

Opinion: Importance of leading a child to healthy eating

By Sadie Barr

Something curious happens when we reduce fat, sugar and salt from school food and replace it with less processed options – kids won't eat it.

Their over-salted, hyper-sweetened and fat-laden palates have been primed by years of beige and orange food in the lunchroom to shun anything that tastes like real food. They are rebelling against the absence of chicken fingers, French fries and tater tots. Unfortunately, some schools listen.

As someone who works in school lunchrooms in Washington, D.C., where the school-food requirements are much stricter than the national standards thanks to the Healthy Schools Act, I see this every day. Just last week, I was at an elementary school when butternut squash was served. Hardly a child would touch it. When I asked students why they weren't eating it, they claimed that they didn't like it. When prodded, most would admit that they had never tried it. Once I explained to them what it was, how the beta carotene can help them see in the dark (white lies never hurt), and bribed them with stickers, they tasted it, and many exclaimed: "It's good!"

It is hoped that they'll eat it the next time with minimal prodding.

Sadie Barr manages school meal programs for 15 public and charter schools in the Washington, D.C., area.

Read the whole story

