



St. Louis Dairy Initiative helps 37 schools creatively serve dairy this year

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ST. LOUIS - It is back to school time and the cafeteria is one place students may not expect to see exciting changes. However, through its Dollars for Dairy initiative, St. Louis District Dairy Council is helping 37 schools amp up their breakfast and lunch programs to include more milk, cheese and yogurt. “When students choose dairy at school, they are getting nutrients like protein and calcium to help fuel them throughout the day,” states Nutrition Educator Erin McGraw. Here are a few creative ways cafeterias are serving up dairy with the help of SLDDC’s Dollars for Dairy initiative:

Alternative Breakfast Models

Breakfast is an essential meal and research supports its importance for increased concentration, better academic performance and better behavior in the classroom. So, what do schools do to ensure students are eating breakfast and reaping the benefits? They offer an alternative breakfast service such as Breakfast in the Classroom, Grab ‘n Go Breakfast Stations, and Breakfast after the Bell. These options increase participation and allow students to start their day off right. “Schools that offer these alternative models ensures each student has the opportunity to enjoy a healthy morning meal that includes dairy,” states Nutrition Educator Erin McGraw.

Coffee Bars

High school cafeteria managers are taking note of the popularity of coffee drinks and including them on a la carte menus for breakfast and lunch. “Serving a hot or cold latte made with 8 ounces of milk is an innovative way to provide one serving of dairy,” states McGraw. According to the National School Breakfast/Lunch Program, schools can offer coffee drinks while staying within nutrition guidelines by using calorie-free syrups, available in a variety of flavors.

Grilled Sandwiches

Paninis, quesadillas and grilled wraps are a new sandwich trend that allows for a variety of bread, meat, veggies and of course, cheese options. Pepper jack, Gouda, Swiss, and provolone are a few of the selections that students have when building a customized hot sandwich. Last fall, Cafeteria Director Nancy Brown from Williamsfield School District in Williamsfield, Illinois sold approximately 1000 paninis over a three-month period through the Dollars for Dairy program. “Sharing this success story with other districts will hopefully interest other schools in adding grilled sandwiches with cheese to their lineup this year,” states McGraw.

These unique options offered to students (and staff) help to increase participation and dairy consumption. Schools selected for SLDDC’s Dollars for Dairy initiative must provide monthly data from cafeterias and work with SLDDC staff year-round to ensure that dairy is front and center of their projects.

For more information on the Dollars for Dairy initiative or dairy’s health benefits, visit www.stldairycouncil.org or contact Erin McGraw with St. Louis District Dairy Council: call 314-835-9668 or e-mail emcgraw@stldairycouncil.org. For delicious and nutritious recipes, check us out on Facebook at STLDairyCouncil.

Recipes:

Iced Caramel Latte

This refreshing iced coffee drink counts as one of the three recommended daily servings of dairy.

Yield: 1 serving

Ingredients:

- ½ cup strong brewed coffee, chilled
- 1 cup low fat milk
- 2 Tablespoons Sugar Free Caramel Syrup
- Ice

Instructions:

Combine coffee, milk and syrup in a tall glass filled with ice. Stir until blended well. Enjoy!

Nutrition Facts: Calories 103, Fat 2.4gm, Calcium 22%, Protein 8gm

Chicken Pesto Panini

Grilled sandwiches are popular restaurant menu items. Serve up these easy-to-make paninis for dinner at home in no time, and impress your family.

Yield: 1 serving

Ingredients:

- 1 ciabatta roll
- 2 teaspoons pesto sauce
- 3 slices deli chicken
- 2 tomato slices
- 1 slice provolone cheese

Instructions:

1. Pre-heat panini press.
2. Cut ciabatta roll in half and spread 1 teaspoon of pesto sauce on inside of each slice of roll.
3. Place one half of roll on panini press, pesto side up.
4. Layer roll with chicken, tomato and cheese.
5. Place remaining half of roll on top, pesto side down.
6. Close panini press and grill sandwich for 3-4 minutes, until cheese melts and crust browns.

Nutrition Facts: Calories 373, Fat 11gm, Calcium 20%, Protein 27gmp