

How'd they do that?

Concordia Charter School

Conducting Successful Taste Tests

Taste tests provide students an opportunity to influence their school menus and help create excitement around new or existing items. They can help foster a relationship of trust and collaboration between students and nutrition teams.

- Feedback from students can help in menu planning, making recipe adjustments, and minimizing food waste.
- Conducting taste tests can result in higher participation rates and increased acceptability of new foods overall.

Steps for a Successful Taste Test

1. Make a plan with your nutrition team. (1-2 months prior)

- Select your recipe or ingredient.
- Analyze preparation needs.
- Schedule the taste test.

Considerations:

- Procuring new ingredients (consider seasonal/local items)
- Labor intensity (special skills or equipment)
- Supplies (portion cups, spoons, napkins, etc.) and location of taste test

2. Promote the Event. (3-5 days prior)

- Create a display or taste test station that includes:
 - Recipe name and key ingredients
 - Sourcing information
 - Photos of recipe and ingredients
 - Date/time/location of taste test

Considerations:

- Make your item ahead of time and take photos of your finished product and ingredients to use on your display.
- Take photos and promote the event on your social media page(s) and/or website. (1-3 days prior)

3. Ensure distribution is engaging and visually appealing.

- Be creative with your display or taste test station.
- Share a short description of the item that will help build excitement for the tasting.

Considerations:

- Include stories about where the ingredients were sourced.
- Keep all descriptions and stories about the item positive and uplifting.



Featured Taste-Test: AZ Sunrise Citrus Salad

4. Collect feedback.

- Use collection methods and voting categories that are simple and easy for students to understand.

Considerations:

- Use words and images to represent categories (ex. Happy=Loved, Smile=Liked).
- Explore other methods such as charts, tally marks, buckets, etc.
- If using paper surveys, keep wording simple and limit to 1-3 questions.

5. Maintain positivity throughout the process.

- Encourage students to try item with one bite.
- Remind students that it is okay if a new food is not their favorite.

Considerations:

- Allow students to trust the way the food looks or smells.
- Use positive "peer pressure" to your advantage.
- If a student absolutely will not budge, do not force it!

COVID-19 Mitigation Considerations

- Start with easy recipes that are not as labor-intensive.
- If display stations are not possible, put extra effort into making individual samples appealing.
- Use voting methods that do not require the use of a centralized testing station.
- Food safety and sanitization of re-used items in between uses.