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@CSUS is Crystal's weekly news bulletin of school announcements and events.

Food, Glorious Food!

By Diane Isola, CFO



As the administrator in charge of CSUS food service, I am proud to have implemented many wonderful changes to our program over the last several years. Since August of 2007, we have been contracting with Epicurean Group, a Los Altos-based food service company that provides restaurant and catering services to educational campuses, fine arts facilities and corporations throughout Northern California. Many of our peer schools have followed us in using Epicurean Group as their food service management company. Mary Clark Bartlett, CEO and founder of the Epicurean Group, has a vision of a new American food system, "one that provides the kind of food that's good for our bodies and for the environment." [Read more "Food, Glorious Food"](#)

Food, Glorious Food!

Epicurean Group has three basic menu philosophy components: local, seasonal and sustainable products. Additionally:

- Food is purchased locally, and is organic when possible
- Chicken purchased is antibiotic-free
- Tuna purchased is dolphin-free
- Seafood is purchased according to the "seafood watch guidelines"
- Ground beef is always grass-fed from Niman Ranch, never frozen
- Fruits and vegetables are always fresh, and organic when possible
- Stocks are made from scratch
- Milk is free of antibiotics and artificial growth hormone
- All salad bar dressings are prepared from scratch
- Turkey is roasted in-house and sliced by hand for deli meat
- Only canola and olive oil are used for cooking

I am often amazed at the variety and quality of food we have available for students, faculty and staff. The Crystal Café serves morning snack and two lunches every day. In a time span of roughly 75 minutes, over 400 hungry individuals pass through the Crystal Café for lunch.

The lunch program has three distinct stations:

The Deli Bar Station has two lunch meat selections that vary, fresh sliced cheese, three to four types of sandwich breads, lettuce, tomatoes, onions, mustard and mayo and various gourmet spreads. Often there is a vegetarian option such as oven roasted veggies, falafel, or hummus. Peanut butter and jam is always available at breakfast and lunch. The toasters see a great deal of student action as one of the most popular snack options!

The Salad Bar Station has two types of greens, four types of home-made salad dressings, olive oil and balsamic vinegar, tuna, hardboiled eggs, tofu, and over a dozen add-ons including an array of vegetables, yogurt, sunflower seeds and granola. There is also a different pre-made salad available. Some days it may be Cobb, other days it may be strawberry and goat cheese spinach salad.

The Hot Entrée Station includes a meat-based protein dish, starch and vegetable, as well as a vegetarian entrée option, usually vegan. One day a week is dedicated to carbohydrates such as pasta, often whole grain. Entrées range from "gourmet" themes such as Orange Mustard Glazed Niman Ranch Pork Chops to what I like to refer to as "Middle School Friendly" themes such as Pizza Day. The Hot Entrée Station also includes a fresh, homemade soup option with varying flavors such as creamy clam chowder and spicy pozole.

Dessert is served three days a week and includes non-fat frozen yogurt ice-cream or a baked item. Fresh whole fruit is available each day for morning snack, lunch and late afternoons.

Of course if you query your student about the food service program at CSUS, you may not always hear about the food being purchased locally or the hamburgers served coming from grass-fed beef. Let's face it, most students just care about having a good lunch each day. Some students may find the many options available daunting. Others may feel we don't offer enough.

Serving both a Middle School (MS) and Upper School (US) population on the same lunch program comes with its challenges. MS students have very different palates than our more sophisticated US population. MS Students want simple, easy hot entrée choices that they can eat quickly before the lunch period is up so they can have some recess time. US Students want their taste buds to be intrigued with spices and texture. US Athletes often want carbs or heavy protein dishes. In developing the menus each week, we have to create a balance between offering meals that might be more appealing to US students some days, and meals that would be more appealing to MS students on other days. This is not an easy task. Chef Tim Uttaro, our Food Services Manager, makes it a point to get direct feedback from the students and faculty. He will often stay and observe the students' reaction to the hot entrée of the day asking them directly,

“Did you enjoy the lunch? What did you like about it? What didn’t you like?” Of course Crystal students do not hold back their opinions!

The variety of options requires our diners to be a bit creative and thoughtful. Often times, students don’t have the time or desire to think about what they want for lunch. So, what should a student do? Simply put, bar hop! Hop from the Salad Bar to the Deli Bar to the Hot Entrée Station Bar. Mix and match, take something from each station to create a fantastic lunch. If you hear from your child that they don’t think there are options that they like, help to guide them by consulting the menu on the school website each week. You will see that there is a plethora of options available even for a finicky palate.

I am sure you will find our offerings delicious, inviting and nutritious, and a food service staff that is friendly and accommodating.