Getting on with the job

Managing a Right Bite canteen

Right Bite canteen at a glance

Canteen or food service management

Managing hygiene and food safety

Managing and ordering stock

Workflow in the canteen

Managing food

Managing money

Managing promotion
Managing a *Right Bite* canteen

**Key elements of success**
- Healthier food choices are well promoted to customers.
- Canteen tasks are organised in the most efficient way.
- Food safety is a key part of the canteen’s operation.
- There are enough staff members (paid or volunteer) to run the canteen efficiently when it is open.
- The canteen has adequate equipment to prepare and serve foods and drinks in line with the strategy.

A *Right Bite* canteen is primarily an educational resource that offers the school community a consistent, quality food service. Making healthy choices easy choices in the canteen involves sound management and good organisation.

The panel on the opposite page provides an overview of the practices that must be managed well to ensure the success of a *Right Bite* canteen. Each of these practices is explored in more detail throughout this section.

While this section is based on assisting school canteens, many issues and suggestions will also be relevant to the supply of foods and drinks in preschools.
## Right Bite canteen at a glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Canteen management</th>
<th>Managing food</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The canteen manager plans, organises, coordinates and monitors all the canteen’s activities.</td>
<td>The menu has healthy nutritious foods on offer that meet the requirements of the Right Bite strategy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Hygiene/food temperature
All foods and drinks are served at the appropriate temperature. This involves careful timing and appropriate heating and storage of all foods and drinks in the canteen.

### Managing money
The canteen is financially viable through efficient management of all resources. This involves accounting for all the canteen’s money and stock. Selling prices are set to cover all costs and make a profit.

### Presentation and positioning
All customers can clearly see the options when standing at the counter.

### Managing stock
An ordering and receiving system is in place.

### Student involvement
Students provide input into and support for the canteen.

### Managing promotion
New foods are well promoted. The menu is clearly displayed in the canteen and around the school. Parents are informed about the menu through the school newsletter and on the school website.

### Workflow and organisation
Tasks are planned and organised in the most efficient way.

### Managing equipment
All equipment is well maintained and appropriate for the canteen’s needs.
How the canteen is managed can be as important as the foods it buys and sells in ensuring the success of a Right Bite canteen.

The canteen manager, whether paid or voluntary, plays an important role in the management of a successful canteen. Managers lead by example as they guide and influence the work of volunteers or other paid staff. They can help establish team spirit in the canteen and provide a friendly, welcoming work environment.

Careful attention to the following can improve the ability of a canteen to implement menu changes successfully.

**Planning**

This involves looking ahead, working out what needs to be achieved, determining the best sequence for the jobs at hand and communicating this to the staff.

**Tip**

Give each volunteer a canteen kit containing information on:

- canteen and/or healthy eating policy
- the menu
- the roster
- hygiene information
- the provision of food for volunteers (this should be covered in the policy).

**Organising and coordinating**

This includes organising and coordinating all of the following resources within the canteen.

**People** – preparing volunteer rosters, breaks for morning tea and lunch during the day, attracting, thanking and rewarding volunteers and working as an effective team member.

**Food** – ensuring safe, good quality food is prepared and served each day in a consistent manner.

**Equipment** – maintaining well functioning equipment and submitting requests for additional or replacement equipment where required.

**Time** – ensuring food is ready for service at particular times. If a lunch order system is used, all orders need to be ready just before the bell to simplify pick up.

**Money** – keeping track of the money at all times. If the canteen uses cash registers, ensuring that the totals are rung off at the end of each trading period during the day, maintaining a standard float, ensuring that the banking is done each day and money is not accumulated in the canteen. All stock should be paid for by cheque or online transaction, with only a small petty cash account in operation.

**Monitoring**

This requires an awareness of everything that is happening in the canteen. Examples include monitoring stock, food handling practices, the quality of foods and drinks delivered and served in the canteen, volunteer rosters (eg are there still enough volunteers halfway through the year?), the success of special days, meal deals and other promotions run through the canteen.
Monitoring also means being well informed about what is happening in the school eg camps, excursions, sports days, designated 'Occasional' food days, and the parent organisation’s activities within the school. All of these have an impact on the amount of food prepared by the canteen on a particular day or the quantity of stock ordered by the school. Check with school leaders for the diary of school year events.

Attracting volunteers

Volunteers are a valuable resource in the school canteen and should be appreciated and made to feel welcome.

There are many benefits volunteers gain from working in the canteen. These include:

• contributing to the school community and the health of the students in the school
• making new friends
• learning new skills
• gaining the opportunity to strengthen their knowledge of English if it is currently their second language
• gaining skills that may be used in other employment.

These benefits can be promoted to parents in a variety of ways to encourage them to become canteen volunteers. These include:

• presentations at orientation days
• holding a canteen open day
• sending out personalised letters requesting help.

It is important that volunteers know what is expected of them and have been shown the requirements of each task they carry out in the canteen. The canteen manager or a committee member should take the time to orientate new volunteers. Written instructions and information posted on the wall can be helpful reminders for volunteers.

Some sites find it difficult to recruit and retain volunteers. Sites could contact their local Centrelink office or their local Council, which often has a volunteer register, to explore alternative avenues of attracting volunteers. DECS also has a relationship with Volunteers SA. This is another avenue which sites could investigate.

Tip

Have a lucky draw for canteen volunteers each term where they receive a ticket in the draw for each day worked.

Keeping volunteers

Volunteers are more likely to continue to work in the canteen when they enjoy themselves and feel valued. This can be achieved by:

• regularly listing the canteen roster in school newsletters
• holding end of year parties
• developing a buddy system
• a visit from the principal to the canteen from time to time
• thank you afternoon teas provided by the students
• providing incentives/rewards for volunteers.
Managing hygiene and food safety

Whatever changes are implemented, attention must always be paid to hygiene and food safety. The national Food Safety Standards provide the minimum requirements to handle food safely. The Standards identify the responsibilities of both the proprietor of a food business and the food handlers. Depending on the organisation of the school canteen, this responsibility may rest with the school principal, the parent body or the canteen manager. The Standards apply to both volunteers and paid canteen workers. See Appendix 6 Resources (page 134) for further information.

Everyone working in the canteen must have the skills and knowledge to handle food safely and prevent contamination that can lead to food poisoning.

The following are examples of potentially hazardous foods if incorrectly prepared and stored.

- Raw meats, cooked meats and foods containing them such as meat pies, lasagne, and spaghetti bolognese.
- Dairy products and foods containing them such as milk, custard, dairy based desserts.
- Processed fruits and vegetables such as prepared salads, ready to eat vegetable packs.
- Cooked rice and pasta.
- Processed foods containing eggs, beans, nuts and soya bean products.
- Seafood eg cooked prawns and crab meat.
- Other foods containing foods listed above eg sandwiches.

In the temperature danger zone ie between 5°C and 60°C some bacteria can double on these foods every 20 minutes.

There are three main types of food contamination.

- Physical – includes hair, dirt, insects, and pieces of plastic or glass in food.
- Chemical – includes insect sprays, detergents or sanitisers getting into food.
- Microbiological – bacteria and viruses found on hands, on vegetables, in raw meat and on our clothes that get into food.

Bacteria need time, temperature, moisture and food to multiply. The types of bacteria that can cause food poisoning multiply quickly on potentially hazardous food.

To stop bacteria multiplying on food

Keep it COLD – below 5°C
Keep it HOT – above 60°C
This applies to receiving, cooking, serving and holding food. It also applies to packaging and cleaning procedures.

**Receiving food**
Always check the date marked on goods that are delivered (where applicable).

**Food prepared at home by canteen staff and provided for sale in the canteen**
The canteen is responsible for the sale of safe food. Any food sold through the canteen must fully comply with the Food Safety Standards legislation. This means that the person preparing the food at home for the canteen must also comply with the food safety legislation.

**Storing food**
Keep food covered to protect it from contamination. Label and date all foods in the refrigerator and freezer.

Raw foods should be stored at the bottom of fridges and ready to eat foods at the top.

Frozen foods should be hard when tapped. There should be no condensation on the outside of packages as this indicates they are starting to melt.

**Date marking**
*Use by date* – Food should not be sold beyond the use by date as it may not be safe to eat.

*Best before date* – the date recommended by the manufacturer so the food can be eaten in the best quality condition.

**Preventing food**
Hands should be washed thoroughly. Try not to touch foods with bare hands – use tongs, utensils or gloves. Long hair should be tied back.

Thaw foods in the refrigerator or microwave on defrost. Once thawed, use foods as soon as possible. Do not re-freeze thawed foods.

Wash fruit and vegetables thoroughly before use.

**Tip**
Use a probe thermometer to check the temperature of foods or the storage space you are keeping them in.

**Tip**
Wash hands or change gloves between handling money and unwrapped foods.
Prepare food fresh each day. Apply the FIFO (First In First Out) principle if food has been prepared in advance. Never mix old and new food. Take food ingredients out as required and use the principles of good workflow to complete jobs quickly and put ingredients and finished food items in the refrigerator.

Hands should be washed and chopping boards and knives changed or cleaned thoroughly when the type of food being chopped changes, eg cooked meats to washed vegetables. Some canteens have different coloured boards for different purposes, eg red for raw meat, green for vegetables.

For more information and fact sheets go to: www.foodstandards.gov.au

Go to Food Safety:
• Food Safety Programs
• Practices & General Requirements
• Food Premises & Equipment

Cooking
Raw meats naturally contain bacteria. Meat needs to be cooked thoroughly to kill bacteria. An internal temperature of 75° C is needed in foods such as chicken nuggets to kill bacteria.

Heating
Many canteen foods arrive in the canteen precooked and require heating. The most common piece of equipment is a food warmer. Foods placed in food warmers need to rapidly heat to a temperature of 60° C or above within two hours. The food can then be held in the food warmer for a further two hours at a lower temperature. After a total of 4 hours it should be thrown away.

Food display
There are many different ways foods are displayed and served in school canteens. Cover or wrap all food on display in clear plastic wrap or paper. Display any potentially hazardous foods under temperature control eg hot foods such as pastas, pies, pizzas above 60° C and sandwiches, salads and milk drinks below 5° C.

Serving food
Use tongs to serve unpackaged food. This can also help eliminate packaging.

Cleaning
Frequent regular cleaning of the canteen will minimise the risk of contamination and food poisoning. Some points to consider include:
• clean and sanitise benches before starting food preparation
• clean work benches, sinks and floors daily
• replace dishcloths and tea towels daily
• clean refrigerators and stoves weekly and storage cupboards regularly.

Any food stalls held outside need to be under cover.
Managing and ordering stock

The main aim when managing stock is to maintain the lowest level of stock while having sufficient stock to use or sell.

Effective purchasing to meet the requirements of the Right Bite strategy means buying products:
- of the right quality
- in the right quantity
- for the right price
- at the right time
- which are in season.

There should be one person in the canteen responsible for ordering stock including foods, drinks, packaging and cleaning materials. This helps to prevent over ordering or double ordering and maintains consistency. To work out when to order stock, look at the food and drink requirements and how long it takes for the supplier to deliver the order. If possible try to order frequently so more perishable stock does not have to be stored for long periods of time. If the school is in an area where it is difficult to access stock frequently it is better to access products with a longer shelf life.

Suppliers

When selecting a supplier, look for suppliers who:
- are local, if possible
- keep the canteen manager informed of product availability and price increases
- have a clear understanding of where the food products fit within the Right Bite strategy or provide nutrition information
- provide competitively priced products
- allow reasonable payment terms
- are able to deliver to the school canteen at appropriate times
- handle food safely (use refrigerated vehicles for chilled and frozen products and deliver fresh products in a covered vehicle)
- offer specials or deals that meet the requirements of the Right Bite strategy including free promotional material, discounts and equipment
- do not apply pressure for the purchase of specific products or brands.

Ordering

When ordering stock:
- check the stock currently in the canteen – a supplier product list can be used. This is a list developed by the canteen manager containing information on each supplier and the products that the canteen orders from them. A manager can take a quick look at the stock on hand and decide how much of each item is needed in the next order
- assess how well foods and drinks are selling. Ordering will depend on the canteen menu and sales
- consider seasonal changes
- keep a record of exactly what was ordered.
**Hints and tips**

- Storage space in canteens is often limited. Aim to have only the stock that is needed on hand. Order frequently as this reduces the risk of stock spoiling.
- Regular stocktakes should be done as the canteen needs to account for all stock. Aim to have as little stock as possible left over at the end of a term to avoid losing stock due to refrigeration breakdown, power failure or other unforeseen circumstances over the holidays. Check the regular times for stocktake with finance officer.
- Apply the FIFO (First In First Out) principle. Always use the oldest stock in storage before the newer stock. Do this by moving old stock to the front of shelves in the refrigeration unit and on storage shelves and place the new stock behind it.
- Reduce the price of slow moving stock. As long as it is within the use by date stated on the package, it is better to sell the stock at cost and recoup some money than throw it away.

**Receiving**

When the stock arrives in the canteen check the delivery docket and supplier’s invoice against the order. Check the date marked on goods where appropriate. Check for price increases and adjust the canteen selling price on items if required.

Once the canteen committee has designed a **Right Bite** menu, use the school calendar to:

- plan ahead for any holidays, sporting or cultural events, open days or excursions that may affect canteen sales or change the types of foods being sold
- plan ahead for any excursions or sporting events where the canteen could provide healthy lunches for students
- identify special days or theme days that promote healthy food choices.

If the canteen orders stock for an event organised by the school or parent body, keep the orders separate from stock ordered for canteen sales. If not, the mark up schedule for the canteen will be incorrect as products ordered have not actually been sold through the canteen.
Good workflow in the canteen is crucial. It ensures food is fresh and attractive, reduces wastage and maximises the amount of food that can be prepared in the time available. Workflow planning means organising tasks in a logical order to make the work easier. To do this, simplify the tasks that need to be done.

Consider:
- timing – when do different foods need to be ready?
- equipment availability – what equipment is needed to prepare, cook, or heat and serve foods?
- number of helpers and their skills
- task allocation – who is doing each job?
- preparation and cooking times to ensure all foods will be ready to serve at the same time.

Good workflow involves:
- minimum movement and back tracking
- efficient use of space
- appropriate use of equipment
- the application of safe food handling techniques
- minimum expenditure of time and effort by all canteen staff, for maximum output.

The principles of good workflow should be applied to the following tasks in the canteen:
- receiving products
- storing foods and drinks
- preparing foods
- packaging
- holding – both hot and cold foods
- serving foods and drinks
- cleaning.

**Tip**

Standard instructions for the cut and quantity of each salad vegetable to be prepared for the sandwiches, rolls and wraps to be made each day should be pinned on the wall near the bench where these items are made. This means all staff know what needs to be prepared and how it should be stored ready for use.
Suggested workflow for sandwiches, rolls, focaccias, wraps and burgers

Making sandwiches, rolls, wraps, toasted sandwiches, focaccias and burgers can be a quick, simple operation when efficient methods are used, as outlined below.

- Prepare all the filling ingredients for the sandwiches, rolls, wraps and salads first:
  - wash all vegetables well
  - shred lettuce, slice tomatoes, grate carrot and cheese, drain beetroot, etc.
  - put all ingredients in resealable, stackable containers. (Rectangular take away food containers seal and stack well and are easy to label.)
- For sandwich preparation, arrange the containers of filling ingredients behind the bread board within easy reach.
- Make up one type of sandwich or roll at a time. Only lay out enough bread for 10 sandwiches at a time (approx. 1 loaf of bread). Crusts can be used for bread cases or breadcrumbs.
- Pair the bread slices – top slice above the bottom slice.
- If using margarine on fresh sandwiches, spread thinly using a spatula. Most jaffle and toasted sandwich makers are non-stick and don’t require margarine on the outside of the bread.
- Place the filling on the bottom layer of bread and finish with the top slice.
- Cut using a sandwich guide and serrated bread knife. Wrap straight away to prevent drying out. Some canteens use sandwich packaging for better display.

For wraps (made from Lebanese bread):
- Roll these carefully and firmly.
- Cut the wrap diagonally to show the contents and wrap in plastic wrap – not too tightly as the contents will be affected.

For burgers:
- Prepare all the buns with salad in advance and add the meat, fish, chicken or vegetable patty last (to maintain the correct temperature). The burgers can then be wrapped in paper or put into plastic clams for easy stacking and distribution. Develop a system for labelling the burgers to prevent confusion, for example ‘CH’ for a burger with cheese.

Tip

When making large numbers of sandwiches keep bread from drying out by covering it with plastic or a clean damp tea towel.
Managing food

How foods are presented can be as important as what foods are presented. Canteens can support the development of positive attitudes and behaviour towards food among students.

The foods and drinks offered in the canteen need to be nutritious, varied, quick and easy to prepare, appetising and well presented to appeal to students. The following information provides practical ways to work with food to achieve these aims.

Ideas for new food and drink items can be found in the Right Bite Ready Reckoner pages 40 - 49 in Part 1 of this manual and through food distributors. See promotion pages 116 -117 for ideas on ways to add variety to the canteen menu.

Variety

A Right Bite menu provides a core of items that seldom change to enable the canteen to operate in a manageable and profitable way. ‘Old favourites’ will always have a place, but add variety and interest to the menu through daily or weekly specials suited to the season. Some canteens offer certain items for sale on a particular day of the week eg burgers on a Friday. This means all the preparation for that item is done on one day. Offer different serving sizes of foods where possible to meet the varied needs of the students.

Food appeal

Interesting contrasts in colour, flavour and texture can be achieved with the addition of fresh, crunchy vegetables in salads, burgers, rolls and wraps. Serve a variety of quality fruits in season. Fruit that is cut up and served in chunks or as a fruit salad is popular with children and students. This gives them the opportunity to try new flavours and textures.

Presentation and positioning

How are foods presented? Look at the canteen from the customers’ perspective – what can students see when they are at the counter? Children and students come in different heights! Attractively displayed healthy (GREEN) foods and drinks, with choices positioned at the front of the counter and in prominent positions in the fridges, sell well. Take care with presentation of individual foods, eg wrap sandwiches and rolls in clear plastic so the contents can be easily seen. Foods should look like, and be, good value for money.

Tip

Before removing slow moving stock, check that it is not there to cater for students with a specific Health Support Plan.
Sandwiches, rolls and wraps

Well priced sandwiches, rolls and wraps are filling and nutritious and have proved to be very popular in many schools. When presented well they have great visual appeal. Students like anything rolled or in rolls. Add variety by using a range of breads on the menu. Fresh salad vegetables add flavour, colour and texture.

See workflow pages 109 -110, for more information on sandwich making.

Go to Appendix 1 on page 126 for ideas for sandwich fillings and a quantity guide for fillings.

Salads

Salads can be made more nutritious and filling by combining salad vegetables and fruits eg add sultanas and pineapple. Add to the salad with canned salads, eg mixed beans. Cheese, cold lean meats, canned tuna or salmon, egg or legumes can be added as a protein source.

A slice or two of bread is also a good accompaniment. Be careful not to price salads too high. And do be aware of costing any wastage if the canteen is not open on every day of the week.

Meal and snack deals

These are standardised lunches and snacks that are bought as a package. Meal and snack deals support the implementation of the Right Bite strategy because they can:

- encourage students to eat a nutritional balance of foods
- streamline lunch and snack production
- make ordering easy
- promote healthier choices and new foods on the canteen menu
- offer students value for money
- provide an opportunity to team up choices from AMBER and GREEN
- improve the nutritional balance when a GREEN choice is added.

Meal deal ideas

- Soup with a bread roll and a piece of fruit.
- Cheese and salad sandwich and a fruit juice.
- Salad roll, small milk drink and a piece of fruit.
- Burger (lean meat patty and salad), small carton of flavoured reduced fat milk and a piece of fruit.

Snack meal deals

- Fruit bun, cheese stick and a small mandarin.
- Popcorn and a small bag of unsalted nuts.
- Hot cheese melt and a small fruit juice.
- Reduced fat cheese, crackers and a pear.
- Ham, cheese and pineapple muffin melt and a small apple.
- Slice of fruit bread and yoghurt.
- Cereal and fruit.

Tip

Use point of sale materials containing the name of the food and price to help promote the food. Small acrylic picture frames make ideal pricing holders.

Tip

If volunteer numbers are limited, consider buying prepared salad ingredients in bulk.

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Hot food choices

The type and number of hot food choices available will depend on the season and the equipment available to cook or heat food and keep it hot. Many commercial hot foods fit into the AMBER category. Some schools do not offer these choices every day. They are offered on different days of the week so the heating and service is more manageable and so they don’t dominate the menu. There are many hot food choices that may be included on the canteen menu. Aim to include mostly items from the GREEN category. These include:

- baked stuffed potatoes
- flat bread vegetable pizzas
- lean meat burgers served with salad
- reduced fat hot dogs with salad
- burritos
- stir fried noodles with vegetables
- pastas with vegetable sauce eg spaghetti Napoli
- chicken drumsticks served with salad
- jaffles
- hot cheese rolls with salad
- soups with wholemeal rolls.

Refer to the Right Bite Food and Drink Selector pages 26-37 and the Right Bite Ready Reckoner tables pages 40-49.

Breakfasts

Many canteens serve breakfast before school. Nutritious choices should be on offer in the morning. These include:

- wholegrain low sugar breakfast cereals served with reduced fat milk
- fruit juice
- fruit toast
- toasted sandwiches
- low fat yoghurts
- fresh fruit
- fruit salad
- milk drinks (warm and cold)
- toast
- muffins
- baked beans.

Drinks

There are many healthy drink choices available for the canteen. Milks are a rich source of calcium and other nutrients. Choose reduced fat plain and flavoured milks in recommended portion size (see Ready Reckoner pages 40 - 49), milkshakes or smoothies. Warm drinks can be offered in winter. Water should be encouraged, in particular tap water, that is fluoridated. Variety can be provided by serving chilled or frozen 99–100% fruit juices, in 250ml serving sizes or less. Between meals, plain water and milk are the best drinks for teeth.

Note

Mixed recipes including cheese, ie sandwiches, can be categorised as a GREEN choice if using reduced fat cheese, and all other components are from the GREEN category. The food would be categorised as AMBER if full fat cheese is used. Limit amount of cheese used to approximately 30-40g per serve.
Managing money

Operating a financially successful canteen

It is not just the food that is sold that determines profit. There are many canteen management issues that also play a part. Operating a financially successful canteen involves managing the canteen’s resources efficiently to meet both the goals of the Right Bite strategy and the school’s healthy eating policy. This includes:

- knowing what the canteen spends and earns
- accounting for all the canteen’s money and stock. Some canteens now use cash registers to help with this process
- working out the cost price of all items (ie how much does it cost the canteen to make or buy the product)
- setting selling prices to cover all costs and make a profit.

For a canteen to operate as a profitable business, income must be greater than the costs involved in running the canteen. Costing foods accurately is an important part of making sure all costs in the canteen can be met.

The cost of a food or drink can be calculated by:

- using the wholesale price of the food or drink
- adding up the cost of all the ingredients that make up a food or drink
- including the cost of packaging of the food or drink where appropriate.

Many canteens also have the following costs:

- the cost of employees including wages, workers compensation insurance, superannuation and long service leave
- equipment purchase and replacement, and ongoing maintenance.

Costing

In the table below there are three examples of costing products – a sandwich and wrap made in the canteen and a commercially made lasagne.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A salad sandwich</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ingredients</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomato</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grated carrot</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shredded lettuce</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sliced cucumber</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beetroot</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 slices bread</td>
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<tr>
<td>Packaging – plastic wrap</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL COST</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.80</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A chicken wrap</th>
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<td>Sliced cucumber</td>
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<td>Grated cheese</td>
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<td>Chicken (50g)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lebanese bread</td>
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<tr>
<td>Packaging – plastic wrap</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>A frozen serve of lasagne</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 x 220g serve frozen lasagne</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Setting selling prices

The canteen sets selling prices to cover costs. The mark up is the difference between the wholesale price of the food (cost) and the selling price.

When setting the selling prices for foods and drinks the canteen committee should consider the following.

- What is the cost of the food to the canteen?
- What are the other costs involved in running the canteen?
- What would be a reasonable price to pay in order to gain sales?
- Is there competition from other shops nearby?
- Does the canteen have a policy of lower prices on foods and drinks in the GREEN segment and higher prices on foods less healthy foods?

A canteen mark up schedule shows the percentage mark up on each item and the sales volume of each food and drink item. The mark up schedule can help the canteen determine the average mark up to use. Some school canteens use a standard gross profit for all items ie they apply a standard mark up of about 35% to all items. Others choose to mark up the less healthy choices and mark down those items that are more healthy.

The selling price can also be set using the supplier’s recommended retail price. If the canteen does not choose to sell at this price, it is important to regularly check for price increases using supplier invoices.

For further information on mark up schedules and other areas of canteen financial management see publications from your school sector and parent organisation.

Tip

Review the costs on all items regularly. Use the school newsletter to let customers know about price changes. Don’t wait until the menu is updated.

How to minimise canteen costs

There are several ways to minimise costs in the canteen.

- Provide clear instructions for all canteen staff to ensure that all foods and drinks are prepared and sold in standard serving sizes eg the same quantity of filling each time for sandwiches and rolls.
- Use portion control equipment so serves of foods and drinks are the same each time the product is made.
- Avoid unnecessary packaging and wrapping.
- Put procedures in place to provide accountability for all products and money in the canteen.
- Sell foods and drinks nearing their use by date at a reduced price to avoid a total loss.
Once a healthy *Right Bite* canteen menu has been planned, it is important to make sure students, teachers and parents know what is available for sale and are encouraged to buy it. Marketing and promotion of the new menu will assist in this process. Both are very important aspects of running a successful *Right Bite* canteen. Marketing has been defined as a planned process that brings together buyers and sellers at a profit.

**Product**

Products for sale in school canteens should meet the *Right Bite* strategy requirements. There are many examples of the types of foods and drinks that can be sold in the school canteen in *Managing food* page 111 and in the *Right Bite* *Food and Drink Selector* (Part 1, Section 2, pages 21-37).

**Place**

Place can mean many things. A helpful way of thinking about it is to consider the canteen’s image. Image is a combination of factors: what the canteen looks like, the food it serves, how food is promoted and how well connected the canteen is to the school and its community. Involve the students in creating a positive image for the canteen. Some ideas for creating an image include naming the canteen. This could be done by holding a competition for the students. Examples of names include the Fuel Tank, the Food Factory and Tuck In.

**Improving the canteen environment**

- Artistic students could design eye catching murals and easy to read menu boards to let students know what is available while they queue.
- Repaint and refurbish the canteen environment to give it a new look. Use canteen profits to improve canteen equipment and the work environment for the canteen staff.
- Create a space outside that is pleasant for eating. Some schools have space to put tables with umbrellas.
- Aprons for canteen workers give a professional look to the canteen area and are an important hygiene measure.
- Promote the canteen as a positive part of the school community in the school newsletter.
- Put the canteen menu and other relevant information on the school intranet and/or internet sites.
- Provide a canteen service to support school activities eg staff lunches and sports days.
- Be supportive of classroom activities.

**Tip**

Marketing is getting the right product in the right place at the right time at the right price using the right promotion to attract customers who will buy.

**Student surveys**

To market the canteen and the foods for sale, an understanding of the lifestyles, ideas, interests and the fads of students is important. The student body, eg the SRC, is well placed to carry out surveys of students to find out this kind of information for the canteen committee. They could find out about some or all of the following.

- How well are certain products being received by the canteen’s customers? (Conduct tasting sessions.)
- Do students consider the price of the products are good value for money?
- Do the students know about the product?
- Are the students satisfied with the canteen service?

This information can be used to select products and put pricing and promotional strategies in place.
Price

Students want variety at a price they can afford. They want value for money. Price products to sell. Keep pricing simple, as this is easier for staff and customers (e.g. $1.50 is preferable to $1.49). Always check the selling price with the students. They will compare the cost with what they pay outside school. Recognise that we cannot always compete! Refer to setting selling prices on page 115 for more information.

Promotion

Active product promotion is essential when changing the canteen menu to healthier products as it generates sales. Products sell best when they sound interesting to the customer and the customer feels they are going to get an immediate benefit by choosing that food. Keep this in mind when creating an image for foods and drinks. Apply the ideas in the promotion checklist as these ideas can often increase the popularity of the food or drink. Put this into practice on the printed canteen menu or menu board, as well as for individual foods. See Appendix 6 Resources on page 134 for websites with more ideas for successful promotions.

Tip

A well positioned updatable menu board speeds up the serving process. Being easy to change with removable plastic lettering and numbering, it is a worthwhile long term investment.

Tip

Some primary schools have a ‘What can I buy for this?’ poster that shows 10c, 20c, 50c coins and a list of foods that can be bought with each one.

Promotion checklist

- Know the audience.
- Use their language/terms/symbols/icons.
- Sell a benefit/lifestyle/image.
- Use motivating/descriptive/sensory words e.g. ‘delicious’, ‘mouthwatering’, ‘scrumptious’.
- Use branding for the foods and drinks, not generic terms e.g. name a burger after your school, or give a meal deal a special name.
- Use theme foods/days, specials, sampling, meal and snack deals, giveaways. Rotate foods through the menu.

Check your progress

- Promotions for healthier food and drink options in the canteen are being done.
- Organisation of canteen tasks has been streamlined.
- Food safety and hygiene practices are being implemented.
- Enough staff members (paid or volunteer) are available for efficient operation of the canteen.
- Adequate equipment to prepare and serve foods and drinks in line with DECS eat well so schools and preschools healthy eating guidelines is available in the canteen.
- Review. Take time out to review progress – what’s working, what’s not working – and plan.