

# Cafeteria Connection

Connecting you to your child's school lunchroom



## PROTEIN POWER: Meat and Meat Alternatives in School Meals

Protein gets a lot of attention these days. In school meals, we categorize protein-rich foods as meat and meat alternatives. Let's explore what falls under this category, the requirements we follow, and the nutritional benefits they offer to our growing learners.

### WHAT ARE MEAT AND MEAT ALTERNATIVES?

Meat and meat alternatives encompass a diverse range of protein sources essential for supporting the growth and development of our students.

#### *These include:*

- Lean meats such as poultry, beef, and pork
- Beans, lentils, legumes
- Nuts and nut butters
- Tofu
- Cheese

By offering a variety of options on our menus, we ensure that all dietary preferences and needs are accommodated.



### NUTRITIONAL BENEFITS

Meat and meat alternatives are rich sources of protein, essential for building and repairing tissues, supporting immune function, and maintaining overall health. Additionally, they provide vital nutrients such as iron, zinc, and B vitamins, which are crucial for cognitive function, energy metabolism, and overall well-being.



### MEETING USDA REQUIREMENTS

Our school meal programs adhere to USDA guidelines that encourage a balance of all food groups, including meat and meat alternatives, to ensure that students receive adequate nutrition to thrive both academically and physically. These guidelines help us create menus that provide the necessary nutrients for optimal growth and development while also promoting lifelong healthy eating habits.