

Mealtime Sampler

February / March 2005



New Look of School Milk Short, Sweet and to the Point: “It Works!”

Mary Ann Lopez, Director of Food Services at South Windsor Schools, South Windsor, Conn. had been reading about the benefits of the New Look of School Milk. So when Kristen Trezza from New England Dairy & Food Council approached her about trying it, she was ready. Lopez said, “I was tired of kids complaining that cartons didn’t feel cold and the milk didn’t taste good. I was ready to try something new to get children to drink milk.”

Lopez wrote plastic bottles into her bid. She was so primed to get this accomplished that she sent an e-mail to all directors in her state suggesting they include plastic bottles in their bids. Her rationale: “If you don’t ask for it, you’ll never get it. The more directors that make the request, the more suppliers will understand the need.”



South Windsor students enjoying the New Look of School Milk.

Lopez started the 2003-2004 school year introducing 10-oz. bottles in the middle school (6-8 grades) and high school (9-12 grades) and merchandising them in glass door refrigerators. She feels this is an important part of the program.

“If we’re going to a ‘new look’ we need a whole ‘new look,’” comments Lopez. “The kids need to see what we are offering.”

In a nutshell, it worked! “In the high school we sold 9,500 additional bottles of milk, with the middle school selling an additional 11,200 bottles and the kids were finishing the milk they took,” says Lopez. “On top of that, kids were thanking us for making the change - that’s something that doesn’t happen often!” Parents and teachers have also thanked Lopez.

The elementary school students were “jealous” of the enhanced milk program, so Lopez decided to offer 10-oz. bottles to her 4th- and 5th- graders. They have been delighted to be able to choose between traditional cartons and the “New Look,” and sales have increased.

“The plastic container is more expensive,” admits Lopez. “But from experience, I can say, don’t be afraid of the price difference; it resolves itself. You can adjust the price to take care of it. And, consider that the more milk you sell, the more your labor cost is distributed, so you can make more money.” Also, vended 16-oz. bottles of flavored milk are available at the high schools. Vended milk runs all day and night and brings in \$5,000-\$6,000 per year through a vending company agreement.

Looking to the future, Lopez is hopeful her processor will begin producing 8-oz. bottles so she can offer the program to younger elementary students. “Since processors have started producing for fast food companies, I think we will benefit - if they make an 8-oz. bottle for them, they will eventually make it for us.”