

## Salad Bars in Missouri Schools

# Success Story

A Garden Bar for Every Student: Crane R-III School District

### Find Your Champion

Ken Llewellyn first became a believer in the power of salad bars, or as he calls them “garden bars,” when working in a school district in the state of California. “When a salad bar was introduced to the school, participation went from 18 percent to 44 percent. You can pay for the salad bar when kids eat from it,” Llewellyn said.

Llewellyn first wet his appetite for school food service while looking for a career change that would allow him to spend more time with family. Although not as exciting as some of his previous positions, such as his time as a professional pastry chef on the U.S. Olympic baking team, still as important.

Upon moving to Missouri from California, Llewellyn became the Director of Food Service for Crane R-III School District. Starting out, he faced similar school lunch challenges as those in California; there were few fresh foods offered and no salad bar. Llewellyn educated his new district on the benefits of offering a garden bar to students, but they remained skeptical.

Llewellyn stated “I had done this two times before and seen what happens. Missouri is a ‘show me’ state but the same thing happened.”

### Salad Bars = Profit

After the introduction of the garden bar, Crane’s student lunch participation soared to over 90 percent. Llewellyn spent approximately \$1,300 to purchase

each garden bar and the trays and utensils needed. He recouped all expenses with a surplus of \$19,000 last fiscal year. In addition, two school board members have attributed an increase in attendance to the school lunch program since Llewellyn took over.

“Don’t worry about the money, it will take care of itself when participation climbs,” Llewellyn said.

### Local Food

While providing a fiscal surplus to the district, the garden bar also brings income to local farmers. The garden bar is stocked with fruits and vegetables from farmers near or in Crane County. “We take pride in saying that we are spending our dollars on apples at Murphy’s Apples, which is one town over. You are keeping the dollars local,” noted Llewellyn.

Llewellyn estimates he buys about \$500 per week from local farmers. “We draw them in with fresh produce, every customer gets something off of the salad bar,” Llewellyn said.

**Crane R-III Stats**  
**Enrollment**  
727 students

**Free & Reduced Meal Eligibility**  
57.8%

**Average Daily Participation**  
92% at Lunch  
71% at Breakfast





### Decrease in Waste

One way profits increase is by decreasing food waste. Prior to the garden bar, children had a choice between five items served on a traditional hot food line. Llewellyn believes there is a lot of waste when kids are served an entrée instead of allowing them to select items from the garden bar, especially when it has a vast array of colorful, fresh items.

Every student, grades kindergarten through twelve, can eat from the garden bar. Monitors are stationed at the bar during meal service to assist children with taking an amount they can eat. Llewellyn also uses educational posters to remind students to take only items they are willing to eat.

Training staff on maintaining the salad bar was another key to decreasing waste. Training consisted of learning proper proportions when cutting fruits and vegetables and how to store fresh produce.

### Benefits More Than Students

Similar to the trend in student participation, faculty and staff meals climbed after the infusion of fresh food. Adults eating from the garden bars provides additional assurance for student consumption of fruits and vegetables especially the most popular items including peaches, apples, nectarines, lettuce, tomatoes, and broccoli.

For more information about adding a salad bar to your nutrition program, visit [www.saladbars2schools.org](http://www.saladbars2schools.org)



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### Keeping it **LOCAL**

Offering a garden bar is a great opportunity to bring more local food into your lunchroom.

Concerns about consistency or supply of locally grown produce are lessened when using a salad bar. By switching out one locally grown product with another, food service staff are able to easily handle what's in season and available.

#### Tips for using local produce in your salad bar program:

- Know your farmer. Develop a relationship with a local farmer.
- Take it slow. start with using one or two local items and build from there.
- Know what's in season and let this guide your planning.
- Use the salad bar to test new items before offering them on the main menu.
- When you do use local foods, promote it!

If you would like to learn more about Missouri Farm to School: contact Lorin Fahrmeier at:

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