

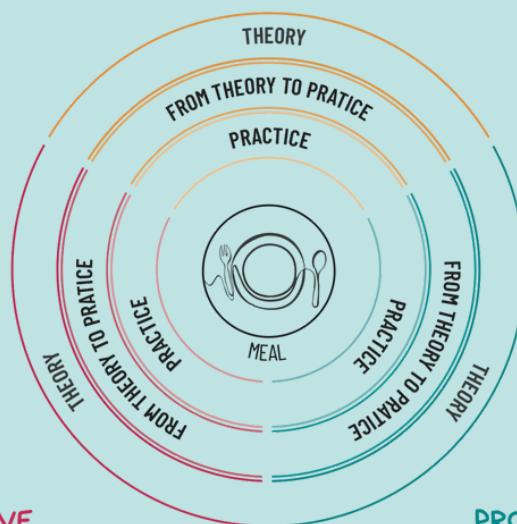
School Menu Design Handbook

A systemic tool for designing healthy and sustainable school meals

School meals are more than food — they're a powerful lever for change.

With over 418 million children receiving a school meal daily, the School Menu Design Handbook helps transform canteens into spaces for learning, inclusion, and sustainability. The handbook supports cooks, educators, food service professionals and even families in designing, preparing, and promoting school meals that are healthy, sustainable, and enjoyable for children.

FOOD PREFERENCES
Creating recipes able to orient **food acceptance** while taking into account cultural, religious, individual and biological needs



ACTIVE LEARNING

Seeing school meals as an opportunity for active and participatory food education

PROGRESSIVE EXPOSURE

Designing strategies and menus that can support the adoption of diets that are healthy, nutritious and sustainable for both humans and the planet

What's inside?

1. Food Preferences

Understanding how children perceive and accept food:

- Sensory science and taste evolution
- Strategies to overcome neophobia
- Tools like the creative matrix and recipe structure

2. Progressive Exposure & Circular Cooking

Designing meals that are good for people and the planet:

- Strategies to increase acceptance of food
- Circular cooking and whole-use of ingredients
- Menu planning to reduce food waste

3. Active Learning

Turning meals into educational experiences:

- Whole School Food Approach (WSFA)
- Cooks as educators
- Classroom integration and hands-on activities

Who is it for?

- Cooks, catering staff and nutritionists
- Teachers and educators
- Families through canteen committees
- School meal managers and policymakers
- Trainers and food ambassadors

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How it supports change

- Theory meets practice: Each chapter blends scientific insights with practical tools.
- Inclusive design: Recipes and strategies are adaptable to diverse cultural, dietary, and operational contexts.
- Sustainability focus: Encourages plant-based diets, local sourcing, and waste reduction.
- Educational integration: Promotes food literacy and active learning through sensory engagement and co-creation considering both the canteen and classroom environments.

Get inspired

Explore examples like:

- Colorful experiments with anthocyanins
- Veggie Burger Challenge for taste education
- Canteen Day as a community celebration of food

Use it for...

- Training cooks and educators
- Designing menus and recipes
- Engaging families and communities
- Supporting policy and procurement
- Creating food education activities

Where to find it:



[Download the full handbook here!](#)

Find more information at schoolfood4change.eu
or contact us at info@schoolfood4change.eu