

Best Practices for RESTARTING SCHOOL MEAL SERVICE



Forecast and place orders earlier than usual.

- Know what you have in inventory at your distributor, at your sites, and at your processor. Once you know what you already have—create your menu.
- Look at data trends—what was happening when you had peaks and troughs?
- Some vendors are using forecasting to justify production line time for K-12 foodservice.



Reconsider the “we’ve-always-done-it-that-way” mindset.

- Reduce your menu options until you get control of your supplies.
- Know your top-sellers and the top-sellers of your neighboring districts to increase the probability that the distributor will have the product.
- Work with current vendors that understand your historical utilization.



Plan a longer lead time for orders – some vendors now require six to eight weeks.



Competition has increased.

- Manufacturers may be limited with line times assigned to K-12 foodservice at processing plants.



Work with bulk products and try to implement Spring menus.

- When an operation transitions from a bulk product to an individually wrapped product, the output changes and the lead time also changes.
- Demand is high for individually wrapped items and therefore these products may be limited in availability.
- If your district mandates serving individually wrapped items, use bulk items and manage the individual portioning and packaging within your own operations.
- Many distributors have warehouses full of bulk and other menu items that were forecasted by schools before they closed in the Spring.



Make use of unutilized USDA Foods.



Shelf stable products may be difficult to procure.



When possible, return to your pre-COVID foodservice practices.

- Pick a menu and make commitments to purchase.
- Menu items that you’ve used before.
- Be intentional and specific about how products will be used (e.g. ovenable or packaging to be removed before heating).



Maintain communication with vendors.

- Communicate with your vendor as your strategy changes and you tweak your menu mix.



This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services