

A Recipe for Operating a Successful School Canteen

Ingredients

- Passionate people
- A policy document providing guidelines
- Bookkeeping/accounting skills and knowledge
- Food safety and hygiene skills and knowledge
- Marketing and communication expertise
- Food preparation skills
- Appropriate and well maintained facilities and equipment



Method

Combine all ingredients and mix well

1. *Passionate people*

- a. In most schools there is a group of parents and staff that work together to organise a food service. For example, in government schools this is generally the responsibility of the P&C
- b. Volunteer support
 - i. Ideally, but not always available
 - ii. Contractors may not be able to operate with volunteers due to insurance requirements
- c. People with a passion for providing a food service that promotes healthy food and drink choices

2. *A policy document*

An essential ingredient in any mix. The policy should set out the guidelines for operating the business and reiterate that the school is compliant with the Department of Education's *Healthy Food and Drink* policy.

3. *Bookkeeping/accounting skills*

- a. Menu pricing for school canteens must take into consideration all overheads for their business operations. Examples include, but are not limited to: wages and on-costs, insurance, maintenance of equipment, and the cost of stock, packaging and cleaning products etc
- b. Appropriate record keeping must be kept up to date e.g. stock take, daily sales tallies, banking
- c. Audited financial records to be completed as part of the overall audit conducted by the parent body / school

4. *Food safety and hygiene skills and knowledge*

- a. All canteens must comply with current Occupation Health and Safety regulations and guidelines
- b. All canteens must comply with the Food Act 2008 and Food Regulations 2009 and as such must register as a food business with the local council (fee may apply)
- c. All paid and volunteers working in a school canteen must complete FoodSafe Food Handler training or equivalent
Note: Costs are incurred for staff to complete accredited food safety and hygiene courses

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5. *Marketing and communication expertise*

- a. Communicating with the school community is essential. Choose the most appropriate forum for the school e.g. newsletter, website, notice board etc
- b. The canteen should be marketed as a food service business that caters for the school community and forms part of the education environment. The canteen should be a friendly place to work in and visit
- c. Food and drinks sold from the canteen must be marketed in a fun, appetising and appealing way

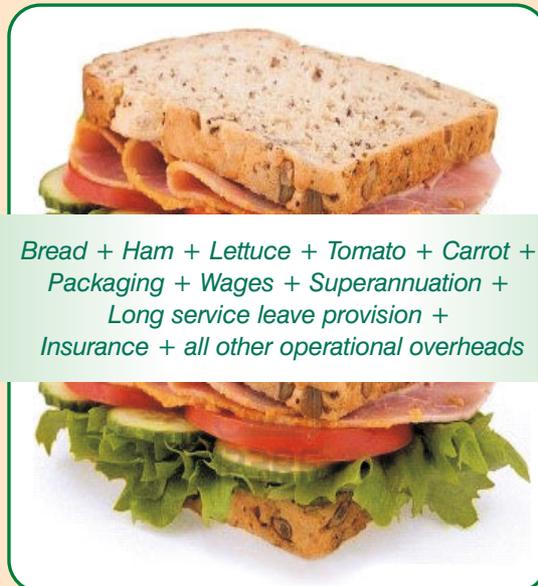
6. *Food preparation skills*

- a. The level of food preparation permitted by the local council will vary. The local Environmental Health Officer should be consulted before menus are planned
- b. All paid and volunteer staff must demonstrate they have the skills and knowledge to prepare food safely

7. *Appropriate and well maintained facilities and equipment*

- a. A school canteen is a commercial business and as such should contain commercial grade equipment (i.e. not domestic equipment)
- b. Funds should be set aside for equipment and facility maintenance and/or replacement when necessary. For example, a broken hinge on an oven door represents a food safety hazard and must be fixed

When you add on all the costs of operating a successful business, WHAT DOES A SANDWICH REALLY COST TO MAKE? Clearly, a lot more than just the basic ingredients! It's essential to use the prices your school pays for stock and your own overheads when arriving at a selling price as these vary between schools. For this reason, there is no standard price for a sandwich so it is risky to base your school's selling price on that of another without a proper analysis of what it is actually costing YOU to make it.



This article may make it easier to explain to parents why there is a variation in prices between schools.



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