Marketing Events for Salad Bars Show an Increase in Student Participation

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Overview

Make a Rainbow at the Salad Bar, more commonly known as *Rainbow Days*, and *FreshLIFE: Enjoy a Salad Today!* are two simple, yet adventurous promotional events that market salad bars to students in grades K through 12. *Rainbow Days* is an educational event targeting elementary schools. *FreshLIFE: Enjoy a Salad Today!* is an educational event for middle and high schools. Participating schools are guided to supply the salad bar with traditional as well as nontraditional fruits and vegetables that represent the colors of the rainbow: red, orange, yellow, green and purple. Participating schools receive the following educational incentives:

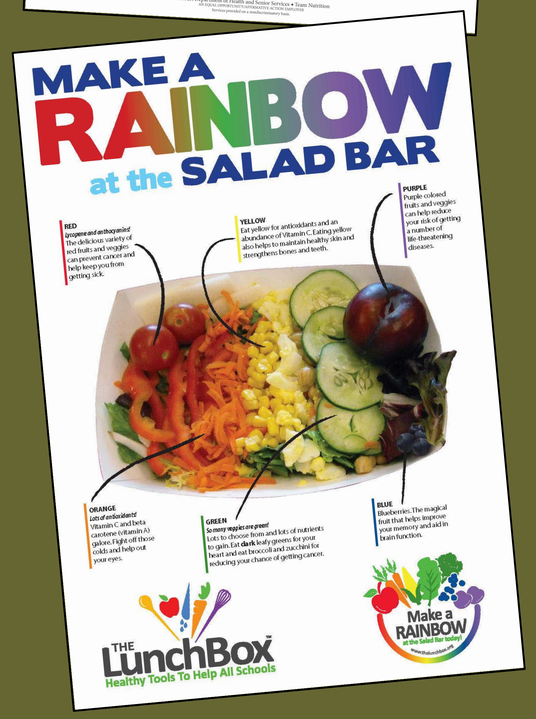
- Tool kit
- Produce guide
- Customizable promotional flyers
- Signage encouraging etiquette at the salad bar
- Posters for the cafeteria with educational tag lines
- Aprons for cafeteria staff in elementary schools
- Visors for cafeteria staff in middle and high schools
- Educational incentives for the students
- Stipends of $200 to help defray food cost

Objective

The purpose of these events is to assist school lunch programs to market and revitalize their salad bars while encouraging students to increase selection of fruits and vegetables.

Missouri Team Nutrition's (Mo TN) goal was to observe a sustained impact on salad bar sales for participating schools two months after the original salad bar event.

FreshLIFE
Enjoy a SALAD today



Methodology

Individual school buildings with a salad bar registered online. After a letter of agreement is executed between Mo TN and registered schools, supplies are shipped with additional instructions. School food management receives an event and post-event survey. The surveys collect:

- Average number of student salad bar sales 60 days before the event (actual servings, information from food service production records)
- Number of student salad bar sales day of the event
- Observed student behaviors before, during and after the event
  - Eating from the rainbow
  - Increase in confidence in seeking out and trying new foods
  - Keeping salad bar utensils separate and returning them to their assigned fruit or vegetable
  - Increase in participation in choosing from the salad bar

Results

Total Salad Bar Events	Rainbow Day Events*	Fresh Life Events**
145	123	22

*As of three consecutive school years: 2013-14; 2014-15; 2015-16
**Starting in Spring 2015; school year 2015-2016

Total Student Reach: 40,331

Rainbow Day Reach	Fresh Life Reach
33,007	7,324

Results cont.

Student Salad Bar Sales (actual servings based on production records) Increased by 10 percent, 60 days past the original event.

	Average # of Salad Bar Sales 60 Days Before Event	Average # of Salad Bar Sales 60 Days Past Event
Rainbow Day Events* (School Year 13-14 & 14-15)	13,895	15,222
Fresh Life Events (began Spring 2015)**	--	--

*Post surveys not yet available for school year 2015-2016
**Insufficient data post Spring 2015 events.

Observed Frequency of Student Behaviors

Observed frequency of student behaviors	Before the Event	During the Event	After the Event
Eating from the rainbow	3.0	3.9	3.3
Increase in confidence in seeking out and trying new foods	2.9	4.1	3.2
Keeping salad bar utensils separate and returning them to its assigned fruit and vegetable tray	3.1	3.6	3.9
Increase in participation in choosing from the salad bar	3.1	4.1	3.6

Key
1 = Very Low to no participation or behavior observed
2 = Low - Some or low participation or behavior observed
3 = Moderate - Students seem to understand the desired behavior but there is more room for improvement
4 = High - Students exhibit this behavior but some improvement can be put in place
5 = Very High - Students exhibit this behavior without being prompted

Conclusion

The salad bar events have a large appeal to school food service due to their simplicity and program support. The observed and desirable student behaviors show a sustained positive impact two months after the date of the original events. Although low response rates of the post surveys exist, the sponsored salad bar events show a sustained impact on salad bar sales to students two months after the event. The conclusions are that orchestrated marketing events help school lunch programs to boost the number of students selecting from the salad bar. Missouri TN is also led to conclude that this short term boost in salad bar sales consequently boosts an increase in fruit and vegetable consumption amongst youth.

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