

Taste tests give students a chance to try new recipes, reduce food waste, and help schools identify meals students want before adding them to the menu. Follow this checklist to plan, promote, and implement a successful taste test in your school cafeteria.

Timeline	Key Tasks
<b>2-3 Weeks Before Event</b>	Order all ingredients
	Prepare promotion materials
	Recruit volunteer helpers (students, parents, or staff) to hand out samples or encourage students to vote
<b>1 Week Before Event</b>	Confirm taste test food purchase and delivery timing
	Advertise taste test: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media</li> <li>• School newsletter</li> <li>• Morning announcements</li> <li>• Website</li> </ul>
	Hang promotional signs around school
<b>Day Before Event</b>	Inventory and Equipment Check <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equipment (ovens, warmers, coolers)</li> <li>• Paper goods (spoons, forks, napkins, cups)</li> <li>• Ingredients/groceries</li> <li>• Check for allergens or dietary restrictions</li> </ul>
	Prep Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voting poster &amp; stickers</li> <li>• Tray for samples</li> <li>• Table for holding samples</li> <li>• Recipe cards with ingredient list</li> </ul>
	Food Prep <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thaw ingredients if needed</li> <li>• Prepare sauces if needed</li> </ul>

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<b>Morning of Event</b>	Announce taste test to students and staff during morning announcements
	Promote taste test on social media
<b>Arrival &amp; Set Up</b>	Confirm team roles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recipe preparation</li> <li>• Sample distribution</li> <li>• Voting station management</li> </ul>
	Check prep location for recipe preparation and staging
	Unpack and organize all materials
<b>Cooking &amp; Assembly</b>	Preheat ovens or equipment
	Prepare the recipe
	Divide into sample sizes
	Keep samples warm or chilled as needed
<b>Staging &amp; Serving Line</b>	Set up serving line or taste test area with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sample trays</li> <li>• Voting poster clearly labeled</li> <li>• Stickers for voting</li> <li>• Stickers/prizes for students</li> <li>• Extra paper boats/cups, napkins, straws</li> <li>• Signage showing recipe ingredients</li> </ul>
	Transport samples to taste test area
<b>Student Engagement</b>	Invite students to try a sample
	Encourage use of all senses (look, smell, taste)

Timeline	Key Tasks
<b>Student Engagement</b>	Remind students to respect different opinions
	Use sample talking points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Free sample! Let us know what you think.”</li> <li>• “Would you eat this again? Give us your feedback!”</li> </ul>
<b>Collect Feedback and Share Results</b>	Ask students: Would you choose this if it was on the menu? (yes/no vote)
	Count stickers and tally results at the end of testing period
	Announce results over PA system
	Share results, photos, or quotes with parents and staff
<b>Post Event</b>	Thank volunteers
	Decide whether to add recipe to the menu or adjust
	Post results on social media and announce upcoming menu addition and how soon it will appear on the menu if popular
	Make recipe information available for staff and students