

## **Berkeley Unified School District Suggestions for Healthy Food Choices in Snacks**

In light of the fact that childhood obesity and nutritional deficiency-related diseases are on the rise in the United States, we in the Berkeley community are obligated to promote and mentor healthy eating habits and balanced lifestyles through student education. Part of the Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) Mission stated in the Integrated Policy for Nutrition Education, Physical Activity and Food includes improving the well-being of the entire community through teaching students ways to establish and maintain lifelong health through better eating habits and physical activity.

In keeping with this goal, the Policy adopted the stipulation that foods offered to students and BUSD employees during the day as snacks, incentives, or refreshments in school offices and on school grounds be as healthful and nutritious as possible. Teachers, administrators and parents who model healthy behavior increase the likelihood of having a positive influence on student behavior.

The following list suggests recommendations for healthy food choices. Please note that this is not an attempt to ban certain foods or gatherings that involve traditional menus. Instead these recommendations aspire to raise awareness of day-to-day healthy eating habits that we can all strive to achieve and maintain while in school settings.

These guidelines may not apply to everyone. For those with known food allergies and sensitivities, we advocate that they follow their doctor's recommendations.

### **Beverages, Fresh Fruits and Vegetables**

Whenever possible, choose fruits, vegetables and beverages that are organically grown and are pesticide-, hormone-, and antibiotic-free. Try the following healthy options:

- Water and sparkling waters
- Herbal teas (hot and iced)
- Pure 100 percent fruit juice and fruit juice blends
- Sparkling 100 percent fruit juice and fruit juice blends
- Blends of 100 percent juice and sparkling water
- Natural fruit-flavored waters
- Whole and freshly cut fresh fruit, local and seasonal if possible
- Raisins and dried fruit, including 100 percent fruit roll-ups and fruit leather strips

- Fresh veggies served with low-fat salad dressing, dips, salsas, bean dips or *hummus* (pureed chickpeas)
- Ants on a Log – celery with peanut butter and raisins
- Yogurt parfaits made with fresh fruit and healthy condiments, such as granola, trail mix, dried fruits
- Fresh fruit salad
- Fruit juice smoothies
- Any fruit or vegetable served as crudité

Consider the following hints when reading ingredient labels on refreshment and beverage containers:

Strive to avoid added refined sugars (white, brown, fructose, corn syrup, high fructose corn syrup, evaporated cane juice and Sucanat™) and artificial sweeteners (such as dextrin, maltodextrin, Equal™ Splenda™ or NutraSweet™) as well as caffeinated beverages. It is also a good idea to avoid canola oil as well as hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated oils (trans fats) in trail mixes, dips, dressings and granolas.

### **Snack Items**

Whenever possible, choose snack items composed of organically grown ingredients that are not exposed to pesticides, hormones, and antibiotics at any point in the processing. Consider some of the following recommendations:

- Trail mixes (without roasted nuts)
- Fruit concentrate- and honey-sweetened yogurt with some granolas
- Real cheese (not processed cheese food, such as “American cheese”) and whole grain crackers
- Tortilla chips and salsa, guacamole, or bean dips
- Select potato chips (in moderation) that meet the parameters listed below
- Select granola, protein, or energy bars
- Select snack or nut bars (not roasted)
- Air-popped popcorn
- Raw nuts
- Compressed rice and grain cakes

When reading ingredient labels on snacks, again strive to avoid those made with excessive refined sugars, white flour, canola oil and hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils (trans fats), artificial (or chemically based) preservatives (such as MSG), chemical dyes, and high sodium content (in extreme excess of 200 milligrams of sodium per serving).

### **Sweets, Desserts, and Pastries**

Sweets, desserts and pastries can be bought or made. Whenever possible, choose sweets that contain organically grown ingredients (or those grown by sustainable agriculture principles)

which have not been exposed to pesticides, hormones, and antibiotics at any point in their processing. Instead of serving commercial cupcakes, consider substituting some of the following desserts and pastries:

- Select scones, biscuits and cookies
- Select cakes, cupcakes, muffins, tarts and pies
- Nut breads and veggie desserts such as carrot cake, zucchini or banana bread (or any dessert that uses berries, bananas, carrots, zucchini, squash, pumpkin or any other produce)

If you find it difficult to purchase ready-made items that meet these recommendations, consider baking from scratch or from healthy boxed or bagged convenience mix. When using your own recipes, if possible consider maximizing the nutritional value by using whole grain flours and adding or substituting healthier ingredients. For example, cookies made with fruit purees and/or dried fruits and reduced amounts of butter and sugar are more nutritious than commercially baked sugar cookies that offer empty calories and no nutritional value. Strive to serve items that use fruit or vegetables for main ingredients; these are especially healthful. We suggest looking for those that use alternative sweeteners, such as the following:

- Fruits, fruit juice and fruit juice concentrate
- Honey and molasses
- Pure maple syrup
- Rice malt and barley malt
- Stevia (an herbal sweetener that's safe for diabetics and has no calories)

Another way to naturally enhance the nutrition and boost the protein content of recipes is to add two or more of the following ingredients to your whole grain-based dishes and desserts:

- Nuts
- Seeds
- Legumes (or beans)
- Dairy products and eggs

Do this with any whole grain-based dessert, and you'll maximize the protein content of that dessert considerably. You'll feel fuller from the nutrition you've consumed and have more authentic energy to burn (rather than the adrenaline or insulin rush that comes from ingesting caffeine or too much sugar).

When reading ingredient labels on desserts, sweets and pastries, as usual strive to avoid those that contain enriched flours, canola oil and hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils (trans fats), artificial additives, chemical preservatives, dyes and artificial colors.

Strive to minimize, limit or avoid treats, desserts and pastries made with excessive refined sugars (white and brown) and avoid those with fructose, corn syrup, Sucanat™, dextrin, maltodextrin, Equal™, Splenda™, NutraSweet™, cane juice and evaporated cane juice (to name only a few).

**Tips for Reading Labels:**

The longer the list of ingredients and the more difficult they are to pronounce, the chances are more likely that many of them are artificial preservatives, additives and colors.

Labels list ingredients by order of volume in the product. For example, if the first ingredient on a product label is sugar, it means that product is composed primarily of sugar.