

Information on Restaurant école



www.restaurant-ecole.com

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Restaurant école philosophy

Restaurant école was created by a primary school Headteacher and a French chef, as a direct response to schools nationwide and parents who wanted a healthy meal for their children at school.

A healthier alternative was vital because research showed that:

- Obesity amongst children is increasing;
- In a typical week one in five children eats no fruit at all;
- A healthy balanced diet has a significantly positive effect of children's behaviour and ultimately on their adult health and life expectancy.

Peter Kent, the Headteacher and Francois Nouaillat, the chef and a parent of two children attending the school, worked closely with the governing body to put in place a school meal service of which they would be proud.

The school meal would now include:

- Fresh, rather than precooked 'convenience foods';
- An increase in fresh fruit and vegetables;
- A reduction in additives and preservatives.

The change has been very much welcomed by parents and the number of children (and staff!) taking a school meal has increased.

Word got round. Other schools were asking how they too could make the change to a healthy diet for their children. It was clear however that there was a limit to the number of schools Francois could help directly.

How were we going to be able to bring our philosophy to other schools?

After months of discussion - the involvement of a nutritionalist and a business director and advice from the vast number of catering experts Francois has worked with – Restaurant école Limited was formed.

The raison d'être was simple:

To provide fresh food every day.

Restaurant école ... Dream into reality

In setting up the company, we were keen to move away from most of the conventional structures of school catering suppliers. We see ourselves as educational suppliers rather than as a catering company.

As well as having our own ideas and passions, we spoke to parents and schools to see what they wanted. In the absence of clear nutritional guidelines from the Government we are using the Caroline Walker trust nutritional guidelines as a basis for food services as these are regarded as the guidelines with the highest expectations.

After carrying out school based trials and evaluation we have arrived at a service, which will provide -

For Parents and children:

- 95% of foods served which are fresh, and where possible free range and organic;
- A list of 39 preservatives, food enhancers, and colourings, which will be banned from our meals;
- A gradual reduction in the levels of sugar and salt;
- Menus, which are checked weekly against the Restaurant école nutritional standards;
- Menus, which reflect seasonal choices and range in the food market;
- Fresh seasonal snack vegetables, cut fruit, milk and freshly baked bread available on children's dining tables at every meal. Crisps and other related items would no longer be provided;
- A food purchasing policy, which puts the highest importance on food quality rather than price;
- The use of local suppliers, where possible, to ensure food quality.

For Schools:

- A contract based on the existing price of a school meal, with no "hidden clauses";
- Weekly support by our chef area manager to maintain menu quality and develop a strong relationship with the school;
- Menus which are specific to individual schools and which are developed in partnership between the head chef and the school;
- A commitment to Education for Healthy Eating. We will welcome partnership projects with schools which encourage children's long term eating habits.

Changing and developing children's eating habits is a lengthy process. Each child is different and we have to use a variety of approaches to encourage these changes. We have to start from where they are now and move gently forward. We want our children to know what constitutes a healthy balanced diet and to recognise quality food when they see it. We really believe with this approach we can have a significant effect on children's long-term health.

Conclusions

Restaurant école promotes policies to encourage healthy eating:

- There has been confusion about the development of national policies in this area and we are pleased to learn that central government are proposing to issue nutritional guidelines for school meals in September this year;
- However, we believe national policies also need to be developed regarding food quality and food education in schools. This should include developing children's understanding of healthy diet, range of food, and the ability to cook as a basic life skill;
- Restaurant école will work with each individual school to establish policies on all these issues;
- The package offered is at no financial risk to schools. Costs are guaranteed.

If there is any issue about our service that you would like to discuss further, please contact either Peter Kent or Francois Nouaillat.

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