcome these challenges – we modify kids' favorite menu items to make them more nutritious, and we use taste tests, chef inspired recipes and farm to school programs to encourage healthier choices. While we have made progress on this front, we do encounter resistance, especially when these efforts are not coordinated or replicated outside of the school setting. School nutrition professionals also face challenges with the prescriptive manner in which the DGAs have been implemented in the federal school meal programs. Although the DGAs were designed as recommendations to guide Americans toward healthier habits, they have been applied as inflexible requirements for our programs. For example, the federal school meal mandate that every grain item offered at school must be at least 50% whole grain effectively prohibits the occasional consumption of white rice and other refined grains permitted under the DGAs.

Planning an appealing menu that balances strict calorie, fat and sodium limits and meets daily and weekly component requirements is a puzzle. Reducing the fat in a meal can create challenges in meeting minimum calorie requirements. Assembling the puzzle pieces can yield surprising results. For example, total fat limits have forced healthy choices like hummus and guacamole off a la carte menus.

Strict sodium limits have been a particular challenge – especially for school meal programs that lack the equipment and labor to prepare meals from scratch. Many schools are limiting nutritious choices for students, in part due to naturally-occurring sodium present in healthy choices like low-fat cheese and milk. For example, some schools are cutting the number of entrée salads offered due to the sodium in popular dressings, limiting ethnic foods and reducing lean protein items at breakfast.

Virtually all schools have met the 2014 nutrient mandates, but as you can see, there have been a number of unintended consequences – and more challenges are on the horizon when future sodium targets take effect. In our rush to meet specific targets, we can lose sight of the bigger picture and the goal of gradually coaxing children, whose tastes are still maturing, to try new foods and make healthier choices.

In addition to meeting mandates, school meals must taste good, and we must appeal to increasingly diverse student tastes. Particularly at the high school level, where students have more alternatives to school lunch, school meal programs are forced to compete with restaurants and convenience stores. Menus must also be designed to be efficiently served to hundreds of students in a matter of minutes, given short lunch periods, while also accommodating a rising number of students with special dietary needs.

And of course, school meals must be prepared on an extremely tight budget. With the federal reimbursement rate for serving a free lunch just over \$3, schools are required to serve well-balanced, healthy school meals for less than what most of us paid for our morning coffee. Schools must cover labor and benefits, supplies, equipment, indirect costs and other expenses, leaving little more than \$1 to spend on the food for each lunch tray.

School Nutrition Association members are constantly working together to find solutions to all these puzzles, but there is no question that these challenges have contributed to the recent national decline in the number of students eating healthy school lunches. Declining student participation undermines the goals of the DGAs. Research consistently shows that school meals are more nutritious than food brought from outside the cafeteria and contribute to improved classroom behavior and achievement. School Nutrition Association strongly supports maintaining robust federal nutrition standards for school meals. To address unintended challenges and to achieve the DGAs' goals, SNA is calling for modest changes to these regulations to provide flexibility for school menu planners. We need a little wiggle room to plan healthy menus that will convince students to choose nutritious school lunches and the fruits, vegetables and milk they include. SNA is also calling for increased funding to help school meal programs cover the cost of offering the whole grains and larger servings of fruits and vegetables recommended under the DGAs.

School nutrition professionals are proud to work alongside the DGA Committee, health and nutrition groups, parents and other advocates in promoting healthy lifestyles for children. As we all work together to achieve this goal, we want to avoid having the quest for the perfect diet become a roadblock to progress in improving our children's dietary choices.



# BIRTHDAY TREATS

Reduce calories and sugar while keeping all the fun!

## Build a Fruit Tower:

Here are a few great birthday treats that can replace the typical cupcakes and candy...

1. **Rice Krispies Bowl** - 90 calories each - Arrange the packaged rice krispies in a bowl and unwrap one, placing it in the center. Decorate the unwrapped piece with frosting and a candle.
2. **Dip Me Sheet** - 60 calories per serving - Place a variety of fruits, caramel dip, and vanilla wafers in an attractive square pan.
3. **Newton's Fruit Cake** - 85 calories for a cookie with fruit - Place cookies around the outside of a pan and fill it with dried or fresh fruits. Add sprinkles and candles.

### Birthdays in the Classroom and Their Impact on Weight:

- With classrooms holding upwards of 25 to 30 kids, birthday treats can have a surprising impact on children's health.
- In a typical 36-week school year, kids will be served almost **1 sugary treat per week!**
- If you were serving cake or regular cupcakes each time, then that would come to about **9,000-12,000 calories per school year...** just from birthday parties!
- If you were to replace birthday cake with these sweet treats, then you would **save about 8,000 calories per child per school year**, which is quite a bit.
- Make a difference and share helpful treats!



December 8<sup>th</sup> was our annual Commodity Processing Food Show and SNA DDS meeting held at OSU's Wes Watkins Center in Stillwater. More than 60 attendee's enjoyed a full exhibit hall with a variety of booths and products to visit. This year we had 48 vendor booths; 5 more than in 2015. New vendor booths this year were OSU Cooking for Kids, Fresh Innovation (Acosta), Tabatchnick Foods, Bake Crafters, and Albies (Fidler).

A big thank you to Nancy Sitler of Sapulpa for her Commodity 101 power point presentation and training.

A shout out to our SNA Industry Reps Brandy Stricker (General Mills) and Todd Kinnamon (Kelley Brokerage) for providing bottle water for show attendees.

A special thanks to Liz Glaser for guiding me to another successful Commodity Food Show.

Our Commodity Distribution Unit provided a list of approved Processors and their Brokers. (Please add to this list: Peterson Farms (Apples), Frank Williams, 918-625-4494)

Linda Turner Commodity Chair **CDU BROKER & PROCESSOR LIST**

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**PROCESSORS:**

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JR Simplot Co.

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Chef's Corner Foods

Nardone Bros. Baking Co

Rich Products

Tasty Brands

Cargill Kitchen

Cargill Meat

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Schwan's

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**PRODUCTS:**

Pollock

Bulk Potatoes

Cheese

Tomato paste

Chicken / Cheese

Cheese

Turkey

Cheese

Eggs

Chicken

Cheese

Flour

Cheese

Eggs

Turkey

Potatoes

Cheese

Pollock

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National Food Group Inc.

Fruit

Asian

Cavendish Farms (K12)

Don Lee Farms

Horizon Snack Foods/NA In  
House

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Peanut butter

Cheese

Fruits

Basic American Foods

Integrated Food Service

S.A. Piazza &amp; Assoc

Bongards' Creameries

ConAgra- Gilardi

ConAgra- Lamb Weston

Fresh Innovations, L.L.C.

JTM Food Group

Chicken

Chicken

Advance Pierre

ES Foods

J &amp; J Snack Foods

McCain

Chicken

Potatoes Bulk

Beef

Fruit

Oil, Tomato Paste

Potato Products, Beans

Cheese, Beef

Cheese

Cheese

Cheese

potatoes, sweet potatoes

Fruits, vegetables

Meats, cheese

Meat, cheese, fruit

Cheese

Flour

Potatoes, sweet potatoes



Commodity Processing Show 2016



# Scholarships for SNA Members

Scholarships for SNA Conferences and More!

<http://sable.madmimi.com/view?id=29545.4997353.1.52793aaeefa4c395909b5c41e1b74ba0>  
<http://sable.madmimi.com/c/29545?id=4997353.29203.1.296fe17c0476351d0ef89640e8bd4d59>

December 19, 2016

[http://docs.schoolnutrition.org/images/newsletters/tm\\_03.gif](http://docs.schoolnutrition.org/images/newsletters/tm_03.gif)  
[http://docs.schoolnutrition.org/images/newsletters/tm\\_04.gif](http://docs.schoolnutrition.org/images/newsletters/tm_04.gif)

Scholarships for SNA Conferences and More!

The School Nutrition Foundation (SNF) is offering scholarships to help SNA members attend the 2017

Legislative Action Conference

<http://sable.madmimi.com/c/29545?id=4997353.29204.1.f7a7f2e47c8f63d8bef806174363d4df>

Annual National Conference

<http://sable.madmimi.com/c/29545?id=4997353.29205.1.800dfc280f01d7ff1260aaf2c87af5f3>

thanks to a special donation by the School Nutrition Association!

Apply online today! Applications must be submitted online by Monday, January 23. Click here

<http://sable.madmimi.com/c/29545?id=4997353.29206.1.941fddc767ce0ac4ed6d7dc1c975473e> for details.

Scholarships to help members earn a college degree and grants for new school kitchen equipment will open on Tuesday, January 10. Start preparing your application and learn more at

[www.schoolnutrition.org/scholarships](http://www.schoolnutrition.org/scholarships)

<http://sable.madmimi.com/c/29545?id=4997353.29207.1.2c77705e1d86a1c952dea66abadc53c5>