Q&A

Q — If I offer a salad bar, will students actually eat more fruit and vegetables?

A — Healthy eating is as much about access as it is about choice. By making healthy food options available, children are more likely to eat smart, especially when they have a choice. Children who can choose their own healthy foods can feel good about what's on their plates, rather than having to eat what is given to them. This often means less waste and less serving time for staff, too.

Q — Salad bars are messy, right?

A — Most school cafeterias in Missouri offer salad bars at least once a week. It's no more of a hassle than cleaning up a taco bar or a nacho bar, but it is much healthier. Feriel Khenissi, food service manager in Columbia Public Schools, says salad bars are simple to use, fun, and "the kids really enjoy it."

Q — It won't fit my budget.

A — A salad bar's contents don't need to be organic or feature exotic products. Lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, and carrots are great low-cost standards. Schools can also apply for a grant to receive a salad bar through the Let's Move Salad Bars 2 Schools program. Find out more at: http://saladbars2schools.org.

Q — Salad bars are just for high school students, right?

A — Salad bars aren't only for older students. Across the state, Missouri students from elementary schools to high school already have the option to choose salad over chips. Even in kindergarten, students are able to handle their trays and enjoy choosing their own food.

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The 2010 Missouri Farm to School food service survey found:

- Fifty-two percent of middle school and junior-high cafeterias offer a salad bar at least once every week.
- Fifty-four percent of high school cafeterias offer a salad bar at least once every week.
- The top-five pieces of equipment used to prepare fresh produce — sinks, ovens, cutting boards, mixers, and knives — are already in most kitchens.

CLOSE TO HOME
TRY **MISSOURI GROWN.**
http://MoFarmtoSchool.missouri.edu.

About Missouri Farm to School:

Missouri Farm to School is an initiative of the Missouri Farm to Institution (MoFTI) project which seeks to increase access to locally grown foods in order to strengthen the health, well-being and economic security of all communities and family farmers. By creating opportunities for training and education, the MoFTI Project links schools, hospitals and communities with locally-grown foods.

If you would like to learn more about Missouri Farm to School: contact Lorin Fahrmeier and fahrmeierl@missouri.edu. The Missouri Farm to School project is part of the Missouri Farm to Institution Initiative, and is funded through a contract with the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services and a grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. University of Missouri Extension and the Missouri Council for Activity and Nutrition are responsible for implementing this project.

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI Extension

Salad + Students = **Success**

Lunchrooms help fuel student success

FARM to SCHOOL ★ MISSOURI ★

School children put in a full day's work. It's important they get the nutrition they need. One of the best ways to do this is to offer a salad bar in your lunchroom. Simple and cost-effective to set up, a salad bar is not only healthy — **KIDS LOVE IT**. And, with fast prep-times and the potential to support local family farmers, salad bars are a great way for Missouri lunch rooms to **keep powering students and communities.**

getting started with a SALAD BAR

1. Talk with school food service staff and vendors to set up a salad bar plan. Chances are, most of the pieces are already in place.

2. Instead of making salads behind the counter, offer the fruit and/or vegetable component of your lunch meal on the salad bar, or offer a chef salad, for a complete reimbursable meal. This empowers students to make healthy decisions while stretching your budget's dollars.

3. Something as simple as homemade croutons or a homemade dressing is easy, cheap and will make your lunch service even more personal. You can also use your commodities on the salad bar to help decrease cost.

4. Make lunch fun! You can also nudge children toward making healthier decisions by marketing new food choices. Get staff, teachers and administrators involved, too. Try holding taste tests or recipe contests. Other popular methods include using menus that highlight a food of the month, and labeling foods with fun names.

Chef *Robert Rusan*, Maplewood Richmond Heights High School, displays one of his locally grown meals.

LET'S MOVE! AMERICA'S MOVE TO RAISE A HEALTHIER GENERATION OF KIDS

Serve more GREENS, get more GREEN!

Salad bars are generally low-cost to begin with. But, there are some up-front costs. SaladBars2Schools, part of the Let's Move campaign, can help. Any K-12 school district participating in the National School Lunch Program can apply for a free salad bar. Along with an insulated serving table, recipients receive bowls, tongs, spoons, and everything else needed to get serving. Find out more at http://saladbars2schools.org.

Keeping it LOCAL

Developing a salad bar is a great opportunity to bring more local food into your lunchroom. Multiple studies have shown that buying food that was grown locally was often the same price — or even cheaper — than food in nearby supermarkets. Not only does it make sense economically, it also tastes better. A fresh slice of watermelon from a farm a few miles away is sure to be fresher than a watermelon that's been in the back of a truck for a few days. Moreover, food service staff concerned about the consistency and supply of locally grown produce can easily solve those issues on a salad bar. By switching out one locally grown product with something else, more Missouri food service staff are able to **easily handle what's in season and available.**