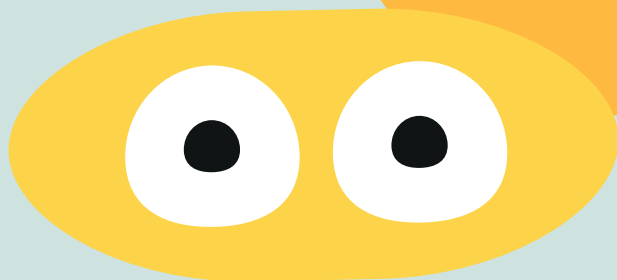
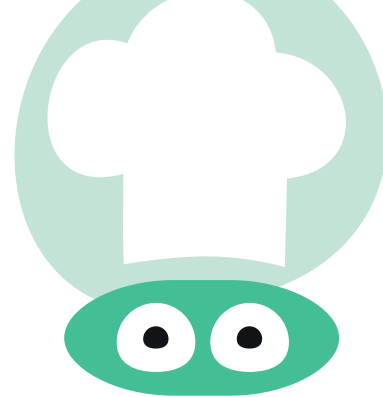


The School Catering Handbook

Ensuring Quality
Mealtime Experiences



On the menu...



Formalizing an educational framework: a collective reflection	p. 3
School catering in the City of Lyon	p. 5
Objective 1: Supporting the child in developing autonomy	p. 17
Objective 2: Promoting friendliness and fostering community	p. 19
Objective 3: Promoting healthy and sustainable diet	p. 21
Objective 4: Supporting the child in their food discovery	p. 23
Objective 5: Working together during mealtime	p. 25
Conclusion and acknowledgements	p. 27
Annexes	p. 29



**For the school
catering handbook
in video, click here**

Forewords

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Nutrition is at the heart of the City of Lyon's Educational Project, serving the 26 000 children attending the school restaurants of Lyon's public schools.

The lunch break is thus part of our ambitions for ecological transition, education in citizenship, and emancipation, towards a more just, supportive, and inclusive education.

Thanks to a committed and sustainable school catering offer, professionals can guide and raise awareness among children about new food and environmental challenges. Mealtime is a key moment of the child's day, and the lunch break is an opportunity for children to share a friendly moment, become more autonomous and responsible, and awaken their taste buds to new flavors while respecting their health and the environment.

Thanks to you - school restaurant managers and specialized catering agents, extracurricular directors and activity leaders, specialized territorial agents for kindergartens, specialized agents for primary schools, and temporary staff – this quality care for children is made possible.

We wanted to make this school catering handbook with you and for you as a reference for values and professional practices to support the young people of Lyon during their lunch and discovery of food.

We sincerely thank you for your daily commitment to serving the children.

Stéphanie LÉGER
Deputy Mayor of Lyon,
in charge of Education

Gautier CHAPUIS
Deputy Mayor of Lyon, in charge of greening,
biodiversity, animal welfare, and food

Dear colleagues,

This school catering handbook serves as a reference and is intended as a tool to help you incorporate the core educational values of the City of Lyon during the lunch break.

Mealtime is a special moment of the day, not only for the children, but also for you who supervise and support them. Indeed, during this time, regardless of your profession, you take on an educational role with the children, within a multidisciplinary team. Thus, beyond your professional skills, you adopt shared approaches and work together to ensure the smooth running of the children's catering.

You have effectively and collectively contributed to the development of principles serving the reception of children in school restaurants. I would like to warmly thank you for this rich co-construction work that illustrates your commitment.

Let's bring this handbook to life in all our school restaurants!

Marianne SACKUR
Director of Education, City of Lyon



Formalizing an educational framework: A collective reflection

Why did the City of Lyon develop this framework?

Creating a framework allows each team to take up the core educational values of the lunch break of the City of Lyon. These values are more concretely expressed through professional attitudes and practices. The framework ensures consistent expectations and harmonization of practices.

This framework is also an opportunity to highlight all the professionals working to support children in school restaurants:

- School Restaurant Manager and Specialized Catering Agent
- Extracurricular Director and Activity Leader
- Specialized Territorial Agent for Kindergartens
- Specialized Agent for Primary Schools
- Temporary Staff

Finally, this framework aims to make visible to families the essential educational values of the lunch break in the City of Lyon (autonomy, socialization, food discovery, etc.).

The City of Lyon aims to bring this educational framework to life in all school restaurants and plans updates as necessary.

Staff Insight:

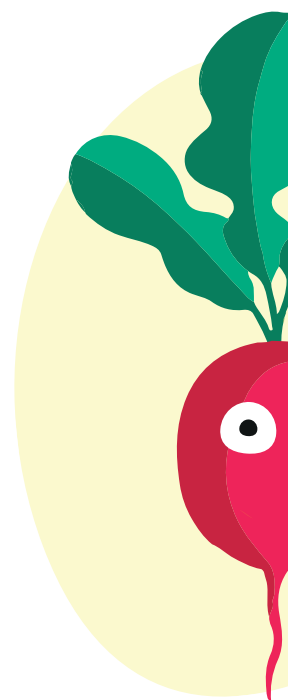
« This framework will help us better understand the attitudes and skills necessary to ensure the quality reception of children during mealtimes. »

How was this framework developed?

This framework was developed through consultation with various professionals involved in the lunch break.

Four brainstorming and exchange workshops were organized between January and April 2023. In total, 78 municipal staff and associative players from the three territorial services of the Education Department volunteered to participate.

Various proposals for actions and professional practices were formulated within these working groups, then submitted to a technical committee and validated by a steering committee.



The five priority objectives

From these consultations, five priority objectives have emerged for quality mealtime experience:

- 1 • Supporting the child in developing autonomy
- 2 • Promoting friendliness and fostering community to make the meal a time of enjoyment
- 3 • Promoting healthy and sustainable diet
- 4 • Supporting the child in their food discovery
- 5 • Working as a team around mealtime

These five objectives define the organizational principles and professional practices of mealtime. The lunch break team incorporates these educational aspects of catering into **the pedagogical project of the extracurricular team**, in connection with the Educational Project of Lyon.

The handbook meets the first ambition of the **Lyon Educational Project** for education in ecological transition, aiming to support each person in their professional practices for healthy and responsible eating.

Each team must adapt these principles to the context of the school restaurant in which they operate (layout of the premises, team's specific skills and know-how, projects and desires of the children, etc.).





School catering in the City of Lyon

The 3 pillars of mealtime



An educational school restaurant

Mealtime and the contents of the plates contribute to food education by taking into account the sustainability and quality of supplies and menus.

It is also a time for learning autonomy, responsibility, and group life. Thus, the staff involves the children in organizing this time, both to enable their individual development and to promote their learning of citizenship and community living.



A multidisciplinary educational team at the service of the child in school catering

In the middle of the school day, the midday break brings together different professionals. These staff members have different functions and roles, but they all work towards the same goal supporting the child's development.

To work as a team, organizational and relational aspects must be thought out collectively and shared during multidisciplinary team meetings, dedicated to the functioning and improvement opportunities of the lunch break.



A time of break and discovery for the child

For the child, the meal is an important moment of their day, which goes beyond eating. It is also a time of relaxation during which they can recharge their batteries before returning to class.

Additionally, it is a time of conviviality and sharing with their friends. Finally, this time is an opportunity to discover the diversity of foods and eating habits.



Key figures of School catering in the City of Lyon

2023
data

1
central
kitchen
about
50
employees

129
School
restaurants

30 000
registered
children

26 000
meals
ordered
on average
per day

Kindergarten
restaurants

100% table service

Elementary school
restaurants

75% self-service
25% table service

about
1800
municipal
staff

and Partner
extracurricular
associations
about 60%
of out-of-school
hours centers

Menu of choice

- **Little Bistro**
2 menus with meat or fish and
2 vegetarian menus per week
 - **Young Sprout**
100% vegetarian
- Or mixed registration
family choice by preselection

Organic

- 2022 : 50%
 - 2023 : 55%
 - 2024 : 65%
 - 2025 : 75%
- + ambition to aim for 100%

Made in the kitchen

- 100% of gratins and
mashed potatoes
- 90% of raw vegetables or salads
- 75% of plant-based recipes
- 60% of sweet pastries
- 50% of savory pastries
- 50% of compotes

Local

Over 4 years: 50% of purchases
within a 200 km radius,
including 20% within 50 km

A new catering
offer since
September

2022

And... an optimized environmental impact:

- The valorization of food waste
- A food donation agreement
- Dish packaging in cellulose trays or
stainless-steel containers
- Actions to reduce supplier packaging
- Delivery vehicles running on natural gas
- The central kitchen and the school
restaurants have been certified with the
French label "Ecocert En Cuisine" level 2
since May 2023

5 steps for meal preparation at the central kitchen:

The storage area



Once received and inspected, goods are unpacked and stored: dry products go to the storage area, while other foodstuffs are stored in positive cold rooms (+3°C) or negative cold rooms (-18°C).

Each day, an average of 17 tons of foodstuffs are received by the storekeeper. For a pasta service, approximately 1,700 kg of raw pasta are received and stored by the storekeeper.

The vegetable preparation area



This is an essential tool for cooking fresh vegetables. The vegetables are cleaned and peeled. Then they are grated, diced, or sliced according to the recipes. For more freshness and flavor, the city prefers short supply chains, and local and seasonal products. For a full grated carrot service, no less than 1.7 tons of carrots need to be processed in the vegetable preparation area.

The culinary workshop



The heart of the central kitchen! This is where all the cooking takes place. Large frying pans for pasta, rice, couscous, and vegetables; large cooking pots for vegetarian bases, sauces, and compotes; ovens for sautés, roasts, fish, and vegetables. It's like home cooking, but on a much larger scale! For a full cak service, 3 cycles of 1.5 hours in the 11 ovens are necessary to bake the 2,800 cakes for the service.

Distribution and delivery



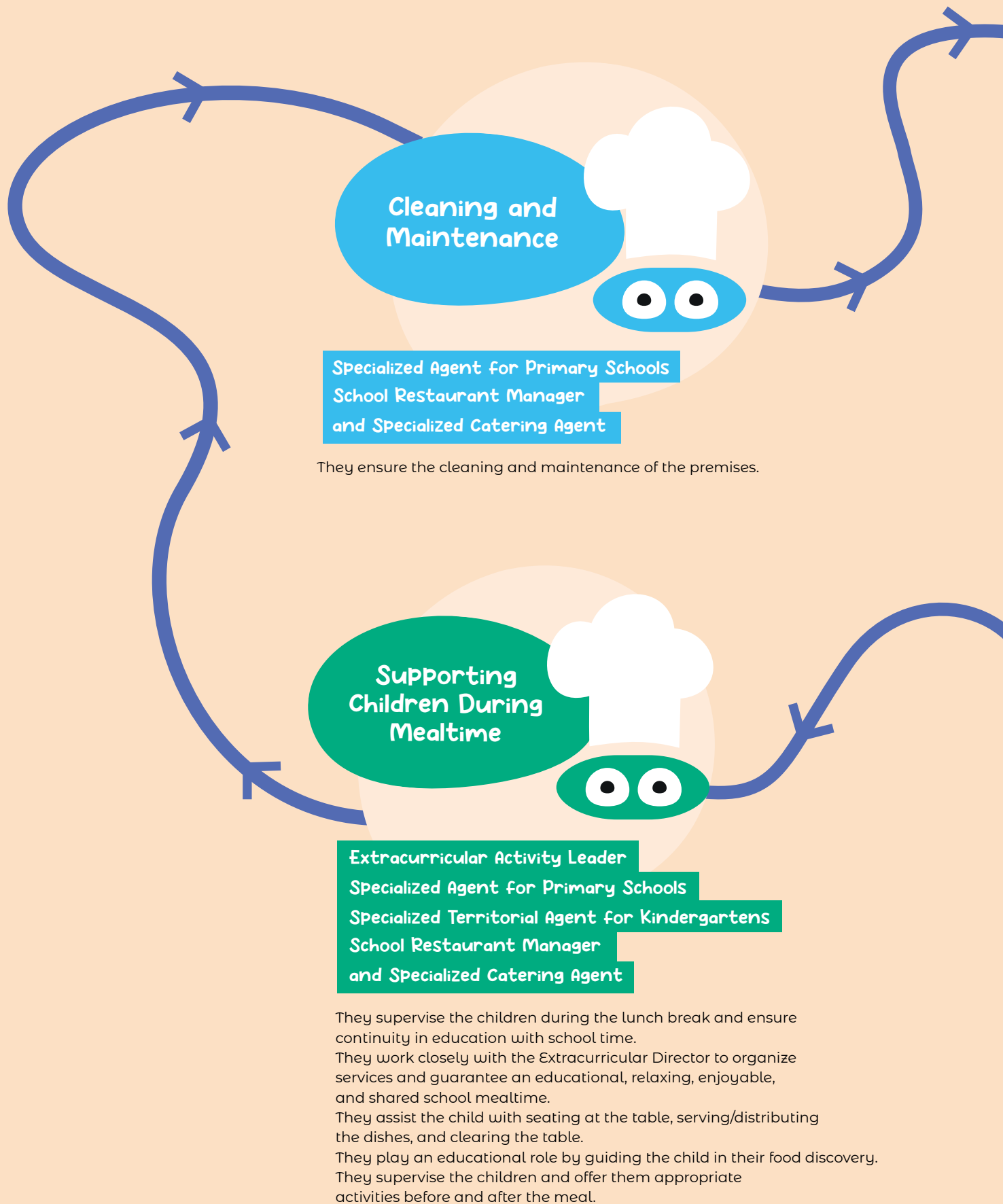
In a storage area at 3°C, the distribution staff gathers the different meal components and dispatches them by school and delivery route. Temperature readings are taken during transport to ensure the cold chain is maintained. Once the meals are delivered, the school restaurant teams take over: they perform the final cuts, plate the dishes, and reheat them to delight both children and adults! A surface area of 400 m² is needed to organize the distribution of the lots for the 129 restaurants into 13 delivery routes.

Packaging and cooling



Starters, desserts, and cooked dishes are weighed and packaged in trays or stainless steel containers. Cold preparations go directly to cold storage, while hot dishes are first cooled in a chilling unit within two hours, as required by HACCP regulations. Depending on the menus, more than 8,000 trays and between 500 and 600 stainless steel containers are sealed each day.

A multidisciplinary team dedicated to supervising children



The key stages of mealtime

Together, they contribute to the smooth running of the lunch break

Extracurricular Director

They coordinate all the staff supervising the children during the midday break and work closely with various school stakeholders.

Local Manager

They are the hierarchical supervisor of Specialized Agent for Primary Schools, Specialized Territorial Agent for Kindergartens, School Restaurant Manager and Specialized Agent in Catering.

Registration and monitoring of attendance

Local Education Coordinator

They organize and facilitate communication with families for extracurricular matters, including catering. They manage the ordering and cancellation of meal for billing purposes and provide daily attendance figures to the school restaurant.

Ordering and preparing meals

School Restaurant Manager and Specialized Agent in Catering

They order meals from the central kitchen based on data provided by the Local Education Coordinator and their experience with the restaurant's attendance to accurately manage meal overorders. They ensure the smooth operation of the restaurant, the preparation and distribution of meals in compliance with food hygiene regulations. They also maintain the catering equipment and premises.

Providing the Best Conditions for Mealtime

Material resources

Children are welcomed during the lunch break within the school premises, which facilitates organization and transitions for the children. Exceptionally, the school restaurant may be relocated to ease congestion or due to construction work.

The City is responsible for the construction, renovation, and maintenance of schools. School buildings undergo energy renovation work to ensure a comfortable environment for children. Additionally, soundproofing work is regularly carried out in school restaurants to reduce ambient noise. These two aspects are prioritized when constructing new school groups.

Beyond building constraints, the arrangement of dining rooms is designed and organized to allow:

- **Children** to be welcomed and have lunch in pleasant conditions (space, calm, conviviality)
- **Adults** to work in good conditions (easy circulation, suitable furniture height, facilitated maintenance and cleaning)

When acquiring new equipment, ergonomic dimensions (weight and maneuverability of equipment, adaptability of children's furniture to adults, ease of cleaning) and acoustic dimensions (choice of suitable noise-reducing materials, pads under furniture) are integrated and prioritized within the constraints of building techniques.

Children's participation in decorating also promotes ownership of the spaces by the group while making them pleasant:

- Displaying the menu written and illustrated by the children
- Displaying illustrations related to food
- Offering periodic thematic decorations





Human resources

Duration and Pace of the meal

The midday break lasts 2 hours and 15 minutes, allowing for excellent meal and service organization, exceeding the recommendations of the AFNOR* standard for school catering.

In table service, two services are organized, and children have a minimum of 45 minutes at the table, allowing them to eat in good conditions and at their own pace.

For self-service, up to 3 rotations can be organized depending on the size of the sites and the number of diners. Teams ensure that children spend at least 20 minutes at the table, which corresponds to AFNOR recommendations.

Supervisory Staff for Children:

For extracurricular care registered to the Departmental Service for Youth, Engagement, and Sports, the minimum required supervision ratios are:

- 1 adult for 14 kindergarten children
- 1 adult for 18 elementary children

The ratios applied by the City are:

- 1 adult for 12 kindergarten children
- 1 adult for 18 elementary children



* The AFNOR NF X50-220 Standard
The school catering service
outlines quality criteria for mealtime.



The recommendations are:

Duration of the midday break: 2 hours

For table service:

- Meal duration in kindergarten: 45 to 55 minutes
- Meal duration in elementary: 35 to 45 minutes

For self-service:

- The child should be able to stay at the table for 20 minutes after getting their tray.





The 5 priority objectives



Le
Lyon
des
enfants

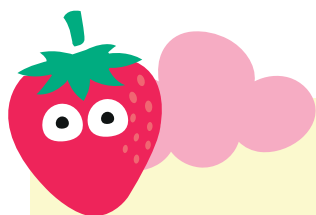
Objective 1: Supporting the child in developing autonomy

Autonomy cannot be decreed but is gradually acquired in the various spaces of socialization for the child (in the family environment, at school, in the school restaurant, at the leisure center...). Supporting autonomy means considering each child's experience to promote their development.

Mealtime also contributes to learning about autonomy. In the school restaurant, the team implements means to allow the child to independently perform daily life actions:

- By offering facilitating organization
- By providing suitable equipment
- By letting them try
- By adapting support to each child's needs, according to their abilities

Giving the child responsibilities by entrusting them with small tasks helps them build a positive self-image. By encouraging their participation, the goal is to make the child an active participant in their meal.



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Supporting the development of autonomy

According to the dictionary, "being autonomous" means "the freedom to govern oneself by one's own laws." Autonomy is also the ability of an individual to take full responsibility for their actions. For a child, it is referred to as the **«process of becoming autonomous»**, as it is a slow and constantly evolving process throughout life. Autonomy varies in degrees according to the individual's age and abilities.

The Common Core of Knowledge, Skills, and Culture* emphasizes the importance of autonomy in the formation of a person and a citizen. Building autonomy is one of the primary missions of nursery and primary schools. **Making children autonomous does not mean leaving them on their own**; it means enabling them to solve problem situations, choose, try, and take initiatives without putting them in difficulty.

According to educator Philippe Meirieu: **« Autonomy is not a gift! It does not happen by some sort of miracle! It is built through the encounter with educators who are capable of articulating, in their concerns, a better definition of their field of competencies, greater clarity on the values they want to promote, and better discernment of the child's level of development and the learning that can help them progress. »**

In pedagogy, leading a child to be autonomous means supporting them to gradually detach from adults or their peers to independently perform the widest range of actions possible, involving their motor skills, way of speaking, imagination, and reflection.

Autonomy is important because it allows the child to « do alone » and thus experience satisfaction in succeeding by themselves.

*The Common Core of Knowledge, Skills, and Culture of the National Education system identifies the knowledge and skills that must be acquired by the age of 16, at the end of compulsory schooling.

How to support the development of autonomy?

Anticipating organization and involving children in tasks allows the team to focus more on supporting the children during mealtime.

Prepare the tables before the children arrive

To increase the team's availability and facilitate service, the tables are set before the children arrive. Examples: water jugs, bread baskets, or any other necessary service items.

Assist with the use of complete cutlery

Plates, glasses, forks, knives, and spoons are provided for the children. The knife can be gradually introduced in the lower kindergarten section, depending on the children's level of autonomy. Before using it to cut or peel, the knife can be used by the child to push food onto their fork or spread cheese. Mastering the use of the knife contributes to table hygiene rules.

Staff insight:

« The child will gradually learn to use the knife. »

Place the dishes on each table (table service)

The service dishes are placed on the tables so that the child can serve themselves the amount they want. They share the dish with their tablemates.

This practice is gradually implemented for kindergarten-aged children.

Adults provide quantity guidelines (e.g., 2 spoonfuls) and ensure that service and sharing are conducted properly.

They ensure that menu choices are respected by providing the different dishes.

Serving oneself also means taking only the amount one commits to eating.

Staff insight:

« We place a dish on each table, so the children learn to serve themselves.

We start with easy-to-serve items so they can take the amount they want and learn to regulate their hunger. »

Encourage children to participate in collective tasks

Being an active participant during mealtime also means taking part in various tasks. Children enjoy being involved in the meal process. Responsibilities given to children are based on their abilities and level of autonomy. Children can help with refilling water and bread, fixing small spills, and clearing the table after the meal. The team provides the necessary equipment to enable children to perform these tasks: child-height refill stations, cutlery holders on tables, table bins, cleaning cloths...

Staff insight:

« Children like being given responsibilities; assigning them tasks acknowledges their competence. »

Prepare their tray and serve themselves (self-service)

At the entrance to the self-service area, children are guided to prepare their tray: glass, cutlery, and napkin. At the cold buffet, children serve themselves. Staff present the options and assist the child with serving. Once seated, the child gets up to fetch their hot dish.

Assist children in sorting waste and clearing dishes (self-service)

Once the meal is over, children sort their leftovers and waste into designated bins according to the collection system in place.

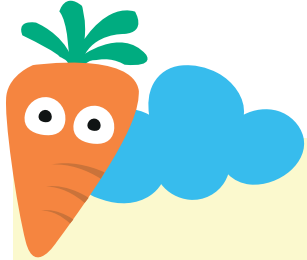
They clear their tray, placing items in the correct spots for each type of dishware.

The staff use this time to discuss the child's meal experience.



Objective 2: Promoting friendliness and fostering community

Mealtime is an opportunity to enjoy time with peers, engage in conversations, and share moments with adults and other children in a calm and friendly atmosphere. Participating in a meal with others teaches children to live with others, take part in group life, and respect social rules.



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Noise level in a school restaurant Standards, coaching techniques, and feedback

In a school restaurant, there are multiple noise sources: noises from the material, related to service and food consumption, and noises from the voices of children and adults. For good intelligibility of children's and adults' speech, the noise level recommended by **the AFNOR NF X50-220 standard** should not exceed **76 dB(A)**. Noise level measurements can be periodically conducted to monitor the sound level.

If results exceed **the critical threshold of 85 dB(A)**, an improvement plan can be implemented considering technical, organizational, and relational aspects.

Three approaches to manage and limit noise levels:

- **Reduce and manage sound technically:** Ensure good sound insulation of the building, appropriate flooring and furniture, and control the operational noise of equipment.
- **Reduce noise from users:** Distribute children in the space, organize adults by sector, manage meal rhythm, control entry and exit of the dining area, and involve children in service.
- **Address noisy children:** Ensure sufficient supervision, team consistency, and calm, measured adult intervention.

Ideas to make children accountable for their behavior and attitudes:

Noise scale or noise meter, which indicates the noise level reached (built with the children).

Initiatives for a quiet dining experience:

- Breathing exercises before entering the dining area
- Avoid filling the restaurant by organizing three meal rotations instead of two
- Letting children choose when they want to eat
- Using sign language to communicate

Secularism during mealtime

School restaurant services are optional public services where the principle of secularism applies, just like in other school areas.

This is reflected in guiding children to explore food and respect others. This shared, convivial time of eating together contributes to education on cultural diversity.

The City of Lyon has chosen to offer menus that respect individual dietary preferences with an adapted catering offer. Each child is free to eat what they want, respecting the menus chosen by their parents, adhering to general health rules of collective catering, without demanding their specific dietary choices based on religious practices.

Staff seek to analyze situations through understanding and dialogue to ensure good meal conditions for each child while guaranteeing the application of common rules..

Article L111-1 of the Education Code excerpt

« Besides transmitting knowledge, the Nation sets as the primary mission of schools to share the values of the Republic with students. The public education service instills respect for the equal dignity of human beings, freedom of conscience, and secularism in all students. Through its organization and methods, as well as through the training of teachers, it fosters cooperation among students ».

How to promote friendliness and social cohesion ?

Let children choose their tablemates

Children love to come to the school restaurant mainly to have lunch with their friends. To make this time pleasant, children choose their tablemates, with at least one friend at their table. The organization in place allows friends, even from different classes, to eat together.

Staff insight:

« So there can be friendliness, children must eat with their friends.
It's up to us, the adults, to intervene if necessary to remind the group of the rules. »

Sharing between children and adults

At the table, guests enjoy talking, telling stories, and laughing together, which is one of the reasons they like eating at the school restaurant. Adults should ensure that interactions are calm and respectful. To foster a trusting relationship, adults are attentive and available to engage with the children. They can also, when possible, sit at the table with the children. Wearing a name tag strengthens the close relationship between adults and children.

Creating a calm and relaxed atmosphere

The entire team helps create a peaceful atmosphere by paying close attention to the children's well-being. If necessary, adults intervene calmly to restore tranquility.

Encouraging mutual help among children

In the school restaurant, children are encouraged to help each other, for example, with serving water, passing dishes, or cutting food. Including children with special educational needs during mealtime is also a major goal for the team. Adults and children work together to welcome them in the best possible conditions.

Co-creating rules of conduct with children

Rules of conduct provide a shared framework and reference points for both adults and children to ensure everyone has an enjoyable time. These rules outline the rights (I can) and obligations (I must) of each person. They can also be formalized as a charter for a well-conducted mealtime. Co-created by the team and the children, these rules are understood by everyone and adapted to the context of each school restaurant. To be effectively communicated and reiterated to the children, they are displayed in the dining area and regularly updated.

Staff insight:

« We build the rules of conduct with the children,
so they know and respect them better, leading to fewer conflicts in the school restaurant. »



Objective 3: Promote healthy and sustainable eating

School meals are essential for learning about healthy and quality eating. Since September 2022, the City of Lyon has been offering meals that combine delicious taste, product discovery, food education, and environmental responsibility.

Enhanced product traceability, stronger support for local agriculture, animal welfare consideration, more organic products, and more in-house recipes... This approach aims to address current issues and help teams educate children about healthier, more sustainable, and quality eating.



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Towards quality, healthy, and sustainable catering

EGALIM Law: Law 2018-938 of October 30, 2018, for balancing commercial relations in the agricultural and food sector and promoting healthy, sustainable, and accessible food for all.

The 5 key measures of the EGALIM Law for school catering are:

- **Increase in vegetarian menus:** Promote food diversity and reduce the environmental impact through more plant-based diets.
- **Quality and/or sustainable products:** Improve the quality and sustainability of products served in collective catering and contribute to the development of more sustainable supply chains.
- **Informing diners and displaying information:** Engage restaurants with their diners and raise awareness about the actions implemented.
- **Ban on certain plastic containers or utensils:** Limit health risks and reduce waste.
- **Combating Food Waste:** Reduce waste and associated costs.

The 2021 Climate and Resilience Law confirms the experiments of the EGALIM Law and supports healthy, sustainable, and low greenhouse gas-emitting diets. This law notably enshrines the proposal of a daily vegetarian menu in school catering.

What is food waste?

Food waste is defined as: « **Any food intended for human consumption that, at any stage of the food chain (production, processing, distribution, consumption), is lost, discarded, or degraded.** »

It includes all avoidable waste and unserved leftovers that end up in the trash.

For example :

Throwing plate scraps into the compost or giving it to animals is considered food waste.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that one-third of the food produced globally is lost or wasted.

The French Environment and Energy Management Agency (ADEME) estimates, on average in French schools, avoidable food waste amounts to 110 grams per guest per meal (ADEME figures 2020).

The European project "School Food 4 Change"

The City of Lyon is one of two French communities awarded for the European project "School Food 4 Change." In line with the European Union's "Farm to Fork" strategy and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, this project develops innovative solutions and best practices that are locally adaptable. The goal is to promote a comprehensive approach to food in schools, addressing both the content of meals and the origin and environmental and health impacts of products. The implementation involves mobilizing the entire educational community.

How to promote healthy and sustainable eating?

Meeting children's nutritional needs

A lunch meal provides about 40% of daily energy intake. In school catering, dietary balance and food frequency are managed over 20 service days, not a single meal.

Menus are developed and monitored by dietitians to meet regulations on children's nutritional needs. They are then approved by a commission including the service provider, dietitians from the city, elected parent representatives, and adult representatives from children's restaurant commissions.

Offering balanced and varied menus helps promote nutritional education and can support health education sessions.

Staff insight:

« I use the weekly menus as a basis for nutrition sessions to connect the food groups from the food pyramid to the menu components. »

Offering varied menus

By offering two menu options, "Little Bistro" or "Young Sprout", Lyon allows families to choose the protein dish based on their dietary preferences.

The Egalim Law promotes diversifying protein sources, asking for at least one vegetarian meal per week based on plant proteins.

In Lyon, two vegetarian meals featuring legumes, cereals, eggs, or cheese are served weekly to all diners.

Reducing food waste

Lyon has implemented actions to ensure meal orders closely match the actual number of children (monitoring orders, maintaining close links with families via an identified co-education liaison in each school, digital meal ordering and cancellation app).

To better adapt meal offerings to children's preferences, daily satisfaction surveys and children's restaurant commissions gather children's input for menu planning.

In each school restaurant, adults encourage practices to reduce food waste for both kindergarten and elementary students by:

- Encouraging children to serve themselves only what they will eat
- Offering portion sizes suitable for their appetite that day
- Making consumption easier (presentation, cutting, peeling)

Partnership agreements with charitable organizations allow edible surplus to be donated.

Sustainable waste management

Lyon is committed to sustainable waste management to reduce environmental and health impacts.

Upstream, efforts are made to reduce plastic and cardboard packaging: reusable delivery crates, reusable containers for cold dishes, cheese counters, homemade pastries, etc. Each school restaurant provides the necessary materials for children to sort their organic waste and packaging (sorting baskets and tables, appropriate signage). Sorting goes hand in hand with awareness sessions to teach children the importance of waste sorting and recycling.

Organic waste is collected and processed at an industrial composting facility, while other waste and packaging are sorted according to the local waste management system.



Objective 4: Supporting children in their food discovery

Food preferences change throughout life.

Children gradually become familiar with different flavors and smells.

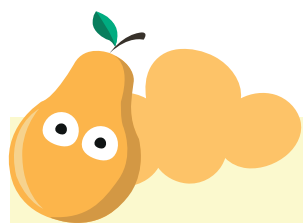
School catering plays a crucial role in introducing new foods and presentations, expanding their food repertoire.

A varied diet ensures the nutritional balance necessary for a child's development.

To help children appreciate food, it's important to introduce them to a variety of foods early.

Sharing meals with other children influences eating behaviors.

The team encourages children to explore new tastes without forcing them to eat.



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Explaining the plate contents

To enhance children's appetite and reduce rejection of unfamiliar foods, it is essential to **explain the plate's contents**.

Several activities can be offered beforehand: showing the food journey "from farm to fork," exploring raw foods (smell, color, texture), conducting cooking workshops to explore different preparation methods.

These actions are part of the midday break teams' educational projects.

Many after-school teams already conduct activities around "menu reading," helping children, including non-readers, familiarize themselves with new menus and their ingredients:

- **By creating a visual daily menu:** Staff can use this during canteen transitions to keep children busy and during break time. The idea is also to help new arrivals who are non-native speakers and encourage non-readers to read.
- **By decorating the school restaurant:** The aim is to personalize the space like a restaurant and decorate it with pictures of menu items, colored by the children and laminated.
- **By organizing food-related games:** An observation game based on fruits, vegetables, and seasonality is suggested, on the model of the Lynx game.

Food neophobia

Food neophobia is characterized by a reaction of fear to a stimulus considered to be new. It refers to the reluctance to try apparently new foods.

Most researchers agree that food neophobia is at its highest level between 2 and 6 years old, affecting 40% to 60% of children, to varying degrees.

« A child who rejects foods is first and foremost a child who is learning. » **Damien Foinant, 2022**
Patience and repeated experiences with different forms of food are essential.

« Eating habits acquired during childhood partly determine eating habits in adulthood. » **Nicklaus, 2005**

Why peel fruits?

While fruit skins generally pose no digestive issues for children, peeling remains essential because:

- The skins of certain fruits lack taste appeal, or even taste bad (e.g., citrus, peach, pear).
- Peeled or cut fruits indicate human intervention, reducing children's uncertainty about the fruit's edibility.

A small gesture can encourage children to taste and better appreciate fruits.

Source : Understanding food rejection in young children – Damien Foinant, 2022

How to promote children's food exploration?

Communicate about Plate contents

To stimulate appetite, the weekly menu is displayed at the entrance of schools and within the school premises at children's eye level (e.g., in the playground). In self-service, a buffet labeling system guides children in their choices.

Staff insight:

- « We took photos of the food with their names and displayed them on the service buffet. The children appreciate and like referring to them. »

Verbally Present the daily menu

An organization is set up for an adult to verbally present the daily menu to the children before or during the meal. Even though the menus are displayed, children do not always read them.

Staff insight:

- « If children know in advance what they will be eating, they eat a lot better. »

Focusing on plate presentation and service

The presentation of dishes plays a crucial role in stimulating children's appetite and awakening their taste buds. Depending on the menu, the team ensures the careful presentation of buffets, dishes, and their services.

In table service, each component requires suitable tableware that respects hygiene rules while showcasing the food (e.g., cheese on a small plate).

In self-service, staff ensures that buffets remain attractive until the end of the meal. They carefully serve the plates, keeping different components separated so children can better identify and appreciate the food.

Staff insight:

- « The gesture should not only focus on efficiency but also on pleasure, hospitality, and personalization. »

Offering different portion sizes

Appetites vary among children. Kitchen-prepared portions should be adaptable daily according to the child's request. Offering different portion sizes (half-portion, full portion) encourages children to taste the food.

For example, a child may more easily eat an apple if it is offered in quarters or halves. In self-service, the sample dish placed at both the cold and hot buffet facilitates discussion about the child's desired quantity.

Staff insight:

- « To avoid scaring the children, we serve small portions, giving them the opportunity to taste. If they like it, they can have more. »

Presenting peeled and cut fruits for children

A small gesture is enough to encourage children to taste and better appreciate fruits. Therefore, fruits are presented peeled and cut for kindergarten children.

For elementary children, the staff offers and assists with cutting and peeling the fruits upon request (e.g., using an apple slicer).

Gathering children's feedback

A satisfaction survey is conducted to gather children's feedback at the end of the meal. In collaboration with the restaurant manager, a team member collects observations from both children and adults for each meal component.

This feedback is analyzed and used by the City to develop menus and adapt recipes within the framework of collective catering services.



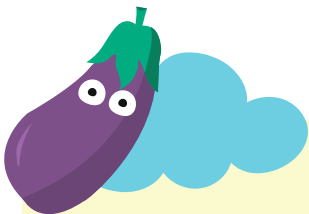
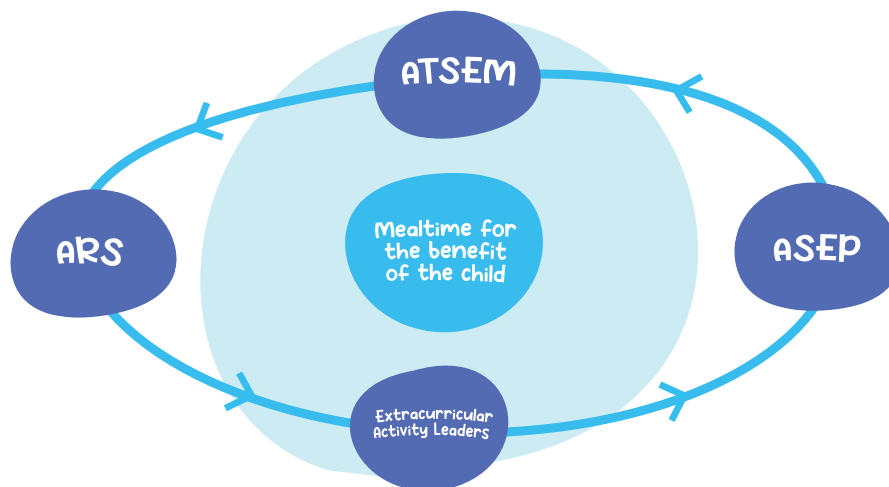
Objective 5: Working together during mealtime

Mealtime and the midday break are supervised by a multidisciplinary team:

School Restaurant Manager (RRS) and Specialized Catering Agent (ASR), Extracurricular Director (DAL) and Activity Leader, Specialized Territorial Agent for Kindergartens (ATSEM), Specialized Agent for Primary Schools (ASEP), and temporary staff.

Each staff member, regardless of their profession, takes on an educational role and holds a responsibility towards the children. Being part of this collective means fostering relationships with different personnel and contributing to an effective work organization based on set objectives. The public service must adapt to societal changes and address the needs of today's children.

Thus, the team does everything possible to welcome children in the best relational and material conditions.



FOCUS

What does encouraging tasting mean?

- Presenting the menu orally every day
- Serving the child a small portion
- Encouraging self-service according to the child's age
- Explaining the different components of their plate: the recipe's ingredients
- Engaging in conversation and referring to their food experience: "Do you know this food?" "Have you eaten it before?" "Does it look like something you know?"
- Labeling and displaying raw products next to the dishes (e.g., a whole eggplant).
A food is deemed edible if it is known and identified by the child
- Sharing a meal with other children who enjoy the food can encourage a child to try something they don't initially like
- Encouraging children who enjoy the food to share why they like it
- Serving all children a small portion to taste. If a child is hesitant, the staff does not force them to taste and remains attentive to signs of disgust.

How to work as a team?

Sharing a common culture through the educational project

« Serving the child » is the primary objective of supporting children during mealtime. The lunch break team incorporates the educational aspects of catering into their educational project. This site-specific framework defines the organization and promotes coherence among different professionals.

Therefore, multidisciplinary meetings should be encouraged throughout the year to discuss the operation and improvement strategies for the lunch break.

An educational project that includes the educational aspects of catering also helps to communicate this approach to families during information meetings, personalized appointments, and parents' welcome centers.

Being attentive, caring, and available

The entire team contributes to the well-being of the child. Being attentive, caring, and available are the qualities developed by the staff present with the children to ensure their physical and emotional safety.

They make sure to respect the individuality of each child while supporting them within the group. The functioning of the midday break ensures smooth transitions and welcomes everyone within a collective, leaving space for a wide range of social, cultural, and familial diversity.

Sharing the menu, its changes, and its different components

To involve everyone in educating and developing children's taste, the catering team communicates the day's menu description and any changes to the entire team. Once informed, everyone can discuss the different foods that make up the meal with the children. The menu components are listed on the morning delivery note.

For new recipes, « product sheets » are made available.

Staff insight:

« It's easier to explain to the children what's on their plate when we've discussed the menu with the team. »

Adopting a positive attitude towards meals

Staff members should maintain a professional stance and adopt a positive attitude towards the recipes served. Personal food preferences of the staff should not hinder children's consumption.

Opportunity for staff to taste the dishes

Encouraging a child to try a food or discussing it with them is easier if the adult has tasted the recipe themselves. Staff are allowed to taste the dishes (starters, main courses, dairy, or desserts) by taking a small portion (the size of a teaspoon), while respecting hygiene measures.

Organizing rotation across different stations

In self-service settings, rotation across various stations is implemented. This rotation helps staff understand the overall meal process and prevents musculoskeletal disorders.



Conclusion

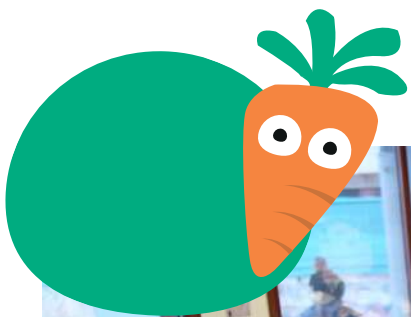
The school catering handbook aims to provide meal-time professionals with a common foundation of practices and approaches for quality childcare in school catering.

The dynamic engagement of all teams, their willingness to critically evaluate their current practices, and their ability to propose improvements enhance the support provided to children during meal-times.

The goal of this reference guide is to serve as a practical tool for professionals, helping them reflect on and organize mealtimes in line with the educational objectives of extracurricular care.

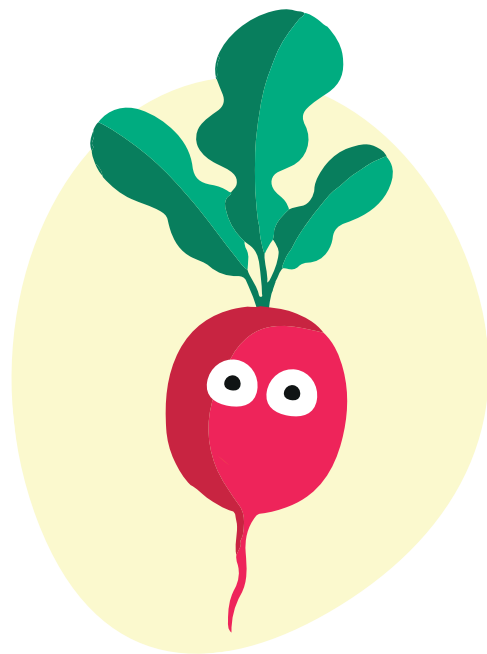
Each team adapts and implements the presented practices in a personalized manner according to the context of their school restaurant.

This handbook is supplemented with video clips and posters illustrating essential practices and approaches. These materials, widely distributed in all school restaurants, also help to promote the initiative to families.



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Annexes

Main texts regulating school catering

Supervision

- Supervision of school catering: **Article R. 227-1 of the Social Action and Family Code (CASF).**
- Supervision of extracurricular leisure activities: **Decree of February 28, 2017,** concerning the supervision of extracurricular leisure activities..

Food

- **Decree No. 2011-1227 of September 30, 2011,** concerning the nutritional quality of meals served in school catering.
- **Decree No. 2019-351 of April 23, 2019,** concerning the composition of meals served in collective restaurants in application of **Article L. 230-5-1 of the Rural and Maritime Fishing Code.**
- Recommendation of the GEMRCN on nutrition (Study Group on Collective Catering and Nutrition Markets) **No. J-07 of May 4, 2007, updated in July 2015 (version 2.0).**
- **EGALIM Law: Articles 24, 26, 27, 28, 29 of Law No. 2018-938 of October 30, 2018,** concerning access to healthy food in collective catering.
- **AGEC Law No. 2020-105 of February 10, 2020,** on the fight against waste and the circular economy.
- **Climate and Resilience Law No. 2021-1104 of August 22, 2021,** on the fight against climate change and strengthening resilience to its effects.

Noise

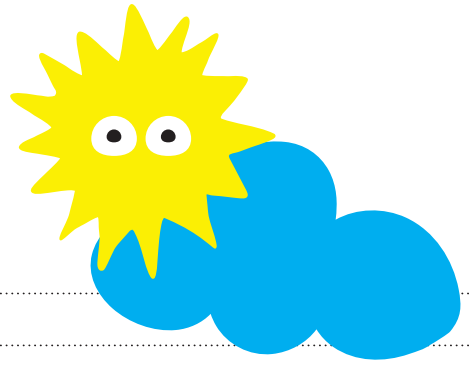
- **Decree of April 25, 2003,** on the limitation of noise in educational establishments Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development - JO No. 123 of May 28, 2003), sets a limit value on the average reverberation duration in dining rooms and applies to new buildings or new parts of existing buildings.

Voluntary Application Standards

- **AFNOR NFX50-220** standard for school catering services – 2011
- **Ecocert En Cuisine** label - 2013



Notes



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The school catering handbook
video is available here

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