

## **A la carte Options Available for Student Lunch**

Please see documents regarding information about the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. The program does strictly regulate portion sizes, calories, sodium fats, trans fats, etc. It also allows school districts and food service programs to sell extra food if students are still hungry. This is a decision of HFFKA.

A la carte items being purchased as an alternative lunch option is essentially no different than a student bringing a lunch from home. Meals served from the food service program with all correct components are considered 'reimbursable meals'. This means, the district earns a certain dollar amount, regulated at the state and federal level, for each meal served. A la carte purchases and any food brought from home do not qualify as reimbursable by the National School Lunch Program.

See attached document in regards to restrictions on what may or may not be sold for a la carte. All items are regulated by HFFKA and must meet specific requirements. Students that eat a school lunch have unlimited access to a fresh fruit and vegetable bar daily. Should a student choose to only purchase a la carte items, we will make bowls of fruit available to be purchased (fresh or canned) daily. Cereal bars, granola bars, and beef jerky are options. Should enough students show interest in these items, Opa! staff will be more than happy to order them. The low sodium beef jerky available to sell is a little more expensive. A small bag would run around \$2.25. In addition, these items come in very large quantities. When ordered for an attempt at a la carte last year, dozens of items were thrown away at the expiration date.

An extra entrée is seconds on what was served. Opa! pays for all food, therefore, the extra entrees are not being bought twice. If an item is not sold as a part of a reimbursable meal, it is then offered as a la carte.

One of the benefits of the punch card is that students are not making extra charges on their meal accounts without a limit. If a family chooses to purchase a punch card, they know their student will be spending exactly \$20 on a la carte purchases. Students who qualify for free and reduced lunches are unable to purchase additional items with their lunch account. Punch cards make a la carte an option for any family who chooses, or is able, to purchase one. If a family is unable to afford a card, Opa! would encourage the student to take advantage of the unlimited fruit and vegetable bar. They also utilize a share table. This is a place where students are able to put packaged items (yogurt, cereal, milk, juice, etc.) that were not eaten. Other students are able to take items from this table if still hungry.

Opa! and the school district do not have any control over the HHFKA regulations. They are required to enforce the regulations and keep the food school lunch service program in compliance. A la carte is a program used all over the country to help students obtain additional food when they are hungry. Opa! Is completely open to suggestions for suggestions. Please do not hesitate to contact Chelsi Jones at Centre, with further questions or concerns.

Working together,

Chelsi Jones, Director of Nutrition Services