



School Nutrition Programs

This weekly newsletter from the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) is dedicated to providing education, training, and technical assistance opportunities to school nutrition professionals, helping to ensure seamless operations for those participating in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Child Nutrition Programs. If you are the food service contact for your school or facility, please be certain that everyone on your team has access to this important information.

Tip of the Week

Check-in with Your Field Specialist

Did you know that School Nutrition Program field specialists offer bi-weekly check-ins for food service directors and managers? These informative check-ins recap the weekly newsletters, offer critical program reminders, provide helpful resources, give virtual training on timely topics, and share success stories for making improvements in local school nutrition programs. For more information, contact your assigned field specialist.

Important Updates

Nominations for the School Food Service Employee of the Year Due Thursday, February 27

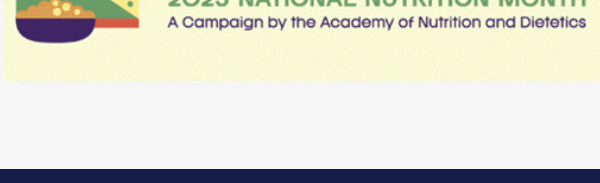
Help IDOE recognize school food service employees who contribute significantly to the health and learning capabilities of students by nominating them for IDOE's 2025 School Food Service Employee of the Year Award. This award was created to recognize the outstanding achievements of school food service employees who excel in the areas of customer service, attitude, professionalism, and teamwork. All school food service personnel except Food Service Directors are eligible to be nominated. Submit your nomination by Thursday, February 27. Contact [Suzette Hartmann](#) with any questions.

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) Application Now Available

The school year 2025-2026 FFVP application is now open to all elementary schools that wish to apply. FFVP is available as a reimbursable grant for kindergarten through sixth grade students. Students older than sixth grade are not eligible for this grant funding. While preference is given to those with the highest free and reduced rate, all elementary schools are welcome to apply. Applications are due by Friday, April 18. Each building must be submitted as a separate application. Apply [here](#). Contact [Gretchen Huntzer](#) with any questions.

March is National Nutrition Month

"Food Connects Us" is this year's theme for National Nutrition Month. Food connects us to our culture, family, and friends. Explore the ways that sharing a meal is an opportunity to learn about where your food comes from and how different ingredients, recipes, and cooking techniques can be used. Try new global flavors or include your favorite cultural foods and traditions. Download resources [here](#) from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.



Farm to School

Indiana Food Day 2025

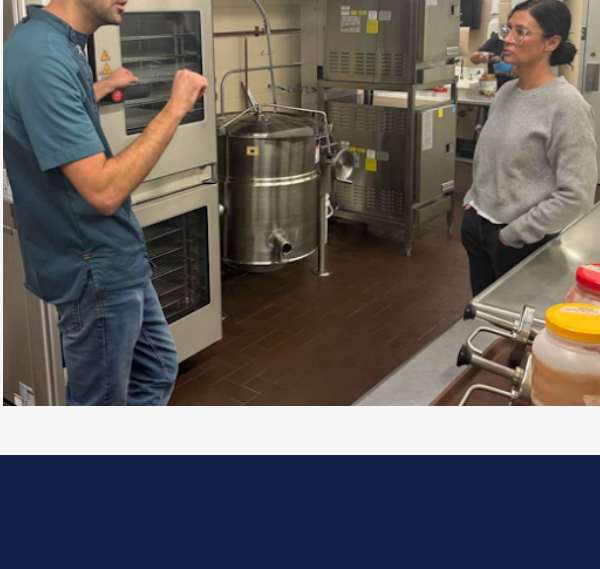
Food Day 2025 celebrates corn! After 10 years of Indiana Food Day celebrations, this is the first time the Hoosier staple has been selected. Food Day is a promotional event that focuses on a different food item every year. We pick the product; you pick when your Food Day is and how you celebrate. This year, we are expanding the months of participation and looking at it as more of a food-of-the-year celebration. We will give seeds out in the spring semester, and the learning begins there. Procure local corn or corn products at any point in the year to take part in the celebration! More information, including a toolkit and registration link to get seeds, stickers, and more will be coming soon. We will wrap up the celebration in October, Farm to School Month! Join us on [Wednesday, March 19, at 2:30 p.m. ET](#) for a kickoff webinar where the Indiana Grown For Schools team will walk through the details of Indiana Food Day and answer any questions.

Harvest of the Month Pilot

The Indiana Grown for Schools Network is thrilled to announce an exciting opportunity for you to participate in the school year 2025-2026 Harvest of the Month Pilot Program. The program will begin in August 2025 and end in May 2026. This innovative initiative aims to connect schools with locally grown, fresh produce while educating students about healthy eating habits and sustainable agriculture. By joining the Harvest of the Month pilot, you will play a crucial role in shaping the program's future success. Sign up [here](#) by Friday, April 11.

Farm to School Highlight

Southeast Dubois School Corporation is excited to announce a new partnership with Fischer Farms that will bring fresh, locally sourced meat options to student lunch menus. As a test, the Fischer Farms team served up mouthwatering cheeseburgers, BBQ pulled pork, savory sausage patties, flavorful smoked turkey, and seasoned taco meat. Students raved about the meals, asking when these new offerings would become regular menu items. This farm to school initiative is made possible thanks to the support and collaboration of Superintendent Dr. Jamie Pund, Food Service Director Lisa Fletcher (pictured with Chef Jeff Fell from Fischer Farms), and the hard-working cafeteria managers and staff.



USDA Foods

USDA Foods Annual Pre-Order Forecast Survey

The USDA Foods Annual Pre-Order Forecast Survey will close on Friday, March 7, at 4 p.m. ET. Once the survey closes, it cannot be reopened. School food authorities (SFAs) must complete the survey in [CNPweb](#) under the surveys tab, by the deadline, in order to receive USDA Foods for school year 2025-2026. For useful information and resources, please review the [Preparing for the Annual Pre-Order Forecast Survey guidance](#). A recording of the Maximize and Master the USDA Foods Survey: Plan, Prepare, Succeed webinar can be accessed [here](#).

When completing the survey, respondents may see the following message:

You do not currently have a NSLP information sheet for program year 2026 in a "pending approval" or "approved" status. You must complete the enrollment process for the National School Lunch Program before your FDP information sheet can be certified and approved.

This message can be ignored. Schools will need to complete this requirement at the beginning of the 2025-2026 school year.

New USDA Foods Survey Offerings

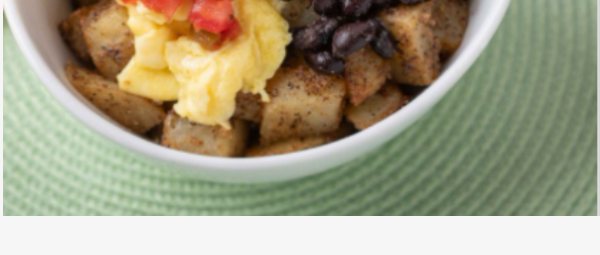
There are three new USDA Foods offerings on the 2025-2026 annual pre-order forecast survey. They are [pulled chicken 111881](#), [frozen apple juice cups 111790](#) and a product that can serve as a vegetarian option, the [black bean burger patty 111860](#). All these items are frozen and are listed in the survey in CNPweb under the 2026 Surveys tab in the chicken, fruit and vegetable categories respectively.

USDA Foods and DoD Fresh Orders and Deliveries

Schools should begin preparing for the end of the school year. Allocations end on April 30. USDA Foods deliveries (based on delivery periods) and USDA Foods for Processing and DoD orders end June 30. Schools should make plans for ordering and utilization. USDA Foods for Processing pounds remaining will carry over to school year 2026 depending on usage and availability. DoD Fresh funds will not carry over.

USDA Foods Recipes

Use your USDA Foods [salsa](#), [shredded cheddar cheese](#), and [refried beans](#) to prepare this variation of [breakfast bowl](#). This recipe must be adjusted to meet serving sizes and meal patterns.



Training and Webinar Opportunities

Reducing Added Sugars at Breakfast

Per the 2024 final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines](#), product-based limits for added sugar will be effective beginning July 1, 2025 for breakfast cereal, yogurt and flavored milk. Join us to learn about the requirements for limiting added sugar at breakfast, how to determine added sugars in products, and tips for reducing added sugars. Thursday, March 6, at 10 a.m. ET. Register [here](#).

Taking Policy from Paper to Action: Implementing the Local Wellness Policy Webinar

During this webinar, we will hear from Alliance for a Healthier Generation and discuss the 6-step process of wellness policy implementation with a focus on forming the wellness committee and exploring resources to help take action. Tuesday, March 11, at 2 p.m. ET. Register [here](#).

Reminders

Wellness Policy Reminder: Foods Not Sold

The local school wellness policy must include set nutritional guidelines for food and beverage not sold but available on campus during the school day. This includes class parties, classroom rewards, and any food brought in by an outside organization. These nutrition standards are created by the school and are not set by the USDA or state regulation. It is important to ensure all school personnel, volunteers, and groups are aware of and following the nutrition guidelines as stated in your wellness policy. Food items offered during the school day that are sold to students must meet Smart Snacks standards and school meal standards. For additional information, visit [IDOE's wellness policy webpage](#).

Updates from Our Partners

Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) February STAR Webinar: Mastering Scratch Cooking in Schools

Hear from school nutrition experts as they share insights on incorporating scratch cooking into school meal programs. Learn tips to help schools overcome common challenges and adopt best practices for preparing foods from scratch. This session will also highlight the benefits of scratch cooking and proven strategies to enhance meal quality and boost student satisfaction. Thursday, February 27, at 3 p.m. ET. Register [here](#).

Building Better Breakfasts Culinary Training

A healthy, protein-rich breakfast is the smart way to start the day, but reducing added sugar can be challenging for school nutrition programs. This webinar will showcase versatile recipes that pack in the protein, while reducing added sugar! Join us Wednesday, March 5, at 2 p.m. ET for live chef demonstrations of practical recipes, efficient techniques and important nutritional insights. This training is sponsored by the American Dairy Association of Indiana and the United Dairy Industry of Michigan. Register [here](#).

Organic Milk and Cheese Funding for Midwest Schools

Funding is available for K-12 schools in 11 Midwest states, including Indiana, to incorporate Organic Valley milk and cheese products into their meal programs starting in spring 2025. If you're interested in bringing organic dairy to your students, email [matthew.provost@organicvalley.coop](#).

Upcoming Dates



Thursday, February 27, at 1 p.m. ET	Meal Pattern and OVS in-person training at Noblesville Schools
Thursday, February 27, at 2 p.m. ET	Nominations due for School Food Service Employee of the Year
Thursday, February 27, at 3 p.m. ET	ICN February STAR Webinar
Monday, March 3 through Friday, March 7	National School Breakfast Week
Wednesday, March 5, at 2 p.m. ET	Building Better Breakfasts Culinary Webinar
Thursday, March 6, at 10 a.m. ET	Reducing Sugars and Breakfast Webinar
Thursday, March 6, at 2 p.m. ET	Rise and Dine: Discovering Global Breakfast Flavors
Friday, March 7 at 4 p.m. ET	USDA Foods Annual Pre-Order Forecast Survey Deadline
Wednesday, March 19	IASBO School Nutrition Seminar
Wednesday, March 19 at 2:30 p.m ET	Food Day 2025 Kickoff Webinar

Additional Resources

[School Nutrition Programs Calendar](#)
[IDOE's Nutrition Webpage](#)
[CNPweb](#)