

Questions and Answers

Responses from:

- Rick Millar, Principal - Mountview Elementary, Williams Lake
- Arzeena Hamir, Organic Farmer - Huband Park Elementary Farm to School Salad Bar
- Joanne bays, National Manager Farm to Cafeteria Canada

Q: About how much space do these salad bars take up? Further, suggestions in a cramped space?

The salad bar units are about 6 feet long by 2.5 feet wide. In a cramped space each school has to figure out how to do things. Some use other rooms/areas to do the prep in so that there aren't too many people in one space. Hallways, empty classrooms, etc. are possibilities.

We run our salad bar in the hallway since it allows the easiest flow-through for traffic. The salad bar unit per say takes up one large table (I believe we use the 10 ft kind). When not in use, we store most of the tools, forks, and buckets in the unit and cover with a tablecloth. It's then pushed up against a wall in an alcove.

The model Farm to School Salad Bar program provides children with an option of 6 servings of vegetables, 3 servings of Fruit, 1 serving of protein and 1 serving of grain at each meal service.

(This is the model that is being funded in NL and NB at the moment. Schools are asked to adhere to this model for evaluation purposes as we need to ensure the same variety of foods served in each food group in order to assess the impact of the service across many schools)

The size of a Salad bar unit necessary to accommodate that much food is approximately 3 " x 5" and it has 3-4 wells. Plastic table-top models are recommended as they are about ½ the cost of the metal units. 150 children can serve themselves in about 20 minutes with each salad bar unit of this size – assuming they are going by on each side of the unit.

Details about salad bar equipment may be found in the resource "A Fresh Crunch in School Lunch: BC's Farm to School Salad bar Guide " produced by the PHABC or in the "Salad Bar Lunchbox Guide" produced in the US. These guide as well as a number of other useful toolkits are available on the Farm to Cafeteria Canada Website at www.farmtocafeteriacanada.ca . Check under "resources" and then "toolkits" or "publications".

Most programs also add soup (as the local foods available are root vegetables like cabbage, onions, potatoes, carrots and beets. These items work a lot better in a soup. And the kids enjoy hot items in cold months) d soups make more sense. Adding soup however requires more space (not much, just enough for a crock pot)

If you have a cramped space consider using a classroom for food service or a gym

Re: the need for a salad bar unit. In BC the Environmental Health Officers supported schools that wished to use ice in bowls rather than a salad bar unit. This saved quite a bit of space. In Ontario however Environmental Health Officers required schools to purchase a unit to ensure cold foods were kept cold. They also wanted schools to have the salad bar unit because it had a sneeze guard. The sneeze guard was a necessity in that province, but this is not the same in other provinces. I recommend that you consult with your environmental health officer about your salad bar plans. Walk through your space with the ENH. Get his/her approval for in bowls on top ice if that is the way you want to go.

Q: What are classroom bins used for?

At Mountview the students get their food in the gym and then walk to their classrooms to eat. After they finish eating they put their dirty dishes and cutlery in the bins, (along with any uneaten food), which is later collected for washing.

Plates to go back to the dish room. Waste to go into composting.

Q: How is food costs covered?

The \$3 each student pays per meal covers food costs, honorariums for the coordinators, and there's always a little extra for things that may be needed in the kitchen.

Children/teachers' pay \$3 per salad bar. Those kids who can't afford this are added to the list automatically by the principal.

Children pay for their meals. Most schools know who their hungry children are. Most already have a process in place to raise funds and to provide meals for these kids. That subsidy goes into purchasing foods for the salad bar on salad bar days. The children who cannot afford the salad bar are welcome to eat there.

In situations where a high percentage of children cannot afford to pay for the F2SSB lunch, the school may explore ways to reduce food costs. They may opt to provide a F2S soup and/or snack program rather than a full F2SSB service.

They may opt to start up a greenhouses or gardens so that they can grow foods to donate to the F2SSB program. There are many, many innovative solutions to this issue. I encourage you to sit down with your F2S team to explore ideas together.

Q: What adaptations did the school need to make to meet food safety requirements?

We did have to have our kitchen inspected by the health inspector. Originally the only 2 things required from him were a 3rd sink for sanitizing (before we purchased an industrial dish washer) and a proper fan over our stove. Other than that it was ready to go thanks to the great work of the carpenters, electricians and plumbers from our School District. They really know what they're doing!

We worked with our Environmental Health Officer from the very beginning so there wouldn't be any surprises. We already had a 3 bin sink system + one parent volunteer with FoodSafe Level 1 certification.

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Q: How is food allergies dealt with?

We don't have very many allergies but the one that is most problematic is anaphylaxis reactions to nuts. Due to this we stay completely away from nuts in any of our foods. Also, the coordinators are very conscious of what they purchase and they make sure that items are not prepared in nut products in any way. Things like lactose intolerance and eggs are very rare and when they do crop up usually the parents deal with this on their own in terms of coaching their children what they can/can't have.

No nuts are served. Last year, we had a few children with gluten allergies so we always offered a gluten-free option like corn chips, corn tortillas, rice noodles or gluten-free pasta.

Most health units and school districts and schools have policies around how to handle food allergies – from mild to severe allergies. These policies vary from place to place. Be sure to know your policy and to adhere to it.

Q: Do all the students in the school take part in the salad bar?

At Mountview it ranges from between 80% and 90% of the students. What we do is give free meals for everyone in September (2 weeks worth) and this seems to really spark the students' and parents' interest and once they get into the habit they just seem to continue. If anyone can't afford the meals it's not a problem as we get a grant to cover these families. We never take attendance but rather encourage students to go if they want to go. Sometimes many students who haven't paid go and it all seems to be fine in the end. With so many students sitting at their desk eating a delicious and nutritious meal the "Salad Bar Fever" just seems to take over and it promotes itself.

No, only about 1/3

Webinar: Nuts and Bolts of Running a F2S Salad Bar
Wednesday, December 3, 2014

Farm to School programs are intended to be universal programs – any child should be able to participate regardless of means.

The participation rate varies in each school. When the first 16 programs were rolled out in BC, there was on average a 90% participation rate in elementary schools by the end of the 3rd year of operation

In high schools however the participation rate was much lower. On average 30% of the high school student population participated.

Most often the issue was that high school students had cars, could leave campus, and fast food outlets were nearby!.

To increase participation engage high schools students in sourcing food, growing food, menu planning, coming up with recipes, food preparation, and marketing

As well in high schools ensure the foods on the salad bar are exciting food combinations with interesting names (kale burger sliders were a big hit in BC high schools) Whereas the elementary school kids do not want their carrots to touch their peas, the high school kids want to see exciting food combinations !

Also consider calling your salad bar a Farm to School Feast (the older male students may turn up their nose to salad calling it “rabbit food”. But they will be enticed by a lunch feast

Q: Are there subsidies? Is this open to all students regardless of student means?

Please see above. In BC schools receive a government grant that can be used for these types of programs. There are also other grants that schools can obtain but while I’ve heard of them I’m not familiar with any of them.

Yes. I believe 12 students are added to the list of participants. We always have more than enough so if a child wants salad but didn’t bring money, they can “owe” us or just grab a plate.

Farm to School programs are intended to be universal programs – any child should be able to participate regardless of means.

Most schools know who their hungry children are. And they already raise funds and offer some kind of lunch to these kids. Most often, the funds available for those lunches pooled with the funds for the F2SSB program and kids are encouraged to eat at the salad bar when it is offered.

Q: Is there Environmental Health Officer Involvement?

Yes. Yearly inspection of our facilities, especially the kitchen.

Yes, we were in touch with our EHO at the very beginning.

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We recommend contacting an EHO as you begin planning. They need to approve your food prep and food service areas. They need to approve your plans to serve food. Having their support from the onset can save a lot of problems down the road.

Q: does anyone know if there is still start up grants available?

In BC there are but you'll have to act quickly as the deadline is December 19th.

There is a new grant available in BC. Deadline is approaching fast though.

Contact your provincial F2S lead to see what kind of funding opportunities might be available in your area. The list of leads may be found on the F2CC website www.farmtocafeteriacanada.ca

Q: Do all students pay the same regardless of age?

At Mountview the K – 2 students pay \$2.25/meal, the Gr. 3-4 students pay \$3.25/meal and the Grade 5 & 6 students pay \$4.25/meal.

Yes. It would just be too difficult for us to have different prices on our ordering system (It's all done online through a hot lunch program)

In many schools yes, The price may range between \$3.50 and 4.50/student/meal. In most cases kids can come back as many times as they wish for that price. In other schools a sliding scale price has been created – kids in lower grades pay less and kids in higher grades pay more.

Q: I would like to have more information about portion control for cost control.

What we do at Mountview is have a “compost” bucket in each classroom that is collected, with the dirty dishes, after each meal. The food in these buckets can go towards a school compost program, a school worm program (we had one last year), and/or local farmers for their chickens/pigs. The Coordinators see these buckets and if there is a lot of food in them then they let me know and I work with the teacher and the class to figure out what the problem is and how to solve it. Most times there's not an issue and the buckets are mostly filled with peels from oranges and bananas and often times some lettuce because the students took a bit too much. Students very quickly figure out what they like and how much of it they like. My worry is not usually that they take too much but rather that they take too little! We do, though, have to remember that it is a lunch and that we don't need to “super size” everything. Students will stop eating when they are full and they will go for seconds if they are hungry. Trust them!

We do have older children portion out highly desirable items like when we make pita pizza slices from scratch. It ensures everyone gets one.

“The Salad bar Lunch Box Guide” from our US Colleague has some great sections on portions and cost. Download your copy from the Farm to Cafeteria Canada website www.farmtocafeteriacanada.ca . Check for the resource under “resources” and then “Toolkits”

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It might be worthwhile having a good conversation with principal Rick Miller AND one of his school meal providers. They will have developed processes and tools that will be of use. rick.miller@sd27.bc.ca

The idea is to get the kids to eat more fruits and veggies and to be comfortable with them loading up on these items while not worrying about cost.

It is a balancing act at first for sure, but in every BC school that launched a F2SSB ...after a few weeks food purchasing, food consumption and food costs came into line. The local farmers received a fair price for their foods, the children paid a price they could afford (350-350/meal) and the food service provider did not lose money. The provider began to show a profit when the number of children passing through the salad bar reached 100. At that number the provider made about \$100 out of every \$300 paid by the child.

Q: Does anyone only serve greens or do they put wraps together to serve as part of the salad bar?

Wraps, Tacos, Subs – are big hits! Many schools provide all of the ingredients for wraps, tacos, subs etc... at the salad bar. They also often provide a demo for the younger kids so they learn how to make their own.

No, we have at least 7 veggies. Just greens would be difficult to sell on an ongoing basis.

Q: Do they put together smaller salads, like coleslaw, carrot slaw, broccoli slaw, or Mac salad in their bars to serve as part of the salad bar?

At Mountview we do not at this time do this but after seeing Arzeena's presentation and pictures our Coordinators are going to start doing this after the Christmas Break. I'm curious to see how this goes.

We tried this but found that the younger kids didn't like the items with sauce so much and we'd have to make a separate batch without. We decided to just serve sauce on the side when we make a dressed slaw or pasta salad.

Yes. Most schools offer at least one large mixed salad (in addition to the 6 servings of vegetables, 3 servings of fruit, 1 grain and 1 protein). High schools students like the mixed salads. Elementary schools do not like them as much. The salads are served in large bowls so kids can self-serve. Portioned pre-made pre-wrapped mixed salads are most often wasted –particularly with the elementary school children. Portioned plastic wrapped to go salads are not recommended.