

Eliminating Ingredients of Concern

PWCS School Food and Nutrition Services is working towards the elimination of “ingredients of concern” in all of our recipes and food products. We are in a continuous process of sourcing locally grown, sustainable, healthy food for our customers.

How does School Food and Nutrition Services define ingredients of concern? While some controversy exists as to what ingredients should be concerning to consumers, our Registered Dietitians use the latest science-based research regarding the safety of the ingredients in our foods. Ingredients we are working to eliminate include artificial preservatives. We have already eliminated artificial colors and sweeteners. This year we have taken the following steps to reduce ingredients of concern.

Nitrates/Nitrites are preservatives found in cured meats that have been linked to the formation of a cancer causing compound. Our hot dogs have been nitrate and nitrite free for the past few years. This year, we are using nitrate and nitrite free sliced turkey ham and turkey breast.

Sodium Benzoate is a preservative used to prevent the growth of microorganisms in acidic food. Research indicates it may cause hives, asthma or other hypersensitive reactions. This ingredient was in our lemon and lime juices, but this year we found a new product without this preservative.

Caramel coloring has been linked to cancer. Like you would at home, we use vanilla extract for baking, and it contains small amounts of this ingredient. This year we were able to find a vanilla extract that does not contain caramel coloring.

Bisphenol A (BPA) is a resin used to coat the inside of metal cans. Some research has shown that it can seep into food and cause harmful health effects to the brain, behavior and blood pressure of small children. This year, we changed the brand of canned beans that we use to one that does not have this lining.

Antibiotics are used on most chickens to keep them from getting sick in the crowded, unsanitary conditions in which they are raised. The extensive use of antibiotics is creating “superbugs” that cause illnesses antibiotics cannot cure. School Food and Nutrition Services has been working with a group called “School Food Focus” to source chickens raised without antibiotics. As no chickens have antibiotics in them when we consume them, there are a few distinctions for the term “antibiotic-free.” One includes chickens that have been raised with No Antibiotics Ever (NAE). Another is the Certified Responsible Antibiotic Use (CRAU) standard, which allows for only minimal use of medically important antibiotics as prescribed by a licensed veterinarian. CRAU is a USDA certified standard. As of last year, our popcorn chicken has been raised without any antibiotics ever, and this year our chicken drumstick has the same distinction. Over the course of this school year, we will be working on adding CRAU standard chicken for our chicken fillet, spicy chicken fillet and chicken tenders. We are encouraging every poultry producer to improve the standards of poultry production to provide better chicken for our customers.

Visit the “Special Diets” page of our website, www.pwcsnutrition.com, for a complete list of ingredients in all of our food products.

Source: www.schoolfoodfocus.org/ingredientwatch