

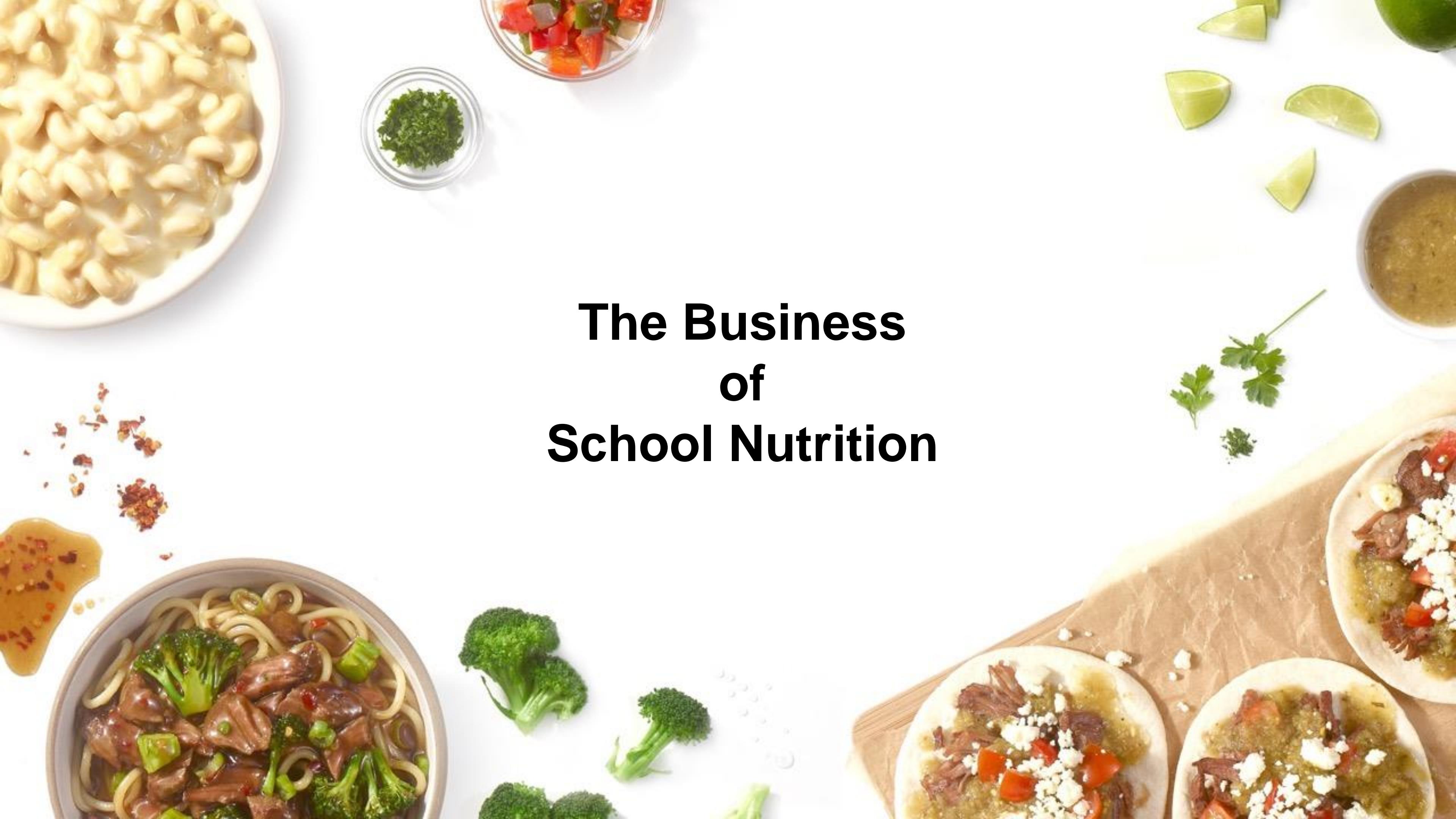
# **The “Why” Behind Menu Planning Burnout & Industry Response**

## **SNA of Ohio Conference & Expo Fall 2025**



# Agenda

- **Part 1: The “Why” Behind Menu Planning Burnout**
  - The Business of School Nutrition
  - Pulse Check: Climate of our Industry
  - Food Industry Trends
  - Menu Planning Burnout & Coping Strategies
- **Part 2: Interactive Menu Planning Panel Discussion**
  - Expert panel reviewing success stories & implementation strategy



# The Business of School Nutrition

# Menu Decisions Impact Financial Budget

## 2 Separate Money Sources in K12 Schools

### Planned Assistance Level a.k.a. Entitlement

- **Planned Assistance Level**
  - Based on meal participation for lunch
  - “Replenishes” every year
  - Intended to go to \$0.00
- **USDA Food Purchases**
  - Brown Box (Donated Goods or USDA Foods)
    - Minimally processed goods
  - DOD (FFAVORS)
  - Diverted/Processing
    - Sends your materials to manufacturers to produce end products
- **Monitored by Food Service Dept or Business Director**

### Fund Account

- Funds from Reimbursements, Revenue from Meal Sales, A La Carte Sales (non program funds), Grants, etc.
  - Intended to “rollover”
  - Goal is to be >\$0.00
- Used for purchasing goods or services for all nutrition program activities
  - Equipment/Utilities
  - Labor/Benefits
  - Food and Supplies
- Monitored by the district treasurer and Board of Education

# Menu Decisions Impact Financial Budget

Budget-Menu Relationship and impact on variable costs and commodities

<b>Essential KPIs for School Nutrition Success Interactive Spreadsheets</b> <b>School Year Table of Contents</b>		
<b>Key Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Page(s) in KPI Resource</b>	<b>Link to Worksheet</b>
Meal Equivalents (MEQ)	12	<a href="#">MEQ</a>
Average Daily Participation	13	<a href="#">ADP</a>
Revenues and Expenditures	20 - 22	<a href="#">Revenue Expenditures</a>
Revenue and Cost Per Meal Equivalent (MEQ)	25 - 27	<a href="#">Revenue Cost Per MEQ</a>
Cost as a Percentage of Revenue	29	<a href="#">Cost % Revenue</a>
Break-Even Point (BEP)	32	<a href="#">BEP</a>
Inventory Turnover Rate	35	<a href="#">Inventory Turnover Rate</a>
Meals Per Labor Hour (MPLH)	38	<a href="#">MPLH</a>
Staff Turnover Rate	42	<a href="#">Staff Turnover Rate</a>
Absenteeism Rate	45	<a href="#">Absenteeism Rate</a>
Summary of Key Performance Indicators	N/A	<a href="#">Summary</a>

**Each page contains a home (See right). Click this icon to return to contents page**



- ICN Operator Budget KPI Tool
  - 40% food cost
  - 40% labor
  - 20% equipment & other
- How is Entitlement calculated?
  - SFA's prior year's total reimbursable NSLP meals served multiplied by the federal Assistance Rate
  - Federal Assistance Rate:
    - SY 23-24 = \$0.365
    - SY 24-25 = \$0.45
    - SY 25-26 = \$0.45

# Example: Impact of Entitlement on Food Budget

- Represents significant impact (and risk/opportunity)

- Example:

- \$3,000,000 Revenue (-)
- \$1,500,000 Food Expenses & \$1,400,000 Labor/Overhead
- ~\$100,000 Profit (3.3% margin)

- Impact of fluctuation in food cost:

- Increase of 5% food cost = \$25,000 Profit (0.8% margin)
- Increase of 10% food cost = (\$50,000) Loss (-1.7% margin)

- Commodity entitlement value represents ~10-20% of total food expenses

- Dependent upon district. How is entitlement calculated?
  - SFA's prior year's total reimbursable NSLP meals served multiplied by the federal Assistance Rate
  - Federal Assistance Rate:
    - SY 23-24 = \$0.365
    - SY 24-25 = \$0.45

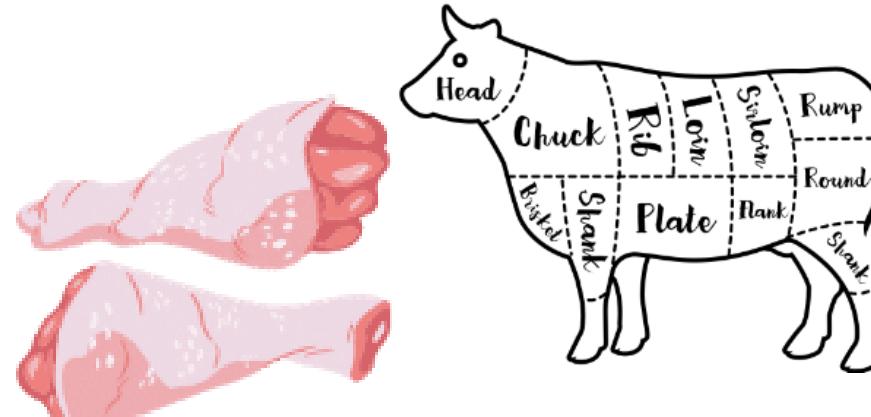


Low margin, high volume business model with the added challenge of ever-evolving regulatory guidelines.



# Ways to Spend USDA Planned Assistance Level a.k.a. Entitlement

## Direct Delivery A.K.A. Brown Box



## DOD Fresh



## Processing



# Ways to Use Entitlement

Direct Delivery (Brown Box)		DOD Fresh		Processing	
PRO	CON	PRO	CON	PRO	CON
Typically product is in its original state allowing for scratch cooking	Little say in when product will be purchased or delivered;	Local, Buy-American Compliant; USDA handles procurement	Availability varies by season	Multiple products available by commodity code	Procurement is responsibility of the RA
USDA handles procurement	Broad product specs can result in differences between products as awards switch vendors	Unique produce not always available commercially	Warehousing fees, cost effectiveness	More control over end items - which product/spec, delivery times & locations	Limited to what distributor carries
Least Expensive; no processing fee & only delivery charge	Freezer Space Requirement, 15 cs minimum per drop		Use it or lose it	Many CN labeled items that are fully cooked & ready to serve	True cost calculations can be complicated with PTV & raw material costs
Peach cups & strawberry cups aren't available commercially	Operational challenges when handling raw items		Still need to purchase produce commercially	Divert to your menu	



Don't leave money on the table – use 100% of PAL given annually.  
You've run out? Congratulations! You've optimized this federal program.

# Carry-Over Pounds in Processing



## ABC School District SY 23-24 Report Card

Ran on June 20, 2024



### Commodity Summary

Commodity	COV #	Alloc. #	Total Alloc. #	Y2D Used #	Y2D Balance #	Usage %	Period Used #	Period Used \$
100154	1,072.960	52,000.000	53,072.960	-43,284.450	9,788.510	82	-43,284.450	-134,284.77
100193	0.000	200.000	200.000	-173.250	26.750	87	-173.250	-268.59
100883	0.000	6,288.200	6,288.200	-6,116.240	171.960	97	-6,116.240	-18,108.21
110242	127.218	16,293.322	16,420.540	-12,992.110	3,428.430	79	-12,992.110	-25,299.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,200.178</b>	<b>74,781.522</b>	<b>75,981.700</b>	<b>-62,566.050</b>	<b>13,415.650</b>		<b>-62,566.050</b>	<b>-177,961.24</b>

### Monthly DF Usage

## USDA Pound Considerations

✓ Divert to your menu

✓ Carry-over pounds have no entitlement value

✓ Use pounds the year diverted to avoid surplus

✓ Pounds belong to the state, not the individual School District

✓ Evaluate pound utilization monthly

✓ When switching products, make a plan for carry-over

	WBSCM Material Code	SY 23-24 DF Value per LBS	SY 23-24 Balance (LBS)	Usage % 7/1-23- 6/30/24	Value of Balance (Carry-Over LBS)
Beef	100154	\$3.1024	9,788.51	82%	\$30,367.87
Pork	100193	\$1.5505	26.75	87%	\$41.48
Turkey	100883	\$2.9606	171.96	97%	\$509.10
Cheese	110242	\$1.9476	3,428.43	79%	\$6,677.21
				Total	\$37,595.66

\$37,595.66  
value in  
carry-over

# Processing Cost Considerations

Average Material Price Index issued in November Each Year

	WBSCM Material Code	SY 24-25 Value per Pound	SY 25-26 Value per Pound	YOY Variance (%)
Beef	100154	\$3.092	\$3.748	17%
Chicken	100103 W/	\$1.410	\$1.490	5%
Pork	100193	\$1.404	\$1.412	1%
Turkey	100883	\$2.090	\$1.791	-17%
Cheese	110242	\$2.104	\$1.992	-6%
Eggs	100047	\$0.704	\$1.654	57%
Peanuts	110700	\$0.591	\$0.644	8%
Potatoes	100506	\$0.157	\$0.171	8%
Tomato Paste	100332	\$0.948	\$0.798	-19%

## Material Code Considerations:

- ✓ Cost-Effectiveness
- ✓ Participation Drivers
- ✓ Student Acceptability
- ✓ Religious Preference
- ✓ Food Allergies
- ✓ Nutritional Analysis



Market prices change annually! Entitlement will NOT stretch as far as it did last year with Beef diversions; plan accordingly, especially for All Beef products.

# Value Pass Thru Method: NOI vs. CNOI



## CHICKEN



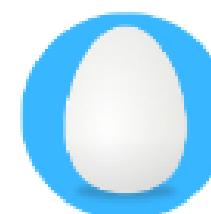
## TOMAT



## PEANUT



## TURKEY



EGG



CHEES

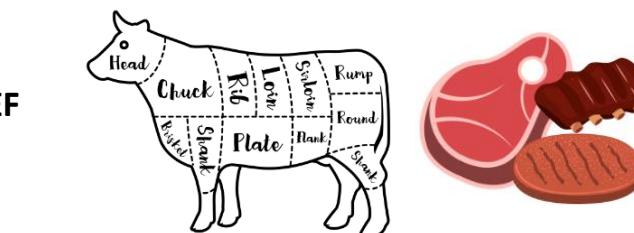


# POTATOES

Ability to purchase product with or without USDA pounds with the Processor.



BE



PO



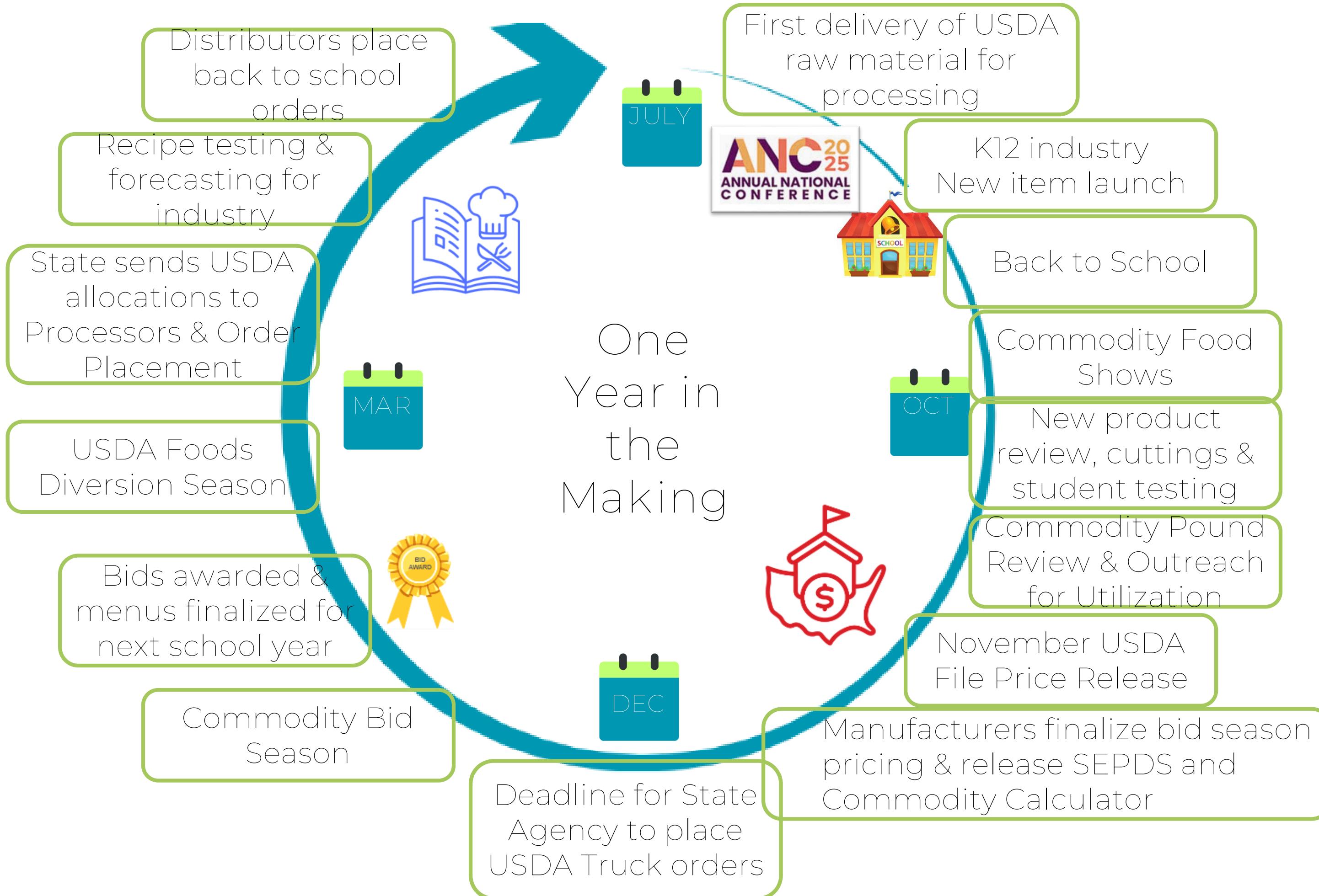
Recipient Agencies MUST have pounds with the Processor to purchase products with containing USDA Foods.

There is NOT unlimited entitlement. It is important to know you are receiving the full value of your entitlement dollars.

# Inventory and Supply



# Sales & Menu Cycle in the Academic Year



# Go-To-Market Timeline for New Products

Real Talk: Back to School Season is TOUGH! Especially for new items...

New Item Initiation:

- 2-3 years for new product development
- 1-2 years to launch a new product
- 6+ Months for CN Label approval
- 6+ months generate customer interest & place on bids
  - No historical data with NEW items → Forecasting is key
- Distributor buy-in and new item code creation

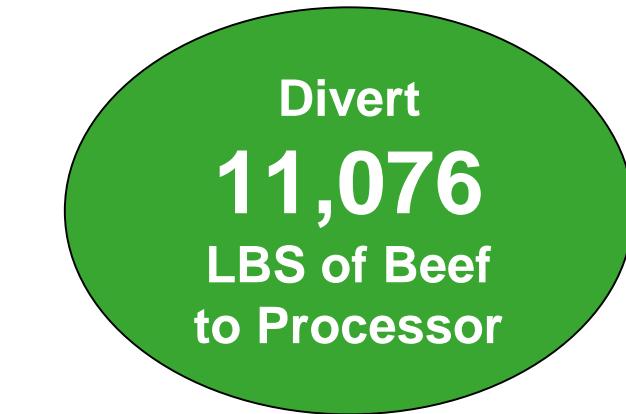
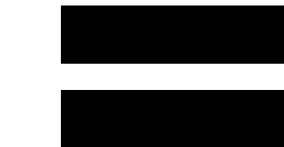
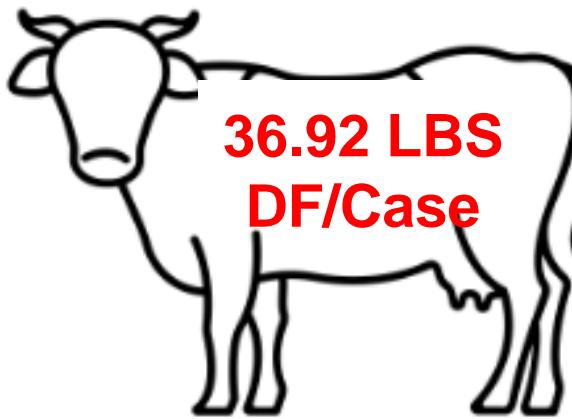
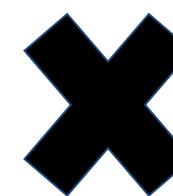
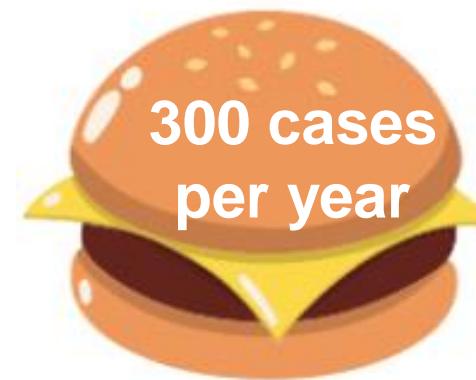
Supply Chain for New Items:

- USDA Raw Material for SY 24-25 delivered to processors in July
- Back to School orders are due end of June
- 21-day lead time for orders to distributors
- Supply chain bottleneck with K12 & C&U resuming operations simultaneously
- Open PO's are the true sign of demand



Plan for flexibility in your menus; avoid menuing “new” items in the first 1-2 weeks of menu cycle.

# How to Forecast



- Review Past usage
  - Commodity tracking websites
  - Velocity Reports
- What changes are happening?
  - Bid awards
  - Distributor stocking and product availability
- Divert to your menus
  - Consider menus and frequency at each level
- Communicate your plans
  - Share forecast to distributor, broker, manufacturer
  - Utilize management staff to aggregate usage data

## Forecasting Best Practices:

- ✓ Create customized calculator for Coop/district
- ✓ Complete calculator by grade level menu
- ✓ Forecasting is NOT binding
- ✓ Forecast on weekly usage
- ✓ No such thing as too much communication!

ment, evaluate, communicate

Your forecasting each diversion season for processing; share this information with your industry partners!



# Menu Checklist for USDA Foods & Processing

Done	Month	Task
	July/Aug	Make sure your contact & distributor information is updated in commodity tracking websites.
	Oct/Nov	Evaluate current menus. What is the participation per entree? What needs to change?
	Oct/Nov/Dec	Evaluate new products to drive participation. Attend shows, conduct cuttings, network, etc.
	Nov/Dec	Sample products with students & document preferences for procurement.
	Dec	Mid-year point: Where are you at with USDA pound utilization? What menu changes can you make it increase drawdown? Communicate those plans with your distributor.
	Dec	Communicate product interest and forecast for new products. Aggregate usage within Coop.
	Dec/Jan/Feb	Finalize product availability with distributors.
	Jan/Feb	Finalize your menu & procure products based on menu plans.
	Feb/March	Calculate USDA pounds needed for menu decisions to maximize entitlement spend. Always divert to your menu! Communicate plans with broker, manufacturer, distributor, state agency.
	February	Complete USDA Commodity Surveys diverting pounds to your survey and considering carry-over pounds.
	March	Mark your calendar with IDOE's due dates for all commodity codes for diversions.
	April/May/June	Update back-of-the-house tools for new products per bid awards. Finalize recipes and communicate forecast to industry partners. Place back to school orders.



## Where Do We Go From Here?

- Evaluate food costs and utilization of PAL
  - Conduct Cost Analysis of all goods in your operation
    - Is DOD Fresh the best bang for your buck vs. commercially purchased produce?
    - Are you utilizing your Direct Delivery (a.k.a. Brown Box) items?
    - Do you have the correct Processed items on your bid?
    - Is your inventory working for you to increase program participation?
- School Nutrition is one facet of the entire food service industry
  - Our pain is felt throughout every industry
    - Agriculture
    - Food Manufacturing
    - Food Service Management Programs
      - Healthcare
      - College & University
      - Retail & National Chain Accounts
      - K12 Foodservice
- Utilize every penny – don't leave PAL on the table
- Understand our 18-month business cycle and don't get caught off guard

# Regulatory Factors

# USDA Nutrition Standards Final Rule

**USDA Food and Nutrition Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

## FINAL RULE FOR SCHOOL MEAL STANDARDS

**Updated School Meal Standards: working towards a common goal of healthy children and helping them reach their full potential.**

School meals are the main source of nutrition for millions of children every school day. USDA is ensuring these meals are even more nourishing, while keeping them appealing to kids.

**Key Provisions**

- Whole Grains**  
80% WGR  
Schools may continue to offer a variety of nutrient-rich whole grains with options for some enriched grains (no changes in standard)
- Milk**  
No Change  
Continue to allow flavored and unflavored milk (no changes in standard) with new limits on added sugars
- Added Sugars**  
2025-2027  
Limit using a phased approach:
  - Phase 1:** Limits on specific high-sugar products (cereals, yogurt, flavored milk)
  - Phase 2:** Overall weekly limits
- Sodium**  
2027  
Gradually phase in one reduction of weekly limit



These regulations are do-able, industry is on-board, products are acceptable to students.



- ✓ Published April 25, 2024
- ✓ No changes until 2025
- ✓ FNS Requests: This is the final frontier

# Regulatory Updates Impacting School Nutrition

- Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) Strategy issued 9/9/25
  - Emphasis on whole foods, reduced ultra-processing, and ingredient transparency
    - Specific food additives of concern:
      - Food Colorings
      - Titanium Dioxide
      - Propylparaben
      - BHT
      - Artificial Sweeteners
        - » Generally Recognized as Safe Ingredients (GRAS) / Foods to be under review
    - Ultra-Processed Foods
      - Formal definition under development, FDA & USDA comment period open until October 23, 2025 at [Regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov)
  - Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2025-2030 anticipated by end of 2025
    - focal point of MAHA strategy and key influence of NSLP & NBP Meal Pattern Guidelines
  - MAHA's "Real Food First"
    - Minimize ultra-processed ingredients
    - Buy-American
    - Review of Allergens beyond the current 9 allergens



What's the consequence? Between economic uncertainty and evolving regulatory changes, food and goods are more expensive and business decisions are more challenging in every sector.

# “Clean Label” Initiatives Already in the Pipeline

- FDA sets food labeling and regulatory standards
- Top 9 Allergens recognized in US
  - 14 allergens recognized by EU & UK
    - Additions include: celery, mustard, sulphur dioxide, sulphites, lupin, and mollusks
- Red Dye No. 3 ban in US takes effect January 15, 2027
- What qualifies as “Clean Label” foods?
  - General Industry Leaders
    - Panera Bread and WaWa
  - Ingredient Guide for Better School Food Purchasing (Est. in 2014 & K12 industry coalition of contributors)
    - **A food product should include only whole foods like whole grains, fruits, vegetables, meats or dairy that are minimally processed or in their purest form; simply food made from food. A food product should not include unnecessary ingredients.**



# The No No List

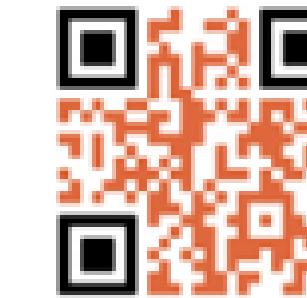
We are committed to food that is 100% clean in all our US bakery-cafes and grocery products. At Panera, clean describes food that does not contain artificial preservatives, sweeteners, and flavors along with colors from artificial sources. The list of ingredients that will never be in our pantry includes, but is not limited to:



Acesulfame K (Acesulfame Potassium)	Calcium Bromate	FD&C Colors	Potassium Bisulfate	Sodium Lactate
Alum (Aluminum Ammonium Sulfate/Aluminium Potassium Sulfate)	Calcium Peroxide	Glycerides (Mono, Di & Triglycerides, all forms)	Potassium Bromate	Sodium Lauryl Sulfate
Ammonium Chloride	Calcium Sorbate	Glycerol Ester of Wood Rosin	Potassium Lactate	Sodium Metabisulfite
Artificial Colors (Certified FD&C)	Canthaxanthin	High Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS)	Potassium Sorbate	Sodium Phosphate/ Disodium Phosphate/ Trisodium Phosphate
Artificial Flavors	Caprocaprylобehenin	Hydrogenated Starch	Propionates (Calcium, Potassium, Sodium)	Sorbates (Calcium, Potassium, Sodium)
Aspartame	Caramel Color (Classes II-IV)	Hydrolyzed Soy or Corn Protein	Propionic Acid	Sorbic Acid (Synthetic Only)
Astaxanthin (Synthetic Only)	Carboxymethyl Cellulose	Lard	Propyl Gallate	Stannous Chloride
Autolyzed Yeast Extract	Carmine/Cochineal	L-Cysteine (Cystine)	Propylene Glycol (Declarable)	Sucralose
Azo Dyes	DATEM (Diacetyl Tartaric Acid)	Maltodextrin (Declarable)	Propylene Glycol Alginate	Sucroglycerides
Azodicarbonamide	Diacetyl/Acetoin (Added, not naturally occurring)	Monosodium Glutamate/ Sodium Glutamate (Added, not naturally occurring)	Saccharin (Calcium Saccharin)	Sulfites (Added, not naturally occurring)
Benzoic Acid	Dipotassium Sulfate	Neotame	Salatrim	Sulfur Dioxide
Benzyl Alcohol/Benzoyl Peroxide (Synthetic Only)	Disodium Guanylate (GMP)	Nitrates/Nitrites (Added, not naturally occurring. Excludes those used for vitamin fortification)	Silicates/Bentonite [Calcium Aluminosilicate/Calcium Silicoaluminate/Sodium Calcium Silicoaluminate, Sodium Aluminosilicate/ Sodium Silico Aluminate, Calcium silicate, Magnesium Silicate (Synthetic Only), Aluminum silicate/Sodium bentonite]	Tertiary Butylhydroquinone (TBHQ)
BHA (Butylated Hydroxyanisole)	Disodium Inosinate (IMP)	Parabens (all)	Silicones/Siloxanes (Methyl Silicon, Dimethylpolysiloxane)	Theobromine (Added, not naturally occurring)
BHT (Butylated Hydroxytoluene)	EDTA (Calcium Disodium EDTA/Disodium Dihydrogen EDTA)	Partially Hydrogenated Oils/ Artificial Trans Fat	Artificial Smoke Flavor	Titanium Dioxide
Bromated Flour	Esters of Fatty Acids (Glycerol and Polyglycerol Esters)	Polydextrose	Sodium Benzoate	Triacetin/Glycerol Triacetate
Brominated Vegetable Oil	Ethoxyquin	Polyethylene Glycol (PEG)	Sodium Diacetate	Vanillin (Synthetic Only)
Caffeine (Added, not naturally occurring)	Fat Substitutes (Sucrose Polyester, Microparticulated)	Polysorbates (all)		

# Ingredient Guide for Better School Food Purchasing

Science-based tool created by school nutrition professionals in partnership with Center for Science in Public Interest



## UNWANTED LIST



Ingredients that are not acceptable at any level in newly developed products, and should be eliminated over time from existing products.

### ① ARTIFICIAL COLORS

Synthetic Food Dyes (Blue 1, Blue 2, Green 3, Red 3, Red 40, Yellow 5, Yellow 6)

Caramel Color CL 3-4

Titanium Dioxide

### ② ARTIFICIAL & UNSPECIFIED NATURAL FLAVORS

### ③ ARTIFICIAL PRESERVATIVES

Butylated Hydroxyanisole (BHA)

Butylated Hydroxytoluene (BHT)

Propyl Gallate

Tert-Butylhydroquinone (TBHQ)

### ④ ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS & OTHER SUGAR-FREE (Non-Nutritive, Low-Calorie and Reduced-Calorie) SWEETENERS

### ⑤ EMULSIFIERS

Brominated Vegetable Oil (BVO)  
Carboxymethylcellulose (CMC) and Polysorbates

### ⑥ FLOUR TREATMENT AGENTS

Bromated Flour/Potassium Bromate  
Azodicarbonamide (ADA)  
Potassium Iodate

## WATCH LIST



Ingredients common in foods of lower nutritional quality, and/or tend to indicate a highly processed food. Watch, limit, demand transparency and accountability in their use.

### ① ADDED SODIUM

### ② ADDED SUGARS (INCLUDING SUGARY SYRUPS)

### ③ CAFFEINE (Especially Added Caffeine)

### ④ NATURAL FLAVORS (Specified)

### ⑤ PHOSPHORIC ACID & PHOSPHATES

### ⑥ NITRITES/NITRATES & PROCESSED MEAT

### ⑦ REFINED OR WHITE (including Bleached) FLOUR

### ⑧ SUGARS METABOLIZED DIFFERENTLY FROM TRADITIONAL SUGARS:

Allulose  
Tagatose

### ⑨ THICKENING AGENTS

Carrageenan

## ALLERGENS & SENSITIVITIES



In addition to the top nine most common food allergies schools are already familiar with (peanuts, tree nuts, soy, wheat, dairy, egg, fish, shellfish, sesame), this new Allergens & Sensitivities category is for school districts to be aware of these potentially problematic ingredients and better equipped to minimize reactions and maximize safety for the majority of our students.

### ① COLORINGS (Naturally Derived)

Annatto

Cochineal Extract/Carmine

### ④ MYCOPROTEIN

### ARTIFICIAL PRESERVATIVES

Benzoates and Benzoic Acid

Sulfites

### ② HYDROLYZED VEGETABLE PROTEIN (HVP)

### ③ MONOSODIUM GLUTAMATE (MSG)

# Implications of Clean Label Initiative

- Products reformulated to focus on whole foods and minimally processed eliminating unnecessary ingredients
- Call to Action: Define what is meaningful to you and tell your stakeholders
  - Districts are implementing metrics on bids and RFP's to evaluate products on more than just pricing.
  - Tool for communicating ingredient label considerations to K12 Nutrition Program stakeholders, e.g. students, parents, administration, community
- Increased emphasis on speed-scratch cooking to utilize minimally processed goods
- Ultimately → higher quality, but more \$\$\$

Plain, Fully Cooked Ground Beef  
In 5 LBS Boilable, Steamable Bag  
100% Beef, No Additives or Coloring



Plain, Fully Cooked Ground Beef  
Crumbles, Prepared,  
No Additional Ingredients



Beef Crumbles + Marinara Sauce



# Food Industry Trends



# Food Industry Trends for 2025

## Consumer Behavior & Preferences

- ✓ Favor smaller, local restaurants
- ✓ Increased demand for plant-based, vegetarian, vegan dishes
- ✓ Seeking experiential dining with immersive experiences, e.g. themes
- ✓ Tech integration for seamless takeout

## Menu & Culinary Innovation

- ✓ Increase menu variety
  - Streamlined menus
  - Limited Time Offers (LTO)
- ✓ Bold flavors
- ✓ Nostalgic and playful options
  - “Newstalgia”



## Regional Faves

**FOOD TREND: HOT HONEY IS HEATING UP!**

Hot honey is one of the hottest food trends right now! According to Datassential, hot honey is predicted to grow in menu penetration by 7% by 2029\*. From pizza and waffles to bowls and tacos, chefs and kids alike love it for adding just the right mix of sweet and spicy. It's a fun way to turn everyday meals into something exciting! \*Datassential, Menu Trends, June 2025

**CHOPPED CHEESE**  
• Est. 1990 • Bronx, NY

The Chopped Cheese sandwich was first made at a deli in the Bronx. It's made by grilling up ground beef, chopped onions, and seasonings and combining it all with melted cheese. It's been a local favorite for years, and now thanks to social media, is becoming a favorite across the country.

**FOOD TREND: FUSION DISHES ARE POPPING UP!**

According to Datassential's annual K-12 report, students are increasingly drawn to fusion dishes that combine elements from different culinary traditions, such as Korean tacos and birria ramen. Try introducing new globally-inspired dishes as an LTO (limited time offer) to create buzz and excitement!

## RETRO REMIX

**WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN**  
NEW-STALGIC MEALS

'New-stalgic' recipes are a blend of old and new, taking comforting classics and giving them a fresh twist. They provide a modern flair while still preserving the warmth of nostalgic food memories.

**MAC MY DAY...**

Bowl concepts, including mac and cheese bowls, are a rising food trend, offering customizable meal options for students while allowing districts to use products and ingredients that already have on hand.

**The Frito Pie Debate...**

**The Texas Claim:**

- Many Texans believe Frito pie originated in San Antonio, with Daisy Doolin creating it in the 1930s.
- She reportedly combined her son's Fritos with chili and toppings like cheese and onions, creating a casserole-like dish.
- The dish gained popularity in Texas, particularly at sporting events and concession stands.

**The New Mexico Claim:**

- New Mexicans often associate Frito pie with Teresa Hernandez, who worked at a Woolworth's lunch counter in Santa Fe in the 1960s.
- She served the dish by layering chili, cheese, and onions on top of Fritos in the opened bag, creating a convenient, single-serving meal.

## CRAVE STATION



Product Info &amp; Recipes

# Inventory Management



Multiple applications per menu item

Goal: A minimum of 3 menu applications per inventory item

✓ Staff comfort with product

✓ Increase Inventory Turnover

✓ Forecast with confidence

Inventory Item	Menu Concept 1	Menu Concept 2	Menu Concept 3	Menu Concept 4
<b>Popcorn Chicken</b>	Popcorn Chicken with Dinner Roll	Popcorn Chicken Bowl & Dinner Roll	Popcorn Chicken Salad	Asian Sauced Popcorn Chicken & Rice
<b>Cheese Wedge Pizza</b>	Cheese Pizza	Top with Basil for Margarita	Top with Breakfast Pork Sausage	Top with Turkey Pepperoni
<b>Beef Taco Meat</b>	Supreme Nachos	Walking Taco	Burrito Bowl	Loaded Totchos
<b>Deli Turkey</b>	Turkey & Cheese Deli Sandwich	Chef Salad	Bento Box: charcuterie Tray	Deli roll-up with tortilla wrap
<b>Canned, Prepared Marinara Sauce</b>	Spaghetti with Marinara Sauce	Prepared Ravioli with Marinara Sauce	Chicken Parmesan Sandwich with Sliced White American Cheese & Marinara Sauce	Meatball Submarine Sandwich
<b>Potato Wedges</b>	Chili Loaded Potatoes: Loaded Potato Wedges with Chili, Cheese, and Broccoli Florets	Brunch for lunch bowl: Potato wedges topped with Egg Scramble and cheese	Potato Taco Bowl: Potato wedges topped with taco, cheddar cheese sauce, and salsa	Pulled Pork Bowl: Potato wedges topped with BBQ Pulled Pork and served with Cornbread
<b>Cheddar Cheese Sauce</b>	Nachos Supreme with Cheddar Cheese Sauce	Loaded Totchos with Cheddar Cheese Sauce	Soft Pretzel with Cheddar Cheese Dipping Sauce	Loaded hot dog bar
<b>Macaroni &amp; Cheese</b>	As is with breadstick	Buffalo Macaroni & Cheese	Hamburger Helper Lookalike: Mac & Cheese + with Sloppy Joe	Build your own Mac & Cheese Bowl topped with BBQ Pulled Pork
<b>Cheese Stuffed Breadstick</b>	Breakfast Bites topped with cinnamon sugar	Ranch Bites topped with dry ranch dressing mix	Buffalo Bites brushed with buffalo wing sauce	Italian Bites topped with Garlic Spray, Italian Seasoning and Parmesan Cheese

# The Versatility of Cheese

Cheddar Cheese  
Sauce



Beef Nachos



Speed Scratch Mac & Cheese



Cheddar Gravy & Meatballs



Beef & Cheddar Hoagie

Low Sodium  
Alfredo Sauce



Chicken Alfredo



Penne Rosa Pasta



Chicken Bacon Flatbread



Tomato Soup

Queso Blanco Sauce



Loaded Nachos



Philly Cheesesteak



Queso Chicken Chili



Buffalo Chicken Dip

Mac & Cheese



BBQ Mac & Cheese



Buffalo Mac & Cheese



Junk Yard Dog



Cowboy Quesadilla

# Speed-Scratch Cooking



- Lean on industry partners and their resources
  - Culinary Teams
  - Marketing Teams
  - Incorporating industry Metrics
  - Nationally Networked
  - Complimentary Training
- Speed-Scratch Pro Tips:
  - Start small, 1-2 items to build staff confidence
  - 4 ingredients or less for ease in execution
  - Utilize LTO's for testing new ideas
  - Utilize cycle menus for necessary forecasting

 <b>Buffalo Chicken Melt</b> Queso Blanco Sauce	 <b>Queso Tomato Soup</b> Tomato Soup + Queso Blanco Sauce	 <b>Cajun Chicken Pasta</b> Alfredo Sauce		
 <b>Cravy Gravy</b> Cheddar Cheese Sauce	 <b>Spicy Taco Mac</b> Signature Spicy Queso + Beef Taco Filling	 <b>Korean BBQ Tacos</b> Seasoned Beef Philly Steak + Korean BBQ Sauce		
 <b>Southwest Philly Steak</b> Seasoned Beef Philly Steak + Queso Blanco Sauce	 <b>Beef Stroganoff</b> Seasoned Beef Philly Steak + Cheddar Cheese Sauce	 <b>Birria Tacos</b> Seasoned Beef Philly Steak + Birria Sauce		
 2022 Crave Collection	 2023 Crave Collection	 2024 Crave Collection	 2025 Crave Collection	 Featured Recipes

# Building Community for Program Acceptance

## Innovative Thinking in the Midwest:

- Owensboro Public (KY) Menu Madness menu competition
- Northwest Allen Co (IN) "Chopped" competition amongst kitchens for new menu items
- Taste of Cincinnati Public (OH)
- Sumner Co (TN) Inviting: "nay-sayers" to join you for school lunch
- Dayton Public (OH): Inviting CFO/COO to tour industry plants/ warehousing
- Daviess Co (KY): Focus Group Style Testing for objective data collection



# Competitive Product Analysis

## Product ABC

Product A vs. Product B.

State:

Pack Size:

Serving Size:

Servings per Case by Meal Contribution:

DF Value per Case:

Case Price:

Cost per serving:

Sodium (mg) per meal contribution:

First Ingredient:

Shelf Life:



Taco Tuesday

Product Number	Product Description	😊	😢	Comments
1	Beef Taco			
2	Pork Taco			
3	Chicken Taco			

# Menu Changes & New Item Consideration

## Industry Pro-Tips

- ✓ Engage student focus groups for objective data collection
- ✓ Engage head cooks and site supervisors in menu decisions
- ✓ Ask industry to cross-merchandise to maximize USDA Food Utilization
  - This is what the broker does!
- ✓ Utilize buying group / coop and distributor forecasting tools to share new product interest.



# Take-Home Messages



There is NOT unlimited PAL (Entitlement); communicate your needs and don't leave money on the table with processors



Increase PAL (entitlement) by increasing participation; optimize your money during diversion season and don't leave any on the table



Innovation is happening all around us; you attending this conference means you're already ahead of the curve. Let's network and learn from one another!