

Food Trends

Nurturing Healthy Minds & Bodies
in K-12 Texas Schools

Published by ECI Management Group

Schools Seek Flexibility in their Meal Programs

All-inclusive works well for some, not all

In a culture where popularity means a lot, dining at Union High School is not only tasty and nutritious, it's cool. Participation in the Union lunch program last year hovered around 18 percent; now the lunchbox is passé and the lunch tray is solidly in style. Chalk it up to the institution's recent switch to an all-inclusive lunch program.

According to a study at Cornell University, lunch programs that provide food for a school's entire student population are relevant to the development of good eating habits. These all-inclusive programs help to reduce waste and encourages personal responsibility in making healthy choices. Of course, as in all school operations, lunch programs are hardly one plan fits all.

The business manager of one Houston private K-12 school took the leap into

all-inclusive three years ago. At the onset of the program excitement was high, but now the school is a bit disenchanted by the rigid structure of the system. All-inclusive might be a comprehensive option, but it's not the only one, and the management must offer flexibility to the schools needs.

Keep searching for a choice that's healthy—and trendy—for your school.

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Gingerbread House Workshop Event

This time of year is when things get sticky—and delicious—for Corporate Chef Michael Mosses of ECI Management Group.

As the holidays approach, he creates 1,200 gingerbread houses for the Presbyterian School of Houston. It's an architectural undertaking that requires seven days of work, 100 gallons of icing and one fantastic gingerbread recipe!

Management Company Keeps Kids, School Budgets, Healthy

Kids are picky sometimes, and so are schools when it comes to choosing a lunch program. Every student body has its idiosyncrasies, and it's important to provide healthy options for even the most selective of youngsters. That's why Houston food service company ECI Management Group works to offer flexibility in its programs, allowing schools to keep their kids, parents and treasurers happy.

ECI works to tailor lunch programs specifically to a school's community. The company offers flexibility on many levels, collaborating with school leadership to build programs that are all-inclusive, pay-as-you-go, or a hybrid of the two.

It's all in the details, from selecting new healthy options to deciding whether or not to eliminate less nutritious choices. The open structure allows ECI to implement its state of the art educational programs that help students make good food choices outside of the school dining hall. Frank Ricupati, President of ECI Management Group, notes: "A plan won't work if it doesn't fit into the school's budget, so ECI customizes the payment structure to accommodate a school's."

A plan won't work if it doesn't fit into the school's budget, so ECI customizes the payment structure to accommodate a school's business needs as well. It's a fluid philosophy that extends to the company's investments, community involvement and educational partnerships as well. Revolutionary!

ECI Management Group

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An Apple A Day

Healthy Holidays: Rethink your fats

A recent study in The New England Journal of Medicine found that the average American gains about a pound over the holidays each year. It doesn't sound too bad, but the report also noted that we don't tend to lose that extra weight—ever. Ten years on, it starts to show!

Keeping an eye on your plate during the holidays is key to staying spry for the rest of the year. This doesn't mean you have to give up on all your favorite seasonal delicacies. Start by making a few simple swaps in the kitchen.

Our holiday diets are packed with saturated fats and cholesterol, so trading in some healthy mono- and polyunsaturated fats can really make a difference. Try baking or grilling instead of frying, or use canola oil instead of vegetable oil. For salads, sprinkle on some olive or walnut oil in place of dairy-based dressings. As for those holiday cookies... well, maybe one is okay. Or two.



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- Is an all-inclusive lunch program the right choice?
- The Gingerbread House Event!
- How to tailor your lunch program to your school.
- An Apple A Day: How much do we gain over the holidays?
- Out Of The Oven: Cranberry Recipe

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Out Of The Oven

Cranberries are a must-have for certain holiday dinners. Lucky for us they're naturally low in carbs. Unfortunately, almost all the cranberry relishes and sauces you'll find in your market are full of sugar! This relish is all about the cranberries, and without all that unnecessary sugar!



INGREDIENTS

1 cup sugar substitute (recommended: Splenda)
1 cup water
12 ounces fresh or frozen cranberries
1 teaspoon orange zest

DIRECTIONS

Combine sugar substitute and water in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Add cranberries and orange zest and bring back to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat, cool, cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

Fun Food Fact

POP!

The average American eats about 68 quarts of popped popcorn each year, but that's not bad news! Popcorn is a whole grain that packs vitamin A, iron and protein—just make sure stay light on the salt and butter.

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CHERRIES~

The holidays are meant to be joyful; still, if you get a headache, then the same chemicals that give tart cherries their color may relieve pain better than aspirin and ibuprofen in humans!