

School Lunches “Go Wild” During National School Lunch Week

(NAPSA) — School lunches have come a long way. Students today have sophisticated palates, and foodservice operators have to be even more adept at enticing them to eat—and eat well—in order to fuel their minds for learning.

National School Lunch Week runs from October 13–17, and “Wild About School Lunch” is this year’s theme. Started in 1963 by a proclamation from President John F. Kennedy, the program raises awareness of and garners support for the role foodservice and nutrition programs play in the lives of American school children.

But school cafeterias have seen tremendous changes since the 1960s.

These days, kids are lining up for chipotle barbeque chicken wraps, fruit and yogurt parfaits and Cobb salad shakers, in addition to chicken sandwiches and pizza.

These are just a few of the menu items from One World Café®, a school foodservice program designed by ARAMARK, a foodservice provider at more than 4,000 public and private schools across the United States.

One World Café combines kid-tested recipes with colorful graphics and fun promotions so students enjoy fresh and nutritious food in an exciting, colorful setting more like the places they eat outside of school.

“Today’s students are extremely savvy consumers,” said Jeff Wheatley, President, ARAMARK School Support Services. “To meet their needs, we’ve raised the level on food offerings while setting the stage with the ‘wow’ factor through One World Café.”



ARAMARK’s nutrition mascot “Spike” teaches the benefits of healthy eating and exercise to over 70,000 children each year. (Photo courtesy ARAMARK.)

The program is extremely successful at school districts across the country, including Houston; Detroit; Duval County, Florida; Culver City, California; and Providence, Rhode Island.

One World Café was selected as a 2003 first place winner in *Restaurant Hospitality* magazine’s Best Kids Menu in America competition.

To educate younger children on making the right food choices, ARAMARK calls on the help of Spike™, the company’s nutrition “mascot” who encourages kids to “Eat Right!” and exercise through live interactive shows to over 70,000 children a year, monthly giveaways to over 500,000 students, and teacher lesson plans. Spike is so popular that he has “gone Hollywood”—he stars in his own video series.

Spike will “go wild” to get in the spirit for National School Lunch Week. Safari clothes and gear will take the place of his usual soccer uniform as he ventures out in search of new wild food offerings.

Initiatives such as One World Café and Spike help increase student participation in school meals and promote nutrition education so young minds are properly fueled for learning.