

SCHOOL MEALS!

Vantaan Tilapalvelut Vantti Oy



Celebrating 70 years of school meals

While children elsewhere in the world either bring their own lunch or pay for the school meals, Finland has a long-standing tradition of over 70 years of free warm meals in schools. We should be proud of this achievement, and we should encourage children to continue to eat healthy and nutritious school food.

The goal of providing meals at school is to promote well-being and to provide the energy to continue studying. Additionally, school lunches teach children to make healthy choices, while also fostering good manners, social skills and food culture.

The children's eating choices are guided not only by their preferences, but also by the examples they get from their environment. A regular meal rhythm sets a pace for the day and helps you to keep going. When the family at home respects a proper breakfast and encourages the child towards eating well at school, it supports the child's education, as well as their healthy growth and development. So, it's important to have a positive outlook on school meals at home. The school meals are also a part of the school's educational activity, so it is also important for the children to have the examples and advice from the teachers monitoring the lunch.

A recommended school meal covers about one third of a pupil's daily energy needs. The energy needs for a child of elementary school age are about 1650–2100 kcal/d, and the elementary school lunches provided by Vantti have an average energy content of 600 kcal/meal. The pupils get to choose between two options for their school lunch, where one of the options is always a vegetarian option. Additionally, all schools have a weekly vegetarian food day.

Puberty is a critical time for health choices. When children graduate to the upper classes, their participation with the school meals decreases. It is precisely at this time that it would be important to encourage the youths to have school meals instead of unhealthy snacks and energy drinks.

Wishing you a great school year,

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School meals 70 years: from macaroni gruel to bolognese

Finland was the first country in the world to pass a law guaranteeing free school meals for all elementary school pupils by autumn 1948.

What did our grandparents eat at school back then? What will a school meal look like in the 2080s?

In the early 1900s, education was made difficult by the lack of both clothes and nutrition. After the Compulsory Education Act of 1921, the municipalities were responsible for providing both of these, but in practice, the municipalities could not afford to properly clothe and feed their children. In the 1930s and 1940s, the pupils had to actively assist the school's cooking staff. In the autumn, everyone brought two liters of lingonberries to school for the whipped porridge, and everyone got together to help with the potato harvest. Cultivating plants and gathering berries and mushrooms for the school kitchen was an obligation mandated by law. This was the only way to have enough to feed everyone.

In the 1950s, the school lunch menus didn't have a lot of variation. They consisted of porridge, macaroni gruel, pea soup and milk. Everyone brought their own bread from home. Plastic plates and individually packaged products came to the school kitchens in the 1960s. The kitchens started using individually packaged servings of butter, and juice came in cardboard tetra packs with straws, instead of glasses. By modern standards, this resulted in a terrifying amount of waste material as everyone rushed to use these new inventions.

When school cafeterias started to be more commonplace in the 1970s, schools were in a better position to provide more variety in their foods than before. In addition to new flavors, the daily meals saw new additions, like salad, bread with a spread, milk and sour milk. The schools could also serve those who followed special diets.

In the 1980s, the first serving lines saw use, but the food was still portioned by the kitchen staff. The first feedback survey

regarding school food was conducted in 1984.

In the 1990s, vegetarian food was usually only available if the pupil had written permission for it, and they had to get the food separately from the kitchen. The vegetarian meal often meant a portion of the regular food but without the meat, as meat substitutes were not as readily available as today.

All told, a daily, free-of-charge, warm meal for every pupil is a pretty big deal. The road to this point has been long, winding and even bumpy, but worth every effort. We will be celebrating 70 years of school meals in October, on week 41. So make sure to give an extra thank-you to your school's kitchen staff after you finish enjoying your meal!

Nutrition needs for a schoolchild

A schoolchild needs a varied diet, proper meals and well-planned snacks for their growth and development, instead of constant snacking and soft drinks. In addition to lunch, it would be good to have a daily rhythm that includes a breakfast, afternoon snack, dinner and evening snack.

A good breakfast and afternoon snack are built on vegetables, fruit and berries, as well as high-fiber, low-salt and low-sugar whole-grain porridges, cereals, breads, pastries and low-fat dairy products like yoghurts. Nuts, seeds and vegetable fat spreads are a source of necessary unsaturated fats. Soft drinks, juice, sweets and/or other products containing a lot of added sugar, salt or saturated fats are not recommended as snacks.

Adults are responsible for making sure that the food options available at home promote the health of the children and adolescents. Children also learn from the examples at

home, so the moments when the whole family is eating together are very valuable, e.g. for dinner. Having the meal together teaches the children about things like food culture and apportioning their meals, as well as offering a natural time to talk about the day.

Information package on school meals by the Finnish National Agency for Education (in Finnish): https://www.oph.fi/koulutus_ ja_tutkinnot/perusopetus/hyvinvointi_ ja_turvallisuus/ kouluruokailu

School menus

The schools use rotating menus that are made for six weeks at a time. This means that well-liked foods like meatballs and fish sticks come up on average every six weeks. Dishes that have been popular in the pupils' surveys on favorite dishes can be served several times a week. The school meals follow the City of Vantaa guidelines, e.g. with the way we choose ingredients. Foods with fish are served with at least once a week. Chicken, minced meat and vegetarian foods are served once a week. Foods with sausages are served at most twice a week.

Our customers' requests and suggestions are very important to us for developing our menus, and our selection of foods is regularly updated based on the feedback. Additionally, we regularly consider holidays and seasonal foods for our meals. School meals are designed to provide complete and balanced nutrition, and to follow the quality criteria of the school meal recommendations as much as possible.

Fresh vegetables or fruit are included in every lunch. The cereal grain products used are primarily high-fiber wholegrain products, and the dairy products used are low-fat or fat-free.

We use iodized salt in cooking, in accordance with the recommendations.

You can read more about the recommendations at the address <https://www.evira.fi/en/foodstuff/healthy-diet>

The Vantti cafeteria menus are available online at www.vantti.fi

Meal times

Every school has their own meal times and turns. It is extremely important that the pupils dine at their appointed time. If a pupil comes in at the wrong time, meaning that more pupils are eating than have been planned, the serving lines will quickly empty out and the pupils will have to wait for their food for no reason. Dining at the wrong time causes lines, which means that the lunch break might not be enough to finish the lunch.

Contents of a lunch

School meals are primarily normal, traditional dishes, similar to homemade foods. Along with familiar dishes, we also offer new types of foods and tastes from around the world. The vegetarian option is available every day, and you don't need to be a vegetarian to choose it.

A balanced school lunch includes:

- warm main dish
- salad and salad dressing
- wholegrain crispbread or soft bread and spread
- milk or sour milk

With soups or porridges, we serve soft bread, sliced meats, vegetables and fruit. A porridge meal also includes a berry soup



School meal video for new first graders

School meals are a new thing for a new first grader. What happens at a school meal? What should you do there? In the following video, Aava from the Länsimäki School shows an example to the future first graders. See the video by clicking on the QR code or by following the link: https://youtu.be/_KmWxafRb-s

we make ourselves. The breads we offer are primarily low-salt and high-fiber. School meals are made from primarily lactose-free ingredients. Lactose-free milk is also available if necessary. This requires you to fill out a special diet notification form.

The food is self-served on serving lines. You can take seconds, so long as you also take some of the side dish with your main dish. Try not to take more food than you can eat. We are always trying to reduce the amount of biowaste produced in our kitchens and cafeterias.

Breakfast and afternoon snacks

A breakfast provides a good start to the school day, and an afternoon snack helps pupils to keep working through the last lessons of the afternoon, as well as in any after-school hobbies. Some of the schools in Vantaa sell breakfast porridge before the start of the school day, and an afternoon snack on the 14:00 break. The principal makes the decisions regarding their school's breakfast and afternoon snack sales.

Breakfasts and snacks are paid with a city card. To get a city card for a schoolchild, you must fill out a city card application form, which can be printed out on the [vantaa.fi](http://www.vantaa.fi) website at http://www.vantaa.fi/administration_and_economy/vantaa_information/vantaa_info/services/city_card. You can receive your city card and load value for it at the Vantaa Citizen Services centers. The application form must be signed by a guardian and the schoolchild's identity must be verified when first receiving the city card. A Kela card is sufficient when verifying the identity of a minor. A deposit of 7 euro is charged for a schoolchild's city card. You can top up the card with a desired sum of value.

Breakfasts cost 0.5–1.5 euro, and afternoon snacks 0.5–2 euro, depending on the products. Depending on the wishes of the school, these might be e.g. porridge, fruit, yoghurt or sandwiches.

Special diets

Our kitchens prepare special diet options for our customers in accordance with the City of Vantaa special diet guidelines. Special diets can be prepared for schoolchildren and students studying in schools and educational establishments based on health reasons, primarily based on a medical statement.

A medical statement is not required for low-lactose or lactose-free diets, nor with vegetarian diets. Notifications regarding diets based on religions or beliefs are to be given at the beginning of the autumn semester through a pupil information form.

For a pupil or student studying in a school or educational establishment in Vantaa, the medical statement for their special diet should be requested from the doctor/organization that has been their point of care/examination. If the pupil or student is not in care with any medical operator regarding their special diet, the family should be in contact with their local health center to receive a statement. The school doctor can write a statement at the pupil or student's normal health examination. A medical statement is required so that the authenticity of the special diet can be ensured, and so that the diet of the child/student is not restricted without reason. A medical statement may normally not be more than 6 months old at the start of the school year of the school or educational establishment, unless the doctor has defined a longer term in the statement. The medical statement is to be delivered to the school nurse to be checked, after which it will be returned to the family.

The special diet will be arranged such that the pupil or student will not be served any unsuitable foodstuffs, but they might not be served everything that is suitable for them. Special diet needs are checked annually (except for diabetes, coeliac disease and lactose-free/low-lactose diets).

The application and instructions are available at the address <http://www.vantti.fi/ateria/erityisruokavalio> or from one of our locations, such as a school or daycare.

Vegetarian food day

Schools in Vantaa have a vegetarian food day once a week. Implementing the vegetarian food day was originally a decision by the city council, and it was primarily motivated by environmental reasons. Vegetarian options are also encouraged in the nutrition recommendations, as increasing the use of vegetables has many positive health effects. The vegetarian food day promotes the varied use of vegetables and familiarizes pupils with different sorts of vegetarian dishes. Vegetarian food days are planned in such a way that the meal is balanced for all nutrients, not just protein. Protein sources in vegetarian food

are e.g. beans, chickpeas, lentils, different dairy products, egg and quorn.

In autumn 2018, Vantti will launch a vegan food trial program in two schools. These schools will offer vegan food options for those who follow a vegan diet at home, as well. After the trial, a decision will be made about possibly expanding the program.

Themes

The schools organize theme days throughout the year. The menus also consider different seasons and holidays. Theme days may sometimes also include desserts. The following theme days will be organized by Vantti in autumn 2018:

16 Aug: Start of school celebration
26 Sept: World School Milk Day
8 Oct–12 Oct: Celebrating 70 Years of School Food
2 Nov: Halloween in schools
5 Dec: Independence Day
19 Dec: Christmas lunch
20 Dec: Christmas porridge

Food groups

Several schools in Vantaa have an active food group. Through these groups, the pupils can voice their opinions about school meals. You can get more information about the food group for your school by asking the kitchen staff.

Feedback

We consider the feedback we receive from customers in developing school meals. In practical matters, such as questions related to the day's meals, we ask that you contact the school's kitchen directly. You can also leave feedback in writing through a Vantti feedback form at the address www.vantti.fi > [Palaute](#)

What is Vantti?

Vantti is a company owned by the City of Vantaa, producing catering, cleaning, property, reception and security services to the City of Vantaa. Vantti employs approximately 970 people, with an annual turnover of approximately 47 million euro in 2017. Vantti operates with inhouse principles, as an independent company and providing services to the Vantaa City Group. Read more at www.vantti.fi