

Appeal to Today's Appetites from A to Z

New products, new delivery styles, and new regulations abound. Directors who harness the energy of fresh ideas will be the first to increase participation and levels of satisfaction for their program.

A – Attract kids' attention – Kids are attracted to foods in colorful packaging with iconic characters.

B – Breakfast is big business – Served at lunch, in the classroom, or on the go, breakfast food is increasingly popular.

C – Chop those vegetables – They're great in sauces and salads, and just one more way to get kids to eat more of them.

D – Display food attractively – Present your dishes just like they do at Starbucks. You'll catch students' attention.

E – Embellish your foods – Give your food some pizzazz, and make healthy ingredients more appealing.

F – Finger foods are fun – Kids love to eat with their hands, so try offering more finger foods.

G – Grab-and-go is good – Convenience fits right in with students' high energy levels and busy schedules.

H – Healthy can be profitable – More and more students are "reading the labels". So let them know the healthy value of your meals.

I – Independence is appealing – Make it convenient for kids to prepare and serve their own foods.

J – Junk food is going upscale – Even munchies are part of the "eat better" frenzy: fried chips are out, veggie chips are in.

K – Keep kids involved – Make students part of the eating experience. Invite them to help test and develop your menu.

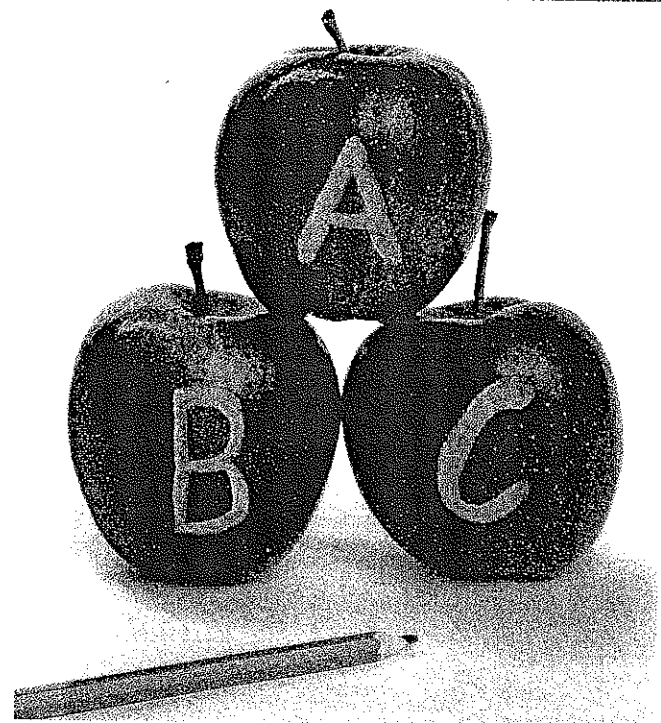
L – Local is the buzzword – Link to trusted local sources, like farms, to improve your program's natural image.

M – Meet or exceed USDA dietary guidelines – Gain bragging rights when you adopt the latest guidelines.

N – Nutritional values should be advertised – List nutrition values on menus, at serving lines and on Web sites to promote food quality.

O – Obesity has been called the new tobacco – Do whatever you can to help kids, "Just say no!" to fat.

P – Promote your school meals – Publicize the message that your meals are, "good for you", "good for learning", and "designed especially for kids".



Q – Quality is recognizable – Kids, like adults, believe that quality rubs off. Let them know you understand its appeal.

R – Reduce sodium, sugar, and fat – Eliminate the negatives and you have accomplished something special.

S – Swing eating in the right direction – Stress good eating habits, and purchase products that support you in your efforts.

T – Tempt kids to eat better – Try a variety of foods. Train students and parents about how to eat well.

U – Unusual shapes make meals fun – Younger kids enjoy foods in odd shapes. Add visual appeal by using moon-shaped cookies or football biscuits.

V – Vending machines mean new choices – Consider new machines that dispense reimbursable or vegetarian meals, too.

W – Whole grains are healthier – Serve students whole grain items at least 50 percent of the time.

X – XM radio can be your friend – Stream music, sports, or YouTube messages into the dining room to capture students' attention while they eat.

Y – Yes to items that make kids say, "Yummm!" – Kids expect their food to taste really good. That's the best way to increase participation.

Z – Zesty spices and flavors are in – With increased exposure to ethnic cuisines, students seek foods that are spicy.