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The Soyfoods Association of North America
Andrea Cohen, Director of Communications
202-659-3520
press@soyfoods.org

Soyfoods: Healthy Solutions to Children’s Nutrition
The Soyfoods Association of North America Celebrates National School Lunch Week, Oct. 14-18

To meet growing demands for healthy, plant-based foods, schools nationwide are serving tofu, veggie burgers, soy crumbles, soymilk, soy yogurt, and other soyfoods. In celebration of National School Lunch Week on Oct. 14-18, the Soyfoods Association of North America highlights the latest research confirming the healthfulness of soyfoods for children, and showcases schools offering soyfood options in their cafeterias.

The bottom line for parents – children in the U.S. and across the world enjoy a variety of soyfoods daily and have grown and developed normally.

School food service programs are increasingly taking advantage of the nutritional and economical value that soyfoods can provide their students. Soyfoods work within school meal requirements to offer a complete protein source that also supports fat and calorie reduction. Schools serve fortified soymilk in place of cow’s milk, edamame as a vegetable, and tofu, soy-based deli slices, soy nuts, crumbles, burgers, soy nut butter or nuggets as meat alternates. The menu options enjoy high acceptance.

Providing nutritious food for children’s growth and development is very important, and soyfoods can easily fit into the picture. Great-tasting soyfoods provide essential vitamins and minerals, such as iron, calcium, potassium and high-quality, complete protein for growing kids. These nutrients help kids build strong bones and lean muscle for balance and coordination, and serving soyfoods help kids learn to make healthy food decisions early in life.

Recent studies have indicated that eating soyfoods at an early age may protect against some diseases later on in life. For example, studies show eating soyfoods during childhood and adolescence may help protect against breast cancer as an adult. Soyfoods may also help preventing constipation, maintaining a healthy weight, and enduring athletic performance.

Did You Know?
- Soy blends well with other ingredients, even extreme flavors.
- Soy can provide added fiber to kids’ diets.
- Soy is a cost-effective ingredient.
- Offering healthier meals and snacks is a top priority in preventing childhood obesity and reducing disease risk.
Soy can provide high-quality protein without the high fat, saturated fat and cholesterol content of many animal protein sources. Soy protein is the only plant protein that contains all of the essential amino acids, just like animal protein.

Soyfoods can help to manage weight, as they are an excellent source of low-fat, high-quality protein that has been shown to increase satiety—thought to be a key component of weight control. With more children having high blood cholesterol, the cholesterol lowering benefit of soy protein is an additional reason to use more often soyfoods in place of animal proteins.

Soyfoods can deliver growth nutrients like iron, essential fatty acids and B vitamins. Many soyfoods are a great source of iron and soybeans are one of the only plant sources of essential Omega-3 fatty acids. Depending on the soyfood, they can also provide calcium, fiber, vitamins B and D, magnesium and potassium.

Children fed soy-based formulas have been found to have normal endocrine and reproductive development, according to several available studies to date. Some parents worry about exposure to estrogen compounds in soyfoods, but soy phytoestrogens are not human estrogens and have not been documented to result in precocious puberty. The Arkansas Children’s Nutrition Center “Beginnings Study” found soy-formula-fed infants’ growth and development patterns tracked closely with those of breast-fed infants. This study did not find any estrogenic effects in the soy-formula-fed infants during the first four months of life when development of reproductive organs is rapid.

Allergies to soyfoods affect less than 1 percent of children and most grow out of them by age 10. The College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology (CAAI) estimates that approximately 0.4 percent of American children, or about 298,410 under the age of 18, are allergic to soy, whereas the more prevalent allergies report milk (32 percent), followed by peanuts (29 percent), eggs (18 percent), and tree nuts (6 percent). Many schools and child care centers offer soy nuts and soy nut butter in place of peanuts, and serve soymilk in place of cow's milk to reduce potential exposure to severe allergens.

In addition to schools adding soy protein to their menus, parents can offer tasty, kid-friendly and cost-effective soyfoods at home. Grocery stores offer soymilk single-serve packs, soy nut butter and pretzel packs, soy yogurt and soy non-dairy frozen desserts in mini sizes. Tofu, veggie burgers, crumbles, hot dogs and sausages fit into any favorite chili, spaghetti sauce or stir-fry. And fruit soy smoothies made with fortified soymilk are fun ways to get added calcium. Children love the taste and never know the difference!

For family-friendly recipe ideas, please visit the Soyfoods Association’s Pinterest page.

For additional information, please visit the Soyfoods Association website, soyfoods.org, which features resources for School Food Service Professionals as well as additional health information. A short video, “The Benefits of Soyfoods for Energetic Kids” featuring Rebecca Scritchfield, RD, is available to link to.

If you would like to speak with a researcher in this field of study, please contact Andrea Cohen at 202-659-3520 or pressi@soyfoods.org.

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About Soyfoods Association of North America
The Soyfoods Association of North America (SANA) is a non-profit trade association that has been promoting consumption of soyfoods in the diet since 1978. SANA is committed to encouraging sustainability, integrity and growth in the soyfoods industry by promoting the benefits and consumption of soy-based foods and ingredients in diets. More information is available at www.soyfoods.org.
School Success Stories Using Soy

Students Love Soyfoods!

These schools are just a couple examples of programs that have successfully incorporated soyfoods such as tofu, veggie burgers, soybeans, edamame, textured vegetable protein and other soy products into everyday meal offerings as a part of the National School Lunch Program. Students of all ages are raving about the delicious and healthy lunches made with soyfoods.

Queens, New York
The Active Learning Elementary School (TALES) – PS 244 is a pre-K to 3rd school with 400 students located in Flushing, Queens. It was founded in 2008 on a vision of health and nutrition, is the first public school in the nation to serve a healthy plant-based lunch every day. Students really enjoy the menu that features soyfoods like: roasted organic tofu with Asian sesame sauce, veggie tofu wraps, and roasted organic tofu with cacciatorre sauce. Throughout the school’s curriculum students are taught how to make healthy choices, and they know soyfoods fit perfectly into a healthy diet. Click here to see the school’s breakfast and lunch menus.

Montgomery County, Maryland
Montgomery County Public School District is the 16th largest school district in the United States and is also one of the most ethnically diverse districts. The District serves about 13.1 million meals a year that increasing must meet diverse pallets and preferences, while maintaining health and nutrition.

Faced with this complex problem, Montgomery County School Food Service participated in a study to experiment with soyfoods in school meals. A plate waste study, published in the Journal of School Health, took popular menu items, including macaroni & cheese, burgers, chicken nuggets, and chicken Caesar salad, and replaced them with soyfoods. Soy pasta was used in the macaroni and cheese, soy burgers and a spicy black bean burger replaced meat burgers, veggie chik’n nuggets substituted for chicken nuggets, and veggie chik’n was used in the Caesar salad. Kids ate just as much of the soyfoods as they did of traditional menu items — indicating a high acceptability of soyfoods.

The study was such a success that Montgomery County School Food Service replaced a couple of its menu items with soyfoods despite slightly higher costs. Since the study was conducted, more soyfoods menu items have been added to the meal options and the county has even adapted Meatless Mondays to its weekly menu planning.

Gwinnett County, Georgia
Gwinnett County Public Schools, located in the metro Atlanta area, is the largest school system in Georgia and continues to grow. The school district anticipates it will serve nearly 161,000 students in the 2010-11 school year. In order to provide healthier options to students, Gwinnett County Public Schools offer a meat-free meal option every day at all 119 school sites. The district has served close to one million soy-based meal options this year alone. Not only are kids willing to eat soyfoods, but kids are clearly asking for more!
References