

SAMPLE SCHOOL LUNCH MENU: SPEED SCRATCH

K-8

Speed Scratch

Speed scratch menus blend convenience with culinary creativity—featuring partially prepared components that staff can combine or finish on-site for a fresher, more customized offering. These menus highlight how speed scratch preparation can enhance flavor, presentation, and student interest while aligning with the latest USDA requirements.

When it works best:

Speed scratch menus are ideal for districts that want the appeal and freshness of scratch cooking but need the time savings and consistency of partially prepared components.



To support school nutrition professionals in preparing for the [updated lunch nutrition standards on added sugars and sodium](#), taking effect in School Year 2027–2028, this sample menu offers practical, compliant menu planning aligned with the new benchmarks. Since January 2026, schools have been able to offer a **wider variety of fluid milk options**, including whole and reduced-fat milk. This menu demonstrates how higher-fat milk options can be successfully incorporated. Our goal is not only to provide menus that meet USDA requirements, but also to spark excitement and encourage greater student participation in school meal programs.

WEEK 1	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
ENTRÉES	Mac & Cheese Bowl ^{WG} w/ BBQ Chicken Siracha Chicken Wrap w/ Asian Slaw^{WG}	Beef & Lentil Taco w/ Cilantro Yogurt Sauce^{WG} Chicken Caesar Salad w/ Caesar Dressing	Tandoori Chicken Leg w/ Raita Dip & Brown Rice^{WG} Seasonal Fruit & Yogurt Parfait ^{WG}	Spaghetti ^{WG} w/ Italian Meat Sauce or Marinara Sauce Cheesy Pesto Chicken Wrap^{WG}	Cheese or Pepperoni Pizza ^{WG} Spicy Chickpea Salad w/ Flatbread^{WG}
VEGETABLES	Steamed Broccoli Baby Carrots	Seasoned Pinto Beans Esquites–Mexican Street Corn Lettuce & Diced Tomatoes	Potato Wedges Cherry Tomatoes	Roasted Cauliflower w/ Parmesan Romaine Salad	Lemon Roasted Carrots Cucumber Coins
FRUIT	Green Apple Wedges Frozen Mixed Berry Cup	Bananas Grapes	Orange Wedges Cinnamon Applesauce	Fresh Pears Honeydew Melon & Grapes	Red Apple Wedges Raisins
MILK	Whole Milk* 2% Chocolate Milk 1% Lactose-free Milk*	Whole Milk* 2% Chocolate Milk 1% Lactose-free Milk*	Whole Milk* 2% Chocolate Milk 1% Lactose-free Milk*	Whole Milk* 2% Chocolate Milk 1% Lactose-free Milk*	Whole Milk* 2% Chocolate Milk 1% Lactose-free Milk*
CONDIMENTS	Ranch Dressing	Ranch Dressing, Salsa, Shredded Cheese	Ranch Dressing	Ranch Dressing	Ranch Dressing, Parmesan
WEIGHTED AVERAGE	590 kcal	749 kcal	545 kcal	623 kcal	576 kcal

WG = Whole Grain | Vegetable Sub-Groups: [Dark Green](#), [Red/Orange](#), [Starchy](#), [Legume](#), [Other](#) | *Unflavored milk options

DIETARY SPECIFICATIONS AVERAGE FOR WEEK 1	K-8 Menu Average	K-8 Target
CALORIES (KCAL)	617	600 min / 650 max
SATURATED FAT (% OF TOTAL CALORIES) <i>Milk sat fat is excluded from analysis</i>	8.3%	< 10%
ADDED SUGARS (% OF TOTAL CALORIES)	3.8%	< 10% (by July 1, 2027)
SODIUM (MG)	914	< 935 (by July 1, 2027)

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WEEK 2	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
ENTRÉES	Crispy Baked Chicken w/ Scones ^{WG} Sunbutter Sandwich ^{WG}	Fish Tacos ^{WG} w/ Mango Salsa Cobb Salad w/ Ranch Dressing	Orange Chicken w/ Fried Brown Rice ^{WG} Peachy King Smoothie w/ Graham Crackers ^{WG}	Penne Pasta Alfredo ^{WG} w/ Chicken Meatballs Cuban Sandwich ^{WG}	Hamburger on a Bun ^{WG} Pepperoni Pizza Pasta Bowl ^{WG}
VEGETABLES	Mashed Potatoes Steamed Green Beans	Seasoned Black Beans Cucumber Coins w/ Tajin	Steamed Broccoli Baby Carrots	Kale Crunch Salad Cherry Tomatoes	Sweet Potato Fries Spicy Three Bean Salad Lettuce, Tomatoes, & Pickles
FRUIT	Green Apple Wedges Frozen Mixed Berry Cup	Bananas Grapes	Orange Wedges Cinnamon Applesauce	Fresh Pears Honeydew Melon & Grapes	Red Apple Wedges Raisins
MILK	Whole Milk* 2% Chocolate Milk 1% Lactose-free Milk*	Whole Milk* 2% Chocolate Milk 1% Lactose-free Milk*	Whole Milk* 2% Chocolate Milk 1% Lactose-free Milk*	Whole Milk* 2% Chocolate Milk 1% Lactose-free Milk*	Whole Milk* 2% Chocolate Milk 1% Lactose-free Milk*
CONDIMENTS	Ketchup, BBQ Sauce, Gravy	Salsa, Ranch Dressing	Ranch Dressing	Ranch Dressing	Ketchup, Mustard, Mayo
WEIGHTED AVERAGE	719 kcal	594 kcal	486 kcal	651 kcal	677 kcal

WG = Whole Grain | Vegetable Sub-Groups: [Dark Green](#), [Red/Orange](#), [Starchy](#), [Legume](#), [Other](#) | *Unflavored milk options

DIETARY SPECIFICATIONS AVERAGE FOR WEEK 2	K-8 Menu Average	K-8 Target
CALORIES (KCAL)	625	600 min / 650 max
SATURATED FAT (% OF TOTAL CALORIES) <i>Milk sat fat is excluded from analysis</i>	7.2%	< 10%
ADDED SUGARS (% OF TOTAL CALORIES)	5.3%	< 10% (by July 1, 2027)
SODIUM (MG)	855	< 935 (by July 1, 2027)



Menu Planning Tips

OFFER BUILD-YOUR-OWN (BYO) BOWLS

Boost choice and participation; easily supports vegetarian options.

VARY PROTEINS

Rotate flavors and styles (roasted, crispy, spicy, global cuisines).

USE USDA FOODS

Add variety with items like catfish or frozen fruit cups.

BREAKFAST FOR LUNCH

Great Monday option; popular with all ages.

FRIDAY SNACK PACKS

Convenient, grab-and-go for busy students.

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WEEK 3	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
ENTRÉES	Breakfast Grilled Cheese^{WG} w/ Hot Honey Yogurt Sauce Sunbutter Sandwich ^{WG}	Enchiladas Verdes^{WG} w/ Spanish Rice^{WG} Chef Salad w/ Ranch Dressing	Korean Beef Bowl w/ Brown Rice ^{WG} Mediterranean Hummus Cup w/ Flatbread ^{WG}	Cheese Lasagna ^{WG} w/ Garlic Bread Stick ^{WG} Curry Chicken Salad Flatbread Sandwich^{WG}	Grilled Chicken Sandwich on a Bun ^{WG} Htipiti Whipped Feta and Red Pepper Spread Bento Box^{WG}
VEGETABLES	Roasted Redskin Potatoes Cucumber Coins	Seasoned Pinto Beans Lettuce & Diced Tomatoes	Edamame Cherry Tomatoes	Steamed Green Beans Romaine Salad	Corn Celery Sticks & Baby Carrots
FRUIT	Mango Lassi Frozen Mixed Berry Cup	Bananas Grapes	Orange Wedges Cinnamon Applesauce	Fresh Pears Honeydew Melon & Grapes	Red Apple Wedges Raisins
MILK	Whole Milk* 2% Chocolate Milk 1% Lactose-free Milk*	Whole Milk* 2% Chocolate Milk 1% Lactose-free Milk*	Whole Milk* 2% Chocolate Milk 1% Lactose-free Milk*	Whole Milk* 2% Chocolate Milk 1% Lactose-free Milk*	Whole Milk* 2% Chocolate Milk 1% Lactose-free Milk*
CONDIMENTS	Ranch Dressing	Ranch Dressing	Ranch Dressing	Ranch Dressing	Ketchup, Mustard, Mayo, Ranch Dressing
WEIGHTED AVERAGE	674 kcal	670 kcal	649 kcal	594 kcal	648 kcal

WG = Whole Grain | Vegetable Sub-Groups: Dark Green, Red/Orange, Starchy, Legume, Other | *Unflavored milk options

DIETARY SPECIFICATIONS AVERAGE FOR WEEK 3	K-8 Menu Average	K-8 Target
CALORIES (KCAL)	647	600 min / 650 max
SATURATED FAT (% OF TOTAL CALORIES) <i>Milk sat fat is excluded from analysis</i>	7.0%	< 10%
ADDED SUGARS (% OF TOTAL CALORIES)	5.2%	< 10% (by July 1, 2027)
SODIUM (MG)	931	< 935 (by July 1, 2027)



Menu Planning Tips

KEEP SIDES COLORFUL

Rotate fruits/veggies and use seasonal options for appeal and value.

PAIR SIDES SMARTLY

Combine simple items to create new dishes.

ENHANCE FRUIT APPEAL

Use berries or premium fruits as garnishes.

START WEEK WITH FROZEN FRUIT

Helps bridge gaps before fresh deliveries.

USE DRIED FRUIT

No added sugar; helps reduce end-of-week waste.

EXPANDED MILK OPTIONS

When schools offer milk options students recognize and enjoy, they are more likely to drink it and waste less, helping them to meet their daily nutrition needs to support their growth and development. Here are three key things to know about higher-fat milk options:

1) WHOLE AND REDUCED-FAT MILK AND HEALTHY WEIGHT IN CHILDREN

A growing body of research indicates that whole and reduced-fat milk are not associated with increased risk of overweight or obesity in children. Several studies have found neutral or even beneficial associations with body composition and cardiometabolic health.¹⁻⁵

2) THE DAIRY MATRIX HELPS EXPLAIN THE UNIQUENESS OF DAIRY FOODS ACROSS FAT LEVELS

Whole milk is often characterized by its saturated fat content (i.e., 5 g per serving). However, saturated fat in dairy foods is complex and includes a diverse array of over 400 unique fatty acids—including short-, medium-, branched- and odd-chain fatty acids—that have been linked with health benefits for satiety, gut health and body composition.⁶⁻⁹ Dietary fat plays an important role in childhood growth by helping support energy needs, brain development and absorption of fat-soluble vitamins.¹⁰

3) OFFERING MILK KIDS ENJOY MAY IMPROVE NUTRIENT INTAKE

Taste and familiarity play an important role in children's food choices. Consumer research shows that whole and reduced-fat milk are the most purchased milk types in U.S. households, indicating that many children already consume them at home.¹¹ Data also show that whole milk represents a larger share of milk purchases among Black, Asian and acculturated Hispanic households, with this preference especially pronounced in households with children.¹²

Keeping Milk Cold & Safe

STORAGE

Maintain milk at ~35°F in walk-in or milk box cooler.

SERVICE BEST PRACTICES

Serve between 35–40°F, minimize cooler door openings, and ensure proper airflow. Keep milk in the cooler during service; do not place it outside the cooler.

TEMPERATURE CHECKS

Use digital thermometers and maintain logs.

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