

There are many competing interests and challenges school canteens face. Including balancing the needs and interests of students, parents and teachers, profitability, sustainability, waste reduction, seasonality, volunteers and suitable equipment. Consider the following to help juggle these priorities.

## Planning and preparation

- Reduce the number of items available on the menu to reduce number of different ingredients required to purchase and prepare
- Consider what can be done by volunteers or buy pre-prepared to save money on labour
- Do your own shopping and shop consciously so you can maximise on promotions, seasonality and prices.



## Reduce waste

### Make friends with your freezer

- leftover fruit salad can be frozen and used in smoothies
- decant flavoured milk into small cups with a popsicle stick and freeze
- place leftover soup in small individual serves (rather than one bulk container) then only defrost the number needed
- peel over ripe bananas, place in container in the freezer to use later in muffins, banana bread or pikelets
- use ice cube trays or zip lock bags and freeze portions of large tinned items e.g. tuna, baked beans, spaghetti or pineapple.



### Discounts

- Discount stock nearing its expiry date or offer a two for one deal – ensure you are still covering the cost price
- Stock take sale - at the end of term advertise an 'everything must go' menu to clear off stock.



### Bulk – consider if bigger is better

- Large grease proof paper can be cut into many sizes for wraps, lining muffin trays or putting recess food on rather than using more expensive bags or napkins
- Cook food in bulk and freeze individual portions e.g. pizza bases, pasta meals, curry and rice, muffins
- Call the schools in your area and negotiate buying packaging in bulk - 1000 containers is cheaper than 100; and only 1 delivery fee.





## Make fruit and veg the hero

When comparing price per kilo, fruits and vegetables come out on top of meat so it makes sense to make fruit and veg the hero of any dish. Top tips:

### Choose the best option at the time

- Root to leaf cooking - use the whole fruit or vegetable e.g. cook potatoes with skins on, use the top/tail/peel of carrots in dips or soups, shred broccoli stems into coleslaw, grate citrus fruit and freeze the rind before juicing, use herb stems and roots to flavour sauces and meals
- Choose the cheapest option per kilo. For example: loose spinach leaves are \$16/kg compared to the prepacked bags which work out to be up to \$33/kg
- Canned, frozen and dried fruit and vegetables can be good options. They are often cheaper than fresh and nutritionally just as good and reduce waste as they have a long shelf life.

### Buy in season

Seasonal produce will vary across Australia, however the [Seasonal Food Guide](#) is a good starting point. The benefits of buying in season include:

- Freshness - high supply means it's freshest on the market
- Flavour - peak picking time is also peak eating time!
- Nutrition - many nutrients start to break down after picking.
- Price - high supply means that produce is at its cheapest
- Environment - locally grown produce means less food miles (good for the environment and your budget).

For great seasonal recipes for the canteen (or for home) visit:

Healthy Eating Advisory Service - <https://heas.health.vic.gov.au/schools/recipes>

LiveLighter - <https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe>

WA School Canteen Association Inc. <https://www.waschoolcanteens.org.au/canteens/menus/recipes/>



Source: LiveLighter, CanTeam newsletter WA.