

SAMPLE SCHOOL LUNCH MENU: SPEED SCRATCH

9-12

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 Veggie Burger on a Bun ^{WG} <u>Siracha Chicken Wrap</u> w/ <u>Asian Slaw</u> ^{WG}	<u>Beef & Lentil Taco</u> w/ <u>Cilantro Yogurt</u> <u>Sauce</u> ^{WG} Grilled Cheese Sandwich ^{WG} Chicken Caesar Salad w/ Caesar Dressing	<u>Chicken Tikka Masala</u> w/ <u>Brown Rice</u> ^{WG} Crispy Catfish w/ Cornbread ^{WG} <u>Peachy King Smoothie</u> w/ Graham Crackers ^{WG}	<u>Pasta Bar</u> : Spaghetti ^{WG} or Penne Pasta ^{WG} <u>Choice of Sauce</u> : Marinara Sauce, Alfredo Sauce w/ Chicken Meatballs, or Italian Meat Sauce Served w/ Garlic Bread ^{WG} <u>Curry Chicken Salad Flatbread Sandwich</u> ^{WG}	Cheese or Pepperoni Pizza ^{WG} Spicy Chicken Sandwich ^{WG} <u>Htipiti Whipped Feta and Red Pepper Spread Bento Box</u> ^{WG}
VEGETABLES	Steamed Broccoli Roasted Potato Wedges Lettuce, Tomatoes, & Pickles	Seasoned Pinto Beans <u>Esquites—Mexican Street Corn</u> Lettuce & Diced Tomatoes	Steamed Green Beans 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	Ketchup, Mustard, Mayo	Ranch Dressing, Salsa, Shredded Cheese	Ketchup, Tarter Sauce, Ranch Dressing	Ranch Dressing	Ranch Dressing, Ketchup, Parmesan
WEIGHTED AVERAGE	781 kcal	889 kcal	654 kcal	719 kcal	711 kcal

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

DIETARY SPECIFICATIONS AVERAGE FOR WEEK 1	9-12 Menu Average	9-12 Target
CALORIES (KCAL)	751	750 min / 850 max
SATURATED FAT (% OF TOTAL CALORIES) <i>Milk sat fat is excluded from analysis</i>	7.2%	< 10%
ADDED SUGARS (% OF TOTAL CALORIES)	4.3%	< 10% (by July 1, 2027)
SODIUM (MG)	1,080	< 1,080 (by July 1, 2027)

SAMPLE SCHOOL LUNCH MENU: SPEED SCRATCH

9-12

WEEK 2	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
ENTRÉES	Breakfast Grilled Cheese^{WG} w/ Hot Honey Yogurt Sauce Crispy Baked Chicken w/ Scones^{WG} Sunbutter Sandwich ^{WG} w/ String Cheese	Fish Tacos ^{WG} w/ Mango Salsa Enchiladas Verdes^{WG} w/ Spanish Rice ^{WG} Cobb Salad w/ Ranch Dressing	Orange Chicken w/ Fried Brown Rice ^{WG} Korean Beef Bowl w/ Brown Rice ^{WG} Seasonal Fruit & Yogurt Parfait ^{WG}	Potato Bar : Baked Potato w/ Choice of Toppings: Cheese, Chicken, Chili Cheese Lasagna ^{WG} Cheesy Pesto Chicken Wrap^{WG}	Cuban Sandwich^{WG} Hamburger on a Bun ^{WG} Pepperoni Pizza Pasta Bowl^{WG}
VEGETABLES	Roasted Redskin Potatoes Cherry Tomatoes	Seasoned Black Beans Cucumber Coins w/ Tajin	Edamame Baby Carrots	Roasted Broccoli Romaine Salad	Sweet Potato Fries Spicy Three Bean Salad Lettuce, Tomatoes, & Pickles
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, Ketchup	Salsa, Ranch Dressing	Ranch Dressing	Ranch Dressing	Ketchup, Mustard, Mayo
WEIGHTED AVERAGE	881 kcal	800 kcal	679 kcal	792 kcal	866 kcal

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

DIETARY SPECIFICATIONS AVERAGE FOR WEEK 2	9-12 Menu Average	9-12 Target
CALORIES (KCAL)	804	750 min / 850 max
SATURATED FAT (% OF TOTAL CALORIES) <i>Milk sat fat is excluded from analysis</i>	7.6%	< 10%
ADDED SUGARS (% OF TOTAL CALORIES)	4.9%	< 10% (by July 1, 2027)
SODIUM (MG)	1,079	< 1,080 (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.

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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