

**SPENDSMART
EATSMART**

School Lunch Comparison

If you are concerned about school lunch, check it out. Here is a comparison of lunch at three middle schools in central Iowa. Here's what I found when I went to lunch with three students in middle school.



Suburban Middle School



Urban Middle School



Rural Middle School

<i>Menu Choices</i>	Cheese bread and marinara, turkey nuggets, deli sandwich, chef salad	Chili, chicken nuggets, baked potato with cheese sauce, corn muffins (ran out with only half the kids served)	Breaded fish fillet or breaded popcorn shrimp were the choices. Bread and butter sandwiches or bread and jelly. Students could get a chef salad if ordered the day before.
<i>Fruits and Veg.</i>	Frozen peas, cooked, whole banana, baby carrots, canned diced peaches and pears combo	Broccoli (served if you asked) spinach with cherry tomatoes (dressing already on it plus more dressing at end) diced fresh cantaloupe, applesauce	Whipped potatoes, creamed corn, pineapple and mandarin orange salad with coconut, apple halves
<i>Cost</i>	Middle School - \$2.40 Adult - \$3.20	Middle School - \$2.50 Adult - \$3.20 A la carte milk - \$.45	Middle school lunch - \$2.00 Adult lunch - \$3.00
<i>Security and Staffing</i>	Called day before; secretary checked with Principal for OK. Stopped by the office for a pass. Put pass in pocket and stood in hall. Staff in and around lunchroom: Principal, one teacher, and one lunch monitor	Called day before; secretary transferred to Principal; had to have parents call school; next day school checked with parents. Wore a stick-on visitor badge. Principal, Counselor, 2 teachers – all with walkie-talkies 250 kids crowded	Called day before, checked in at office. Name tag was returned to the office when leaving. One teacher.
<i>Time</i>	Half hour; plenty of time to eat; then ala carte line opened and kids lined up to buy more Kids lined up in 2 rows, then scattered gathering foods. Three checkout lines at end	Half hour; didn't get out for lunch until 25 minutes into the allotted time. Kids sat at tables and were called up one at a time to go through a short line. A la carte items were purchased along with the lunch. Hard to know what was ala carte and what foods were counted as the meal.	Round tables, relaxed atmosphere, low noise level. (80 kids eating at once)
<i>Table-ware</i>	Plastic reusable trays with plastic silverware. Drank out of cartons.	Styrofoam plates and bowls, plastic combo spoon forks. Drank out of cartons.	Hard plastic washable trays and metal silverware. Drank out of cartons.
<i>Service</i>	Scatter service. Kids picked up trays; then went to different stations to dish up their food.	Cooks put entrees and hot vegetables on trays. Kids served themselves cold fruits and vegetables.	Cooks put entrees and hot vegetables on trays. Kids served themselves cold fruits and vegetables.

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