

Food Service Survey Results Summary for the 2022-23 School Year

Thank you to all the students, faculty, staff, and parents/guardians who took the time to complete our Food Services survey. We received 353 survey responses! The information provided in these surveys will be utilized to help improve the quality of our food service program at South Middleton.

The following is a summary of the responses from the surveys received from students (189), faculty/staff (43), and parents/guardians (121).

Feedback regarding menu options provided:

General feedback is that most respondents felt there are more options offered in the cafeterias and more fresh fruits and vegetables available.

We continue to receive concerns that food can taste bland and have issues with being over/under cooked. *Chartwells will work with the kitchen staff on the best ways to prepare items that are often reported to be over or under cooked (pizza and French fries especially). Due to USDA limits on sodium and fat, menu items have lower sodium levels and fat content which can affect flavor. Recipes are also being evaluated.*

Students and parents/guardians continue to complain that portion sizes were too small, especially for the middle and high school level students. *The portion sizes are defined by the USDA and school food service programs must provide meals in accordance with the regulated portion sizes. Students who have funds in their meal accounts can purchase a second meal as an a la carte item to supplement their main meal.*

What do you like about school meals:

Most students reported that they like the variety of options; the meals are filling; and the meals taste good and fresh.

Some student mealtime favorites include Asian/regional cuisine; buffalo chicken dip; watermelon; mashed potato chicken bowl; tacos; salads; yogurt parfaits; pizza; breakfast for lunch; sandwich bar; spaghetti/pasta options; and more fruit and vegetable options.

Mealtime favorites that Parents/Guardians reported include French toast sticks; pizza; breakfast for lunch; fun lunch; corn dogs; nachos; mashed potato chicken bowl; spaghetti; chicken patty; yogurt parfaits; grilled cheese sandwiches; and fresh fruits.

What don't you like about school meals:

Student feedback about mealtime dislikes were more general. Individuals reported that meals can lack flavor; sometimes items are undercooked; portion sizes are too small (left feeling hungry); some varieties of pizza don't taste good; some foods seem "greasy"; and not offering what was on the menu. Other complaints included limits on condiments and being charged for bottled water.

One continued complaint is being charged for bottled water. The cafeterias are required to provide free, potable water at mealtime (breakfast and lunch). Students were only offered free water during the pandemic. *Prior to the pandemic and now, the cafeteria charges for bottled water. Bottled water is an a la carte item. Students still have access to free potable water through the water dispenser.*

Some complained that sometimes fries and pizza were either soggy, cold, or too hard. *Additional training will be provided to cafeteria staff on the best ways to bake fries and pizza in the kitchen ovens. No food items are fried in the building kitchens. French fries are baked.*

Parents/Guardians reported that there are no vegan options; pizza is offered too frequently; food can be bland; some items are overcooked, and some are soggy; too much sugar (primarily for breakfast); too many processed foods; long lines; occasionally they run out of some menu items; limited menu choices (Rice students); portion size too small; and the use of Styrofoam.

Several students and parents/guardians also complained about the use of Styrofoam. *Chartwells is looking into alternative options for serving food items that would eliminate the use of Styrofoam.*

A few general complaints about the quality and variety of middle school menu items were reported from students, staff, and parents/guardians. *Chartwells will be evaluating the set up and options offered at the middle school to improve service and quality.*

Portion size for adult/faculty/staff meals – *Adult meal portion sizes should be larger than elementary student portion sizes. Servers will be reminded to modify portion sizes for adult meals.*

How is the customer service:

Overall, the feedback was that that cafeteria staff are helpful and welcoming. *Chartwells will continue to provide customer services training to all cafeteria/kitchen staff.*

Cleanliness of facility:

Overall, the feedback was that the kitchen and cafeteria are generally clean and well maintained. While the SMSD custodial staff primarily maintain the cleanliness of the cafeteria/student seating areas; Chartwells staff assist at times. Chartwells maintains the cleanliness of the kitchens. Each kitchen is inspected by the state twice per school year.

Comments/Concerns/Suggestions:

Comments:

Like the different “bars” at the HS – pasta, potato, salad, sandwich, etc.

Thanks for the gluten free options!

Like the new featured items

Turkey Dinner was fabulous!

Concerns:

Lines are too long, and lunch time is too short. *We are unable to modify the length of the meal periods but lines can move more quickly if students have the ID card on hand OR on their phone to scan. Manual entry of student ID numbers takes a long time. Most buildings serve anywhere from 200 to 300+ meals per day.*

Some food items received were “out of date” and or quite bruised/mushy. – *The Director of Dining Services will review the process of checking dates and carefully evaluating produce with the cafeteria*

staff prior to serving. Any student or staff that receives an item that is of concern should bring the item to the cafeteria staff's attention. Providing the damaged/out of date item to the staff person is important for evaluating quality. Chartwells can follow up with the food distributors about any issues.

*Breakfast seems to have a lot of sugar – All items sold in the cafeterias must be “Smart Snack Complaint” which means they must meet the USDA set minimums/maximums for sugar, sodium, fat, and calorie content. Please visit the following link to learn more about Smart Snacks in Schools.
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/tools-schools-focusing-smart-snacks>*

Suggestions:

Improve the speed of check out (speed up line) – Line service will move more quickly if students have their ID card with the barcode on it available. Students can even use previous year's ID cards with barcodes or can download their barcode onto their smart phones through SchoolCafe (grades 6-12).

Use reusable plates, bowls, and utensils – A huge portion of reusable utensils have been thrown away in the past. During COVID, all service was on disposable items. Chartwells is evaluating different reusable plates/bowls/tray options to reduce waste in the cafeterias.

List ingredients/allergens by component (i.e., condiments/sauces) since those may also contain allergens.

Offer stickers to elementary students who try new foods.

Offer more vegetarian options such as hummus and veggie wraps. Offer meatless salads for those who don't eat meat (or at least put it on the side). Please contact the Director of Dining Services, Kim Smith, regarding possible vegetarian/vegan options. In order for the meal to meet all the required components, it must specially designed.

Post meal offerings on WBBN at the HS. – Great idea!

Offer healthy a la carte options for purchase such as yogurt or cheese sticks. – Great idea!

Requests:

Communicate new menu items in multiple formats – We will look at the different ways to make sure students and staff are aware of the featured menu items. As always, check Nutrislice for the most up to date menu offerings.

Provide Gluten Free meals- We do offer gluten free options. These meal items are set aside from the serving line for students who need them. Medical documentation regarding gluten allergy must be on file with the district. Please contact the Director of Dining Services, Kim Smith, to learn more about accessing the gluten free menus.

Can students get a second meal? - Any student who has funds in their meal account can purchase a second meal. Second meals are not included in the Free/Reduced Price meal program and therefore students are charged for second meals.

More salads and fresh fruits – Chartwells is continuously trying to access more fresh fruit and vegetable options. School nutrition programs are required to “buy American” which means that fruits and vegetables offered must be grown in the US. That limits availability of some produce at certain times of

year (i.e., strawberries, blueberries, etc.). But the Director of Dining Services has increased the amount of commodities that will go toward the procurement of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Faculty/Staff would like to know in advance of any menu specials that are going to be offered. And, the elementary school staff would like to get the new “Feature” items. *Chartwells is looking at ways to accommodate this request.*

Allow cash sales – *Unfortunately, cash sales are not an option at this time. But, students and staff can apply funds to their account easily by submitting a cash/check payment at their building office (in a payment envelope). This payment option has no fees and does not require an online account. Online accounts through SchoolCafe do offer the convenience of online payments (which have a service fee attached to each transaction.)*

Changes being made:

We are working on improving communication of last-minute changes made to menus when the planned items are not received. In addition to modifying the menus online (in Nutrislice), we are working on emailing a communication to parents/guardians of students at the effected schools.

More food sampling/tasting options are being developed to present at school mealtimes in each building.

Please visit the South Middleton School District website, www.smsd.us, under the *Food Services* tab for additional information about menus, setting restrictions, a la carte pricing, what makes a meal; facility inspections, applications for Free/Reduced Price meals, and so much more. Some information is available as downloadable PDFs on the lower portion of the screens.

Please feel free to contact Jennifer Metz at jfm@smsd.us or 717-258-6484, ext. 2303, or Kim Smith at foodservice@smsd.us or 717-258-6484, ext. 1016, if you have additional questions or concerns.

Thank you to all the individuals who took the time to complete the Food Service Survey!