

I love what I do. I have been involved in Hot Lunches at Vis since 1984, when my oldest son was in school. Back then, once a semester, we brought in McDonalds cheeseburgers and served them with a bag of Guys chips and an orange drink. That had been the practice when I was a student at Visitation in the 70s. The Visitation lunch program has been evolving ever since. When I first took over the lunch program, it grew 10% annually for 8 years in a row. That is one of the reasons I have never raised prices. Currently 90 % of the families participate and an average of 50% of the students get hot lunch every day. The Program has never been more popular. The students who are most impressed are the ones who have transferred in from other schools. It is common to hear from these parents or children on how lucky we are at Visitation in regards to our school lunches.

The Visitation Hot Lunch program is popular because the children love the kid-friendly food; the parents love the price, and the school loves the fact that the serving of hot lunch never disrupts the school day. None of this is by chance. My past restaurant owner experience, culinary education, and everyday presence in the lunch room keeps me qualified to provide the best lunches and service available. Keep in mind, we do not have a cafeteria kitchen nor do we have a cafeteria staff. All food needs to be delivered to the school before the first lunch and to retain its quality while in warmers up to two hours before it is served to the last group of children.

Here are a few facts about the food that you may not realize. Nothing I serve is fried. All is baked to cut back on unnecessary fat calories. The chicken nuggets, strips and patties are the highest quality available and made from all white meat and all are CNC, Children Nutrition Certified. I use only fresh ground beef that I brown, drain, rinse and drain again before being seasoned and served on Taco Salad. I also make my own taco sauce from scratch. The Chicken Noodle Soup (Stroud's Recipe), Bow Tie Pasta (Shawn Keller's recipe), Macaroni and Cheese (mom's recipe) and baked potato (Real bacon and cheddar cheese) are made fresh from scratch. The pizzas are made fresh and baked fresh using only 100% real, part skim, low moisture, Mozzarella cheese. My spaghetti sauce has a large amount of finely minced carrots, onions and celery simmered into the sauce. (Please do not tell your children about that one!) The hot dogs are lower fat and higher protein than "Ball Park Franks." I use my electric slicer to slice the turkey for the subs which allows me to use a better quality meat and a larger portion than you would get at any of the sub shops. The corn dogs are made from turkey instead of pork or assorted meats. I take a lot of pride in the quality of our lunches. I do this on a tight budget and even tighter time line.

Additionally, this year I have fed over 1000 lunches to children that have shown up at school without a lunch. More than half have not remembered to pay. It is hard to expend too many resources chasing down \$2 at a time. I have never refused lunch to a child. I do love what I do. Some days are rough, all are challenging, but overall it is rewarding. I love being friendly with the children as they come through the lunch line. I love even more that my job includes never having to discipline them. My objective has always been to let the Principal and staff focus on the education of the children. I will continue to focus on feeding them a good, healthy lunch that will not disrupt the school day.