01 Going Trayless: Unintended Nutritional Consequences of Trayless Cafeterias

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Objective: Recently, there has been an interest in whether no longer offering trays, “going trayless,” in all-you-can-eat cafeterias might reduce how much a diner takes and how much they waste. If going trayless encourages diners to take and eat less food in a cafeteria, what foods are they leaving behind? When given the choice of salad, pasta, and dessert, which item is a 2-handed person likely to forgo?

Design, Setting and Participants: On 2 different days, the side dish selection and plate waste was collected from 443 college students who had selected the main course (chicken teriyaki). On one day, dining trays were available to all students. On the second day (2 weeks later), the cafeteria went “trayless” and no dining trays were available.

Outcome Measures and Analysis: Of those students who selected the main course (chicken teriyaki), we were interested in what percentage selected a salad and what percentage selected a dessert. We also measured any plate waste of chicken, pasta, and dessert.

Results: Going trayless decreased the nutritional mix of what students selected for dinner. Twenty-six percent fewer students took salads, but only 8% fewer took ice cream. There was 23% less plate waste than when trays were used.

Conclusions and Implications: What happens when a school goes trayless and students have only 2 hands? In this field study, they still took the ice cream but left the salad behind. Smaller trays may be a better way to decrease food waste and maintain nutrition than no trays.

Funding: None.

02 Move the Fruit: Putting Fruit in New Bowls and New Places Doubles Lunchroom Sales

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Objective: How can school lunchrooms increase fruit sales for less than $50? Most fruit is sold in metal trays in an inconvenient location. Would placing fruit in a colorful bowl in a well-lit, convenient part of the line increase sales for very little cost?

Design, Setting and Participants: More than 560 students (middle school and high school) in 3 schools in northern New York. This was a pre-post control design in which fruit was placed in colorful bowls in a convenient place in line. The study ran for a full semester and was compared with sales a year from date.

Outcome Measures and Analysis: Fruit sales during the semester.

Results: All 3 schools experienced dramatic increases in fruit sales after the intervention, which decreased shortly afterward and then stabilized. Three months (1 semester) after the intervention, the average sales across the schools was 105% more than what it had been before the intervention.

Conclusions and Implications: The more appetizing and visible a school lunchroom can make the fruit appear, the more of it they will sell. Simply putting fruit into a colorful bowl dramatically increased sales.

Funding: None.

Oral Abstracts

03 What Is in a Name? Giving Descriptive Names to Vegetables Increases Lunchroom Sales

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Objective: How can school’s lunchrooms lead children to choose more vegetables? Children have become accustomed to fast food-style marketing. This can make foods such as “broccoli” or “carrots” seem tame or generic in comparison to “broccoli bites” or “tender steamed carrots.”

Design, Setting and Participants: Two elementary schools in the New York City metropolitan area were chosen, and one of the schools implemented a strategy of naming all vegetables during the course of a month. Both schools are operated by the same food service and offered the same menu for the duration of the study. Sales of vegetables by individual were tracked for 2 months in each school, one before implementation of the naming strategy and one after. This resulted in a total of more than 6,000 purchasing observations.

Outcome Measures and Analysis: Vegetable sales were recorded and analyzed to determine effect in treatment school.

Results: Although vegetable sales remained relatively steady in the control school, the percentage of individuals choosing vegetable increased by more than 20% for the treatment month when vegetables were named.

Conclusions and Implications: Using simple techniques such as naming vegetables can make them more appealing and appetizing to elementary school students. This is a simple and inexpensive way to increase child vegetable consumption.

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04 Building Community Capacity to Make Environmental and Policy Change to Prevent Childhood Obesity: The Case of New York State’s Eat Well Play Hard Community Projects

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