



# TEEN CHEF

March 2026

## NEWSLETTER



### LET'S GET COOKIN'!

This month we are focusing on starting with the basics- Chopping skills, especially dicing. Diced produce is a common staple for many recipes, whether they are simple or complex. Click the link to watch quick demos of how to slice and dice a bell pepper and how to dice an onion.



PLAY

**Produce (noun):** "Things that have been produced or grown, especially by farming."

#### Dicing Tips:

- When chopping round fruits and vegetables: once you make your first slice, place the flat surface of the produce down so it doesn't roll.
- When cutting an onion, be sure to avoid cutting through the root, this is what holds the onion together.
- When dicing fruits and vegetables, try to make your cuts (slices) similar in length and width, this will give you a cohesive end product and makes for better dish presentation!

### NUTRITION TIDBITS

Each year during the entire month of March, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND) celebrates Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs) and highlights different topics surrounding nutrition. The National Nutrition Month theme this year is "The Power of Nutrition."

The food we eat gives us energy in a similar way that petroleum gas "fuels" a car and allows it to accelerate. It is hard to get a car moving once it runs out of gas, isn't it? Well, same thing goes

for us humans! The food we eat "fuels" us so we can get through our day with plenty of energy. Try challenging yourself to nourish your body with good food fuel this month, and beyond!

**The food we eat is made up of protein, fat, and carbohydrates.**

- **Carbohydrates:** get broken down into glucose- our bodies' primary source of energy and the brain's preferred energy source.
- **Protein:** helps make hormones, muscle, repairs cells and makes other proteins. -Very important for all that growing you still have left to do!
- **Fat:** stores energy, insulates and protects our organs, helps hormones communicate in the body, and helps us absorb fat soluble vitamins like vitamins A, D, E, and K.

Remember, food isn't the only piece of the puzzle when it comes to eating for energy; Hydration, movement and getting enough sleep are also just as important. We'll be covering these topics in more detail for the next few months so make sure you check out April's issue!



### FEATURED RECIPE OF THE MONTH SALMON QUESADILLAS WITH A TWIST!

Calling all quesadilla lovers to the floor, these salmon quesadillas will leave you pleasantly surprised. Check out the common, special ingredient in our cooking reel to see how we turned this recipe up a few notches in flavor.



PLAY

## PARENTS' PRESS

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans has released new nutrition guidance for 2025-2030. In the following months, we'll be breaking down how these changes will affect what is offered in your teens' school cafeteria. This month, we'll be focusing on new added sugar restrictions that will affect school breakfast options.

By July 2027, school breakfasts and total added sugars from all weekly meals provided must limit added sugars to less than 10% of total calories. Consider this change a win! Many schools currently rely on cold cereals and reheated breakfast items to meet food production demands, especially in schools with a larger student attendance. Results from a 2024 k-12 food trend survey revealed that cold cereal (63.7%) muffins (52.7%), and mini donuts (49.7%) were the top three most popular breakfast items served to students. These foods often contain high amounts of added sugar; averaging between 14-30g of sugar per serving, which can negatively impact students' ability to concentrate during class time, and their energy levels the rest of the school day; These new added sugar restrictions are likely to cause challenges for school breakfast and may result in more food products being offered that instead contain artificial sweeteners. These sweeteners are recognized as generally safe by the FDA, however some studies have found overconsumption of these sweeteners may have negative side effects such as altered gut health and may lead to increased risk of nutrition-related disease. Monitoring your teen's school food options will allow for more well-informed food choices. Remember there is nothing wrong with being a food investigator!

**Artificial sweeteners:** Synthetic or modified sugar substitutes that provide a sweet taste, without calories or a significant effect on blood sugar levels.

**Common artificial sweeteners:** Aspartame, saccharin, sucralose, stevia (considered more natural; derived from plants), neotame, and advantame.

**\*Important note:** Although there are various supported changes released in the New Dietary Guidelines, Nutrition Services understands that making nutrition decisions for yourself and loved ones involves consideration of various life circumstances and health conditions, which can make it challenging to practice nutrition recommendations published for the general public. Therefore, some recommendations may not be suitable for you and your family. If you have nutrition questions or concerns regarding these guidelines, or are interested in meeting with a Dietitian, feel free to contact us by calling 317-221-7024.

### Sources:

<https://cdn.realfood.gov/DGA.pdf>

<https://nutritionsource.hsph.harvard.edu/2026/01/09/dietary-guidelines-for-americans-2025-2030/>

<https://www.npr.org/2026/02/05/nx-s1-5691598/school-lunch-food-pyramid-usda-dietary-guidelines>



Note that added sugar restrictions will not take place until July 2027, so consider the following tips to help your teen start their school day off right with “powerful” breakfast.

**Discuss breakfast preferences with your teen; consider asking the following questions:**

- When do you usually eat breakfast and lunch? (A 10:30 a.m. breakfast and a 12:40 p.m. lunch might mean your teen needs a snack in between – and extra protein at breakfast!)
- What is your hunger level in the morning?
- What foods do you choose in the school breakfast line?

**With your teen, determine nutrient-rich foods to “power up” breakfast options offered at school. Examples:**

- Grilled chicken bites
- Hard boiled eggs
- Yogurt / Yogurt drink
- Trail mix
- Protein smoothie
- Cheese sticks / snack cheese

