

Ashfield Public School

Healthy Choices Canteen Trial,  
Term One, 2015

Report for P & C, April 2015

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# Summary

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- A Healthy Choices Canteen trial was held on seven Fridays during Term One 2015.
- The purpose of the canteen was to provide healthy and sustainable lunches for the school community and assess the viability of this model of a canteen in our school community.
- Each week, we offered a freshly prepared lunch item. Over the term we offered Lebanese bread wraps, sushi, fried rice, curry, pasta and soup. The cost of each item was \$4 per serve, however sushi was \$2 per roll.
- The canteen had an approved operating budget of \$1000, and only used \$38 of this to purchase reusable cups and other packaging materials.
- The trial was profitable for the P and C.
- **Total profit:** \$797.97
- **Most orders:** Sushi
- **Least orders:** Curry
- **Students' favourite:** Sushi
- **Students' favourite (runner up):** Pasta
- **Students' least favourite:** Curry
- **Most profitable item:** Sushi (Tuna/Vegetable week 2)
- **Most post-purchase waste:** Fried Rice
- **Most requested for next time:** Fruit Salad, followed by Noodles
- The canteen will continue in term two, where the committee will test a slightly different model. The committee also hopes to engage the school community on issues around what constitutes healthy and sustainable food.

# Background

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The Ashfield Public School P&C firmly believes that a school canteen must promote healthy eating by selling *only* healthy food and support the whole school curriculum of healthy bodies, lifestyles and environments.

The purpose of our Healthy Choices Canteen trial was:

1. To provide affordable and healthy lunch options for students and to promote healthy and sustainable food.
2. To provide a service for parents

The canteen was not designed as a fundraising exercise, however across the term the canteen was profitable.

## Healthy *and* Sustainable Lunches

The NSW Department of Education's Fresh Tastes strategy uses a traffic light system to classify the health of food. All items served in the canteen were classified as green.

Our canteen used research from the Australian National University to determine what sustainable food was. Researchers from the ANU have identified four food behaviours that have definite and measurable impacts on the environment.<sup>1</sup> These behaviours are perfectly compatible with the Fresh Tastes strategy. They are:

1. Don't over-consume food
2. Reduce animal products
3. Reduce discretionary (highly-processed) foods and
4. Don't waste food.

We applied this in the following ways:

*Don't over-consume* - Our serving sizes were appropriate for children

*Reduce animal products* - We encouraged vegetables to be part of - if not the centre - of our menu. We frequently offered a vegetarian variation of the item.

*Reduce discretionary foods* - We offered meals not snacks. All meals were prepared from fresh ingredients on the day of consumption.

*Don't waste food* - We managed our purchasing carefully and composted organic matter in the school worm farm. This element of sustainability was the most difficult to apply.

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<sup>1</sup> Friel, S., Barosh, L. J., Lawrence, M. 2014. Towards healthy and sustainable food consumption: an Australian case study *Public Health Nutrition*, 17, pp 1156-1166

# Menu

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## Lebanese Bread Wraps

Freshly made Lebanese bread wrapped around spinach, carrot, cucumber, tomato and either ham or cheese. We were surprised by the enthusiasm displayed for so much salad – especially from the kindergarten kids!

Income: \$211.50 Expenses: \$93.51 Profit: \$117.99

## Sushi

Freshly made sushi with mixed vegetables or tuna and cucumber. This proved to be the most popular and profitable canteen. We decided against serving extra soy sauce keep salt levels low and reduce disposable packaging. Rolls were wrapped in baking paper, not cling-film.

Income: \$255.00 Expenses: \$81.34 Profit: \$173.66

## Vegetarian Fried Rice

Fried Rice with egg, mixed vegetables and plenty of low-sodium soy sauce. Served in reusable cups.

Income: \$148.00 Expenses: \$53.65 Profit: \$94.35

## Curry

A vegetarian/vegan curry prepared by mums from our Indian community. We expected a high uptake, but this ended up being our smallest canteen.

Income: \$106.00 Expenses: \$71.96 Profit: \$34.04

## Pasta

Bolognese sauce (with beef) serve with penne pasta.

Income: \$230.00 Expenses: \$94.61 Profit: \$135.39

## Soup

Italian Ribollita soup served in a reusable cup with a wholemeal roll. Because the serve was small we offered free refills.

Income: \$144.00 Expenses: \$52.24 Profit: \$91.76

## Sushi

Due to the success of our first sushi canteen we offered sushi again with two variations: Mixed vegetable or teriyaki chicken/cucumber.

Income: \$232.00 Expenses: \$81.22 Profit: \$150.78

# Evaluation

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## A Coordinator's Perspective

We can be rightfully proud of our efforts. The trial met our goals to serve healthy affordable food to the school community. Over the term, we served almost five hundred freshly prepared lunches. Feedback from students and teachers was generally positive. We heard many tales about the students trying new foods. Several parents reported they were delighted that children who would not normally eat fresh vegetables at home ate them on canteen days. Anecdotally, our model worked. We only served only one healthy food option each week, which allowed kids to see their peers eating happily. This in turn encouraged others to try new/healthy foods.

Profit/fundraising was never the purpose or focus of this venture (we planned, of course, to break even), however we proved that healthy, freshly prepared food could make money for the school. On-the-day orders were important for the success of the trial, however that made scheduling quantities of food difficult. The tight time frame on Fridays makes purchasing in advance critical. After some over-purchasing in the first week we managed to be more efficient at predicting the supplies we would need. Opportunities exist to maximize profit within this model by finding better, cheaper suppliers, as I often purchased from a major supermarket due to time constraints. Although we have heard some criticism that the \$4 price point was expensive we think that it offers value for money to parents, as well as maintaining the financial viability of the project.

Serving freshly prepared food is the most healthy and sustainable choice for a canteen, however it is quite labor intensive. Staffing the canteen adequately took effort. We had a pool of around 15 volunteers. However, many of these volunteers had caring responsibilities for younger children that limited or curtailed their involvement. However, our network was ad hoc. There is opportunity to be better organised at recruiting and scheduling volunteers. One week a team of volunteers from the Indian community cooked a curry for lunch. This generated some interest from other community groups who want to do the same thing. We expect to do this again.

My thanks go to all the wonderful parents who helped this trial be a success. Thank you for making Fridays in the canteen collegiate and fun! Also thank you to the students at the school who were always enthusiastic and polite, and to Damien Moran for letting us experiment with this model. Special thanks goes to Mimi Cook, Louise Hawkins and Dyani Hoekstra who were always happy chat me through whatever obstacles were bothering me!

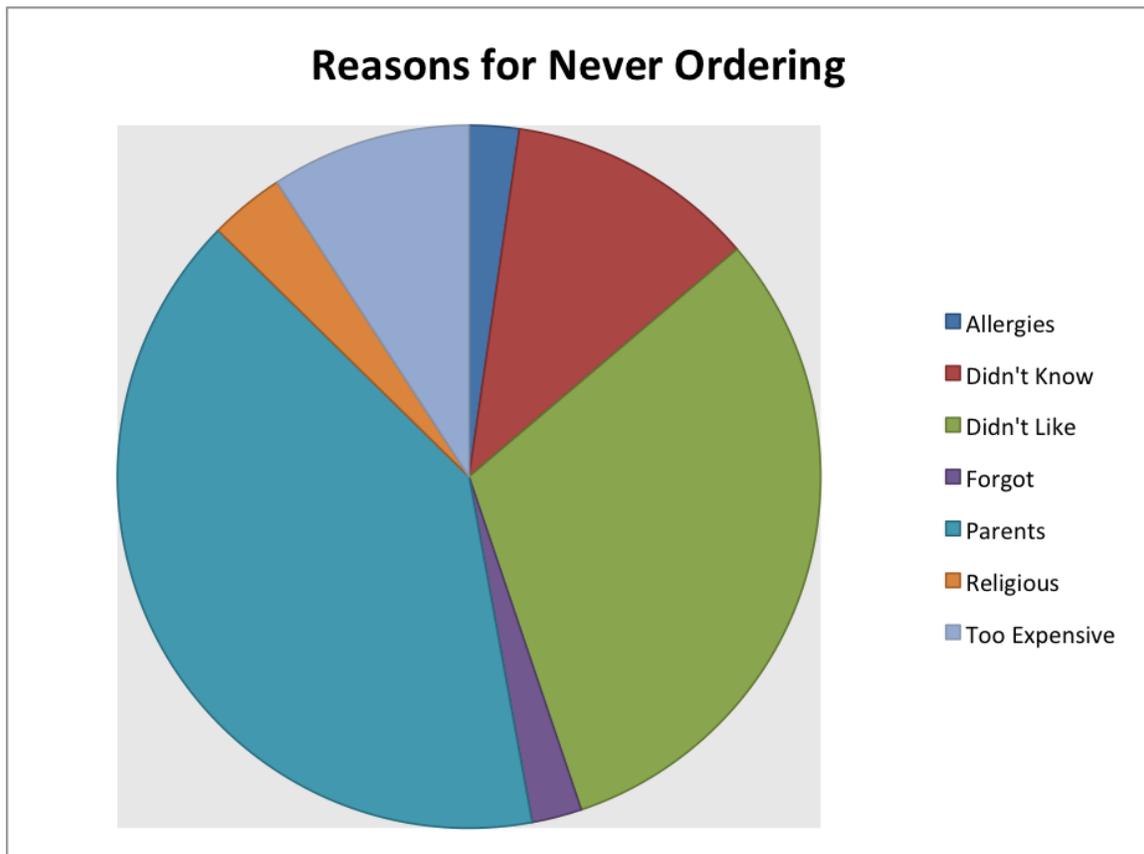
## Student Responses

In the final week of term we asked all students to fill out a survey to evaluate the canteen. In particular we were looking for menu suggestions for next term, information on whether food was wasted post-purchase and to find out the reasons why some students never ordered food.

We invited suggestions of healthy menu items for canteen next semester and were encouraged by the response. Ashfield Public School students seem to have a good idea of what healthy food is. We have incorporated these suggestions when planning the menu for term two. The top five suggestions were:

- 1) Fruit or Fruit Salad
- 2) Noodles
- 3) Sushi
- 4) Pasta
- 5) Dumplings

The vast majority of students responded that the food was never too big – however some students may have interpreted this question to be about the physical size of the food (ie to get their mouth around), rather than the portion size. Fried Rice was the item with most post-purchase waste, followed by wraps.



The most common reason given for never ordering from the canteen was parents not allowing it. There is an opportunity to consult with parents to discuss what their barriers and reservations are. We fully support parents who pack their own healthy lunches, but would like to make sure we are making food that is acceptable to the whole community.

### **Parent Feedback**

Parents will have the opportunity to provide feedback at the P and C meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> April.

# Term Two

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The canteen will continue in term 2 with a new co-ordinator. We will also trial pre-ordering on Wednesdays to be more organised with supplies. We are planning to integrate the work of the canteen with other projects around the school. In particular we hope to liaise with the gardening team so that they grow some of the herbs and salad vegetables we require. We hope to be able to use the canteen as an epicentre to develop programs around food literacy – in particular what makes food healthy and sustainable.

The menu for term two is as follows. Lunches are \$4 unless otherwise specified:

<b>24 April</b>	<b><i>Eat like an ANZAC</i></b>	\$3 Damper w choice of beef and vegetable soup or vegetable soup
<b>1 May</b>	<b><i>Saucy Squiggles</i></b>	Wholemeal spaghetti with tomato vegetable sauce and herbs from school garden with or without Free Range Organic chicken.
<b>8 May</b>	<b><i>Roly Poly Spring Rolls</i></b>	Fresh Vietnamese spring rolls filled with carrot, lettuce and choice of chicken or tofu
<b>15 May</b>	<b><i>Lovely Lebanese Wraps</i></b>	Fresh Lebanese bread filled with salad and choice of cheese or tuna.
<b>22 May</b>	<b><i>NO CANTEEN</i></b>	Walk Safely to School Day (Breakfast Canteen)
<b>29 May</b>	<b><i>Noteworthy Noodles</i></b>	TBA
<b>5 June</b>	<b><i>Hippy Dippy Chippies</i></b>	Crunchy polenta chips with choice of mild chili con carne (meat) or mild chili con frijoles (beans). Prepared with herbs from school gardens
<b>12 June</b>	<b><i>Stone Soup</i></b>	Stone soup made with herbs and vegetables from the school garden as well as those brought by YOU! Served with fresh bread roll. \$3 <i>if you bring in a small bunch of herbs or vegetable for the soup.</i>

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