



K12 FOODSERVICE SOLUTIONS

K-12 MENU TREND GUIDE

2025-2026



TURN
MEALS INTO
MOMENTS





SERVE SMILES

DISH DELIGHT

CREATE MEMORIES



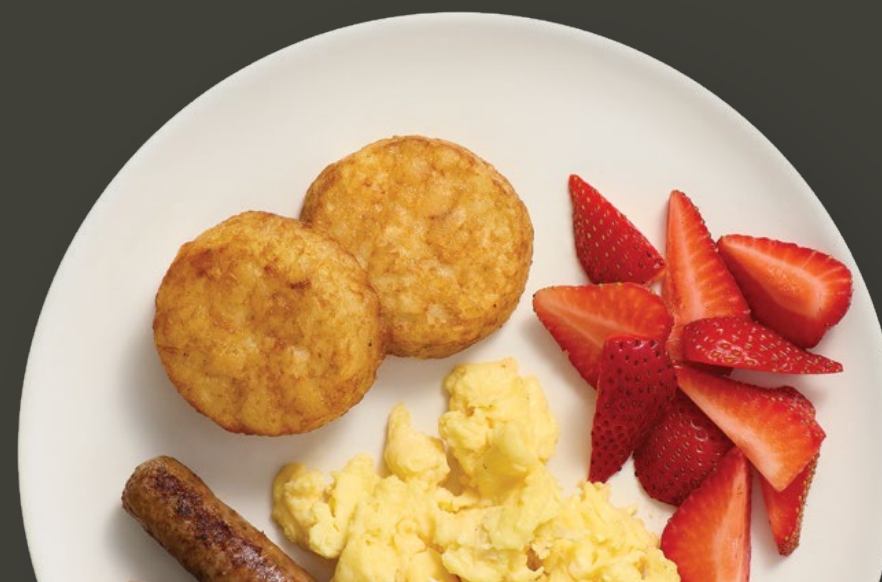
For kids, school meals are about more than what's on the plate. It's a time to reset, recharge and reconnect with friends — in between class.

That's why we created this McCain K-12 trend guide. It's designed to help fuel your creativity as a foodservice director — and put smiles on the faces of the kids you feed.

You'll discover 5 kid-centric trends that can spark mealtime joy. Get creative tips to make breakfast or lunch a deliciously relaxing break. And uncover new menu ideas from our culinary team that add tasty fun.



Dig in to see how we can help you turn meals into moments.



TREND
01

MAKE MEALS CUSTOMIZABLE

Kids love putting their creative spin on school meals. That's why build-your-own dishes — bowls, wraps and tacos — are trending. Letting them mix and match grains, proteins, veggies and sauces adds fun and flavor. Bonus: It encourages adventurous eating, too



Be on the lookout for original McCain recipes throughout this guide. These trend-specific menu ideas were created by **Chef Joe Urban and McCain's Chef Carol**.

35% of Gen Alpha kids have been in control of their eating habits since an early age.¹

¹Source: <https://datassential.com/resource/gen-alpha/>

ZESTY ORANGE CHICKEN & WEDGE BOWL

Start with a base of McCain® Crispy Bakeable Seasoned Skin-On Wedges and grilled chicken tossed with zesty orange sauce, pepper and onions. Then offer customizable toppings such as rice, grains, beans, avocado, lime, veggies, nuts, seeds and sauces.

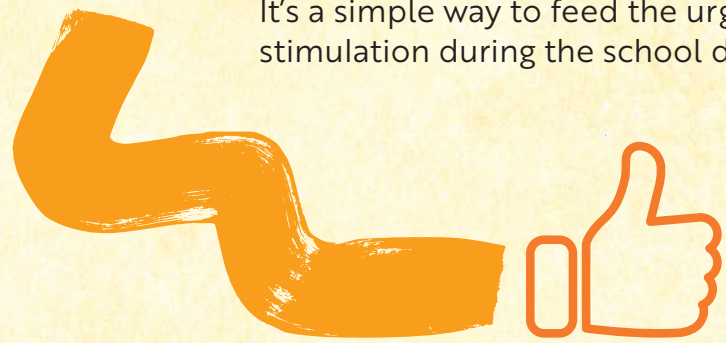


McCain® Crispy Bakeable Seasoned
Skin-On Wedges
SKU: 1000000496



BRING THE CRUNCH

If you're a kid, the crunchier the bite the better. And we don't just mean snacking at school. Cravings for noisy, crispy-textured foods are up. It's a simple way to feed the urge for sensory stimulation during the school day.



Social discussions with the term "crunch" have increased by **13%²**

²Source: <https://www.bagable.com/p/crunch-food-trends-dominate-snacks>



Golden Crisp®
Early Risers® Hashbrown
SKU: 1000010772



EARLY AVOCADO TOAST

Help them get up and crunch. Pair **Golden Crisp® Early Risers® Hashbrowns** with mashed avocado, sliced tomato and julienned red onion, and sprinkled with feta cheese.



EARLY BIRD CRUNCH WRAP

Make mornings yummier. Stuff a **Golden Crisp® Early Risers® Hashbrown** inside a flour tortilla. Layer with crumbled turkey sausage and cheddar cheese, then fold into a triangle.



ADDING FUN TO FUNCTIONAL FOODS

Shouldn't fueling up your body be enjoyable, too? Busy kids think so. That's why combining fun-to-eat foods with feel-good nutrition is in demand. Serving up energizing bites that taste (and look) fantastic can help your schoolkids on the go keep going.

65% of consumers are looking for foods that boost immunity and gut health.³

³Source: <https://www.chartwellsk12.com/chartwells-k12-is-thinking-outside-the-lunchbox-with-their-top-ten-food-trends-for-kids-in-2025/>

HOT RINGS

Wow their taste buds with a protein punch. Drizzle **Golden Crisp® Whole Grain Onion Rings** with hot honey and sprinkle with chopped turkey bacon.

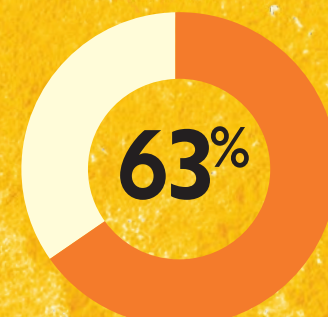


Golden Crisp® Whole Grain
Onion Rings
SKU: 1000012335



SAMPLING GLOBAL FLAVORS

It's no wonder tech-savvy kids have more curious palates than previous generations. They're hungry to try the globally inspired flavors they've seen online. From bold sauces to exotic spices, your menu is an easy place to add them in.



63% of Gen Alpha enjoy trying new foods and flavors.⁴

*Source: <https://botrista.com/resources/trend-reports/gen-z-vs-gen-alpha-the-evolving-landscape-of-young-consumers/>



SWEET & SAVORY Mediterranean Chicken Pita Sandwich

Take the kids on a culinary adventure. Toss **Harvest Splendor® Sweet Potato Thin Fries** in Mediterranean seasoning, then stuff into a pita with grilled chicken, hummus, chopped tomato and cucumber salad and tzatziki sauce.



Harvest Splendor®
Sweet Potato Thin Fries 5/16" XL
SKU: MCF03731



TRIPLE "T" BOWL (Tater Tot Tinga)

Serve up south of the border flavor. Top **Ore-Ida® Tater Tots®** with chicken Tinga, pepper and onions. Then drizzle with sour cream and garnish with cilantro.



Ore-Ida® Tater Tots®
SKU: OIF00215A

"NEWSTALGIC" DISHERS DELIGHT

Reimagining comfort food classics is in style at the kids' food table. By giving nostalgic tastes an updated flavor twist, the dishes they know and love — think mac and cheese — can spark delicious new memories when the lunch bell rings.

3X How much likelier people are to choose comfort food over gourmet meals.⁵

⁵Source: <https://nypost.com/2024/02/27/lifestyle/survey-finds-americans-more-likely-to-opt-for-comfort-food-over-gourmet-meals/>

SWEET SPUD STREET TACOS

Give chicken or beef tacos a tasty spin. Sprinkle baked **Harvest Splendor® Sweet Potato Thin Fries** on top of lettuce, cheese and Pico de Gallo.



Harvest Splendor®
Sweet Potato Thin Fries 5/16" XL
SKU: MCF03731





HELPFUL TIPS FOR MAKING MEAL TIME MEMORABLE



THESE IDEAS CAN HELP ENGAGE KIDS AND KICK UP THE FUN:

- ➔ **CREATIVE MENU ITEM NAMING**
Help kids get imaginative through a school competition.
- ➔ **INVITE KIDS TO TASTE TEST**
And choose new menu items.
- ➔ **USE COLORFUL SIGNAGE**
Draw attention to allergy-free items or new menu options.
- ➔ **MAKE HOLIDAYS SPECIAL**
Change up the menu for Halloween, Thanksgiving or Valentine's Day.
- ➔ **HOST KIDS' CHOICE DAYS.**
Let them decide what's on the menu.



ummm



MEANINGFUL MOMENTS

ARE SERVED BY YOU

We hope this McCain K-12 guide gives you some fresh menu inspiration and useful ideas that can bring mealtime excitement to your school.

We appreciate your dedication to nourishing kids at school every day!

TRY THE MCCAIN K-12 PRODUCTS FEATURED INSIDE THIS GUIDE:

McCain® Crispy Bakeable Seasoned Skin-On Wedges
Golden Crisp® Breaded Whole Grain Onion Rings
Golden Crisp® Early Risers® Hashbrown
Harvest Splendor® Sweet Potato Fries
Ore-Ida® Tater Tots®

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