

# A New Menu

*USDA changes nutritional standards for school meals.*

On Jan. 13, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) published a proposed rule to update the nutrition standards for meals served through the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs as

part of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, signed into law by President Barack Obama Dec. 13, 2010.

According to a USDA news release, the new proposed meal requirements will raise

standards for the first time in 15 years and will make critical changes to school meals to help improve the health and nutrition of nearly 32 million kids that participate in school meal programs every school day.

“The United States is facing an obesity epidemic and the crisis of poor diets threatens the future of our children — and our nation,” said Ag Secretary Tom Vilsack. “With many children consuming as many as half their daily calories at school, strengthening nutritional standards is an important step in the Obama administration’s effort to combat childhood obesity and improve the health and wellbeing of all our kids.”

The proposed changes to school meal standards, which would add more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fat-free and low-fat milk to school meals, are based on recommendations released in October 2009 by the National Academies’ Institute of Medicine (IOM) and presented in their report, “School Meals: Building Blocks for Healthy Children.” Schools would also be required to limit the levels of saturated fat, sodium, calories and trans fats in

## **Table 1: Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010:**

### **Before/after elementary school lunch menu**

#### **MONDAY**

##### **BEFORE**

Bean and cheese burrito (5.3 oz.) with mozzarella cheese (1 oz.)  
Applesauce (¼ cup)  
Orange juice (4 oz.)  
2% milk (8 oz.)

##### **AFTER**

Submarine sandwich (1 oz. turkey, 0.5 oz. low-fat cheese) on whole-wheat roll  
Refried beans (½ cup)  
Jicama (¼ cup)  
Green pepper strips (¼ cup)  
Cantaloupe wedges, raw (½ cup)  
Skim milk (8 oz.)  
Mustard (9 g)  
Reduced-fat mayonnaise (1 oz.)  
Low-fat ranch dip (1 oz.)

#### **TUESDAY**

##### **BEFORE**

Hot dog on bun (3 oz.) with ketchup (4 Tbs.)  
Canned pears (¼ cup)  
Raw celery and carrots (⅓ cup each) with ranch dressing (1.75 Tbs.)  
Low-fat (1%) chocolate milk (8 oz.)

##### **AFTER**

Whole-wheat spaghetti with meat sauce (½ cup) and whole-wheat roll  
Green beans, cooked (½ cup)  
Broccoli (½ cup)  
Cauliflower (½ cup)  
Kiwi halves, raw (½ cup)  
Low-fat (1%) milk (8 oz.)  
Low-fat ranch dip (1 oz.)  
Soft margarine (5 g)

#### **WEDNESDAY**

##### **BEFORE**

Pizza sticks (3.8 oz.) with marinara sauce (¼ cup)  
Banana  
Raisins (1 oz.)  
Whole milk (8 oz.)

meals. See Table 1 for a comparison of the proposed nutrition standards.

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act gives schools and communities new tools to meet the challenge of providing more nutritious food, including increasing school lunch reimbursements by 6¢ per meal, and increasing technical assistance. School meal programs are a partnership between USDA, State agencies and local schools, and USDA will work with schools and communities to help improve meals so that they are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

“Raising a healthier generation of kids will require hard work and commitment of a host of partners,” said Vilsack. “We understand that these improved meal standards may present challenges for some school districts, but the new law provides important new resources, technical assistance and flexibility to help schools raise the bar for our kids.”

According to government data, almost 32% of children 6 to 19 years of age are overweight or obese; the number of obese children in this age range has

trebled in the last few decades. These children are more likely to have risk factors associated with chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and Type 2 diabetes. Updated school meal standards are a central part of the strategy developed by President Obama’s Childhood Obesity Task Force to provide healthier food at schools, and in turn, work toward resolving childhood obesity.

USDA is seeking input on the

proposed rule from the public through April 13, 2011. Those interested in reviewing the proposal and offering comments are encouraged to do so at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov), a web-based portal to make it easy for citizens to participate in the Federal rulemaking process. All comments received will be considered carefully in finalizing the rule before it is implemented.

USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service

(FNS) oversees the administration of 15 nutrition assistance programs, including the child nutrition programs, that touch the lives of one in four Americans over the course of a year. These programs work in concert to form a national safety net against hunger. Visit [www.fns.usda.gov](http://www.fns.usda.gov) for information about FNS and nutrition assistance programs.



### WEDNESDAY

#### AFTER

Chef Salad (1 cup romaine, 0.5 oz. low-fat mozzarella, 1.5 oz. grilled chicken) with whole-wheat soft pretzel (2.5 oz.)

Corn, cooked (½ cup)

Baby carrots, raw (¼ cup)

Banana

Skim chocolate milk (8 oz.)

Low-fat ranch dressing (1.5 oz.)

Low-fat Italian dressing (1.5 oz.)

### THURSDAY

#### BEFORE

Breaded beef patty (4 oz.) with ketchup (2 Tbs.)

Wheat roll (2 oz.)

Frozen fruit juice bar (2.4 oz.)

2% milk (8 oz.)

#### AFTER

Oven-baked fish nuggets (2 oz.) with whole-wheat roll

Mashed potatoes (½ cup)

Steamed broccoli (½ cup)

Peaches (canned, packed in juice — ½ cup)

Skim milk (8 oz.)

Tartar sauce (1.5 oz.)

Soft margarine (5 g)

### FRIDAY

#### BEFORE

Cheese pizza (4.8 oz.)

Canned pineapple (¼ cup)

Tater tots (½ cup) with ketchup (2 Tbs.)

Low-fat (1%) chocolate milk (8 oz.)

#### AFTER

Whole-wheat cheese pizza (1 slice)

Baked sweet potato fries (½ cup)

Grape tomatoes, raw (¼ cup)

Applesauce (½ cup)

Low-fat (1%) milk (8 oz.)

Low-fat ranch dip (1 oz.)