

Dear Students,

You have control over the choices you make in the cafeteria every day! The school food service staff works hard to provide appealing, nutritious foods for lunch and/or breakfast. Then you choose what to eat!

By participating in the National School Lunch and/or Breakfast Program, your school receives federal and state reimbursement for qualifying meals. In order for a meal to qualify, certain food components must be offered. These are meat/meat alternate, grains/breads, two servings of different fruits and/or vegetables and milk. For each food component there are minimum quantities required, though your school may offer more.

According to federal regulations you do not have to take all of these food components. You may choose only three or four food components in at least minimum quantities and the meal will still qualify for reimbursement. This is called “*Offer vs Serve.*” The school food service *offers* all five food components, but can *serve* you fewer. The main reason for allowing you to decline foods that you don’t intend to eat is to reduce food waste.

An example of a lunch menu that offers all food components is:



Hamburger on Bun
French Fries
Tossed Salad
Milk

You could take all menu items or any qualifying combination such as:

Hamburger
Bun
Milk
Tossed Salad

Hamburger
Bun
Tossed Salad

Hamburger
Bun
French Fries

French Fries
Tossed Salad
Milk
Bun

As long as you choose a minimum of three different food components, containing minimum required quantities, your meal qualifies. The staff person who checks your tray at the end of the line is required to see you that you have a qualifying meal, so you may be asked to go back and get something else if your meal is not a reimbursable one.

Choosing three, four or five food components has no effect on the price you pay for lunch. The entire meal is the best value for your money. You can help keep the lunch line moving quickly by checking the menu ahead of time and politely telling the servers which foods you do not want.

Remember the choice is yours! Declining foods you will not eat instead of throwing them in the trash is a responsible way to help your school save food, time and money.

Thanks for your cooperation!