

What Works Well: Jeanette's Top Tips

It's no good just looking at where students eat if the food itself doesn't look and taste appealing, so before you focus on the dining room or school hall try asking yourself the following...

Do you taste the food you are cooking?

Do you use fresh herbs? For instance basil, added to a bolognese, gives a wonderful taste

Do you use spices?

Are you using the old Grundy tins or can you present your food in earthenware dishes?

My tips for appealing food:

- Wipe around the edge of dishes before you place in the oven so there are no burn marks
- Don't cook food too early and leave it to stand on a hot plate
- If possible, steam all vegetables
- If not, use the minimum amount of water and don't cook them until the last possible moment
- If you are lucky enough to have someone in the kitchen while you are serving, batch cook the vegetables
- Make sure the counter service is clean and appealing – you eat with your eyes!
- Keep to a minimum the food that's on the servery and decorate the dishes with herbs e.g. fresh parsley on a fish pie, or lemon slices
- If you are serving fresh fruit make a platter, cutting the fruit into bite size chunks, and use the top of a pineapple as a centrepiece (I know pineapple can be expensive, but just once in a while will not break the bank)

Try to think about all of the above before taking a look at where the food is eaten. Also, it's worth remembering it has taken your team all morning to produce what is going to be eaten in half an hour!

My tips for an appealing dining experience:

- Can you move the furniture around to make more space if you are lucky enough to have a dining room?
- Can you look at having more service points maybe in different areas? For example, a pasta point of sale, a pre-order point of sale, or students ordering at break?
- Ask the SMT to eat in the dining hall
- Try displaying posters or art-work from the students in the dining hall
- Do you have a school council member who is interested in food? If so invite them to interview you or a member of staff and they may be surprised at the amount of work you do. Remember, students think food just appears!
- If you have some students who are foodies could you have them come into the kitchen to help cook for a day or a week?



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