



Farrer Primary School

Healthy canteen turning a profit

Farrer Primary School's involvement with Fresh Tastes has enabled them to build on existing growing and cooking activities and link them to the operation of the canteen.

The school undertook a complete canteen overhaul to align their menu with the Traffic Light System, implement an earlier lunch hour and use a new online canteen ordering system.

"Two years ago we had to convince the P&C to view the canteen as a business and pay employees with the right skills to run it," explained Ingrid Reimers, Farrer's P&C Canteen Sub-committee representative.

Since then, Canteen Manager Marnie Boreham-Smith has managed to turn the canteen into a profitable, efficient and popular option for students and parents.

To comply with the *ACT Public School Food and Drink Policy* and the National Healthy School Canteen Guidelines, Marnie and Ingrid first had to refine their processes to be more efficient. They decided to phase out paper bag ordering, set up an online ordering system, source grants for freezers, evaluate their supplier relationships and analyse their canteen's financial data.

After the canteen's first menu assessment, Marnie has consistently reviewed recipes to ensure they have the right mix of ingredients under the Traffic Light System.

"An assessment is a good opportunity to have your menu reviewed and often it's just some fine tuning to resolve it," said Marnie. "At our last assessment, I realised most of our issues could be resolved easily by replacing one ingredient."

When the canteen started removing red foods and drinks, Marnie and Ingrid were nervous about the impact on sales. Yet they were surprised to see sales increase and the canteen was gradually able to open for three full days a week.

Marnie prepares most of the food from scratch, and constantly seeks to improve the canteen operation through stock management, freezing, using produce grown by the school, and creating a hospitality leaders program for Year 6 students.

"Students apply to be part of it and then they're rostered to help with basic food preparation, stock control, customer service and cleaning," explained Marnie. "They get valuable work experience whilst learning about healthy eating and they also have lots of fun."

Other canteen initiatives include meal deals twice a term, swimmer lunchboxes during swimming lesson weeks, a pop-up canteen at the sports carnival, product donations from parents, and weekly newsletter promotions.

According to School Leader and Fresh Tastes coordinator, Michael Hatswell, the canteen is like nothing he has ever seen before.

"It's professional and so well managed that it returned a profit at the end of last year, which was then reinvested back into the canteen," said Michael.

Fresh Tastes is open to all primary schools across Canberra. Contact the Fresh Tastes team for information about how your school can get involved. Fresh Tastes is part of the ACT Government's Healthy Weight Initiative supporting a healthy, active and productive community.