

Food Trends

Nurturing Healthy Minds & Bodies in K-12 Texas Schools

Published by ECI Management Group

A Fun New Take On The Plate

Approximately 13,000 elementary school students are increasing their fruit and vegetable intake at lunch thanks to a new food education program. Utilizing a colorful design modeled on the USDA's "My Plate" icon, "Power Play'te" encourages students to fill their plates with healthy, fresh, produce.

The tagline of the program is, "Grow on, play with your food," and it encourages students to try combinations of food

in a way that the founders hope will encourage a lifetime of healthy eating.

"Power Play'te", which launched in September 2012, uses the plates one day per week. It quickly became a special day to the students, who are encouraged to dress in the color of the "Crop-of-the-day" and can earn stickers for finishing their food.

Founders Susan Sternitzke and Kristan Sheppard go to a different school

each Wednesday to participate in the festivities and to gauge program success.

"We take a group of 10 kids at each school and look at three things: the quantity of fruits and vegetables they took, how much they ate and how much they threw away," says Sternitzke. So far, consumption has been rising impressively.

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Nolan Catholic High School Engages "My Plate"

Before you eat, think about what goes on your plate, in your cup or bowl. ECI Management Group Executive Chef Roscoe Chapman makes this easy for his Nolan Catholic High School students, where small changes throughout the dining hall make eating "healthy" a no-brainer.

"Foods like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, and lean protein foods contain the nutrients you need without too many calories," says Chef Chapman. "Cut back on foods high in solid fats, added sugars, and salt. Make half your plate fruits and vegetables, switch to skim or 1% milk, vary your protein food choices, and eat the right amount of calories for you."

At home, Chef Chapman encourages parents to be role models for their children by eating healthy and maintaining an active lifestyle.

An Apple A Day

A Healthy Life

Don't Skip Breakfast: Fiber in the morning means less hunger late in the afternoon, when you're most likely to feel tired and gorge yourself on sugar.

Hit The Sack: Seven hours of sleep a night not only helps you live longer, but also lowers your stress, sharpens your memory, and reduces cravings for pants-splitting foods. Set a bedtime and stick to it.

Taste Nine Colors: Foods with bright, rich colors are more than just nice to look at. They're also packed with flavonoids and carotenoids, powerful compounds that bind the damaging free radicals in your body and lower inflammation. Eat nine fistfuls of colorful fruits and vegetables each day and you'll reap the benefits without having to give up other foods.



Putting "My Plate" Into Action

ECI Management Group believes good health depends on good nutrition, but sorting through complicated data can be confusing. The "My Plate" campaign reminds you to plan meals based on a balanced diet, and pay attention to the relative amounts of the different food groups on your plate.

ECI Management Group has been practicing principles similar to "My Plate" for 15 years, and uses the guidelines and easy to follow diagrams to create menus.

"We use the color coded graph to make choosing your food simple," says Christy Timmons, Regional Director for ECI Management Group.

The appeal of "My Plate" is that it uses a plate icon to suggest the relative portion sizes of the food groups you're eating. You don't have to eat from every food group at every meal, and can instead use it as a guide to what foods to eat daily.

The plate icon is divided into four sections, roughly one-quarter for each of vegetables, fruit, grains and protein, plus a glass of dairy on the side. It is a balanced start to meal planning and can be adjusted to conform to daily recommended amounts depending on age, gender, activity-level and other considerations.

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In This Issue:

- A Fun New Take On The Plate
- Nolan Catholic High School Engages “My Plate”
- Putting “My Plate” Into Action
- An Apple A Day: A Healthy Life
- Out Of The Oven: Pesto Pasta

Food Trends
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Out Of The Oven

Pesto Pasta

PREP TIME: 20 Minutes

COOK TIME: 30 Minady

YIELD: 8 servings

Fun Food Fact

Figs provide more fiber than any other common fruit or vegetable.

INGREDIENTS:

1 pound dry ziti pasta
1 onion, chopped
1 pound lean ground beef
2 (26 ounce) jars spaghetti sauce
6 ounces provolone cheese, sliced
1 1/2 cups sour cream
6 ounces mozzarella cheese, shredded
2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

DIRECTIONS:

1. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add ziti pasta, and cook until al dente, about 8 minutes; drain.
2. In a large skillet, brown onion and ground beef over medium heat. Add spaghetti sauce, and simmer 15 minutes.
3. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Butter a 9x13 inch baking dish. Layer as follows: 1/2 of the ziti, Provolone cheese, sour cream, 1/2 sauce mixture, remaining ziti, mozzarella cheese and remaining sauce mixture. Top with grated Parmesan cheese.
4. Bake for 30 minutes in the preheated oven, or until cheeses are melted.

Live A Humorous Life

Bring some humor into your life. Laughing not only eases stress, promotes social bonding, and lowers blood pressure; it may also boost your immune system.