

Flavored Milk in Schools

Low-fat (1%) chocolate and other low-fat flavored dairy milks can be offered in school meal programs again. Supporting the goal of making food choices both nutritious and appealing to students, while also aligning with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, nutrition regulations now provide schools greater flexibility in meeting their nutrition requirements. Schools can offer low-fat flavored milk in school lunches, breakfasts and Smart Snacks during school years 2022-23 and 2023-24. Low-fat flavored milk can also be offered to children 6 years and older in the Child and Adult Care Food Program and Special Milk Program. Planning for the future, USDA is working on a proposed rule that will enact long-term nutrition standards aligning with the most current Dietary Guidelines for Americans.¹

Whether low-fat unflavored, chocolate or a different flavor, all dairy milk varieties are a good or excellent source of 13 essential nutrients important for growth and development. In fact, the Scientific Report of the 2020 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee found consistent evidence that dietary patterns inclusive of low- or non-fat dairy are associated with beneficial outcomes for bone health, overweight and obesity, and type 2 diabetes.² Low-fat flavored milk can help schools address the nutrition, taste and health needs of the students they serve.



5 Reasons Flavored Milk Matters

1 LEADING HEALTH & NUTRITION ORGANIZATIONS RECOGNIZE THE BENEFITS OF FLAVORED MILK

The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the American Academy of Pediatrics recognize that a small amount of added sugars, which fall within the daily calorie limit, can be used to increase the palatability and appeal of nutrient-rich foods, such as low-fat flavored milk.^{3,4}

2 FLAVORED MILK IS NUTRITIOUS, PROVIDING 13 ESSENTIAL NUTRIENTS IN EVERY SERVING

Flavored milk is a good or excellent source of the same 13 essential nutrients as unflavored milk, including calcium, vitamin D and potassium – nutrients of public health concern that many kids don't get enough of in their diets. In addition, flavored milk contributes only 4% of added sugars in the diets of children 2-18 years⁵ and is not associated with an increased BMI.⁶ Flavored milk is a beverage of choice that can fit into healthy eating patterns.⁷

3 FLAVORED MILK HELPS INCREASE MILK CONSUMPTION & DECREASE WASTE

- Studies indicate that children drink more flavored milk than unflavored milk, and that flavored milk served in the school meal programs is wasted less than unflavored milk.⁸
- Removal of flavored milk from schools can lead to a decrease in total milk consumption, which could negatively impact children's nutrient consumption.
 - In a Colorado school district, when flavored milk was removed on one or more days of the week, there was an **11.4% increase** in the percentage of milk discarded, resulting in a **37.4% decrease** in milk consumption.⁹
 - In an urban school district in Massachusetts, significantly fewer students selected milk when flavored milk was removed (**56.8% vs. 94%**), resulting in significantly lower (**54.8% vs. 63.7%**) milk consumption.¹⁰

4 FLAVORED MILK HELPS PROVIDE SCHOOLS FLEXIBILITY

Schools now have the flexibility to offer additional dairy milk options (1% flavored milk) to ensure children receive the nutrients provided by milk. A survey of schools that reintroduced low-fat flavored milk found that **73%** of schools reported their students "liked 1% flavored milk better," and **58%** reported an increase in the amount of milk served.¹¹

5 KIDS LOVE THE TASTE OF FLAVORED MILK

Flavored milk has received high palatability ratings from children and they drink more when it's flavored.¹²

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