



Guide to creating ultra-efficient nursery mealtimes



WILTSHIRE
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FOODS

Nursery Meals



Efficient use of
ingredients

Making
free-from diets
efficient

Why read our Guide?

The word 'efficiency' is used every day in business and certainly in schools! But what does that actually mean?

The Oxford Dictionary cites efficiency as the quality of doing something well with no waste of time or money. And for years, we've heard talk of the Government 'driving efficiencies' into public sector funding – which in effect, means taking out labour and cost.

There's a difference in driving efficiencies when looking to cut costs as opposed to 'being operationally efficient'. And it's crucial for schools in the creation of an optimal environment for learning and wellbeing of little ones. It not only enhances the overall experience for children but allows schools to allocate resources more effectively towards other endeavours.

Rupert Weber
Head of Education



In our Guide to Creating ultra-efficient school Catering, we will explore the need for nurseries to 'look behind the obvious' and consider different elements that can also lead to cost savings as a beneficial consequence.

There are lots of ways which may not be immediately obvious, for nurseries to make their mealtimes more efficient.

In our Guide, we explore the elements that we hope will make you 'pause for thought' and give you new ideas to consider.



Making time more efficient

50%

less labour
hours required
with cooking and
serving prepared
meals

When it comes to mealtimes, there is a noticeable difference in the labour hours required between cooking and serving a prepared meal and engaging in scratch cooking in the kitchen.

Typically, there are at least 50% less labour hours required with cooking and serving prepared meals and, it's a lower skill level (than a chef or cook), which in turn means a significantly lower hourly rate.


The discrepancy arises due to the various steps involved in scratch cooking including ingredient buying, preparation, cooking, and cleaning, which demand considerably more time and effort. Prepared meals on the other hand, are ready to serve and require minimal preparation. They can be cooked easily from frozen and served with minimal labour needs.

With some easy training, your team can all be trained to cook and serve the meals meaning staff absences can be easily covered.

The reduction in labour hours allows nurseries to contribute to the financial sustainability of meal programmes without a reduction in quality, allowing them to allocate their resources more efficiently to other nursery needs.



Find out more: www.apetito.co.uk/our-service/nursery-meal-services



Efficient use of ingredients – waste equals cost and inefficiency

Explore the efficiencies that can be gained by using prepared meals, including consistency, easier portion control and elimination of waste from scratch cooking, whilst still having the ability to cater to varying children' numbers on a daily basis.

For many nurseries the challenge of reducing waste whilst providing nutritious meals to little ones is of increasing concern. Food waste not only impacts on the environment, but it incurs significant costs for nurseries.

One of the key advantages of utilising high quality, prepared meals is the assurance of consistency in taste, texture, and presentation. Nurseries can provide little ones with delicious and nutritious options every day.

Portion control is essential in ensuring that children receive adequate nutrition while minimising waste. Preparing meals from scratch can often result in overproduction (leading to more waste) or inadequate serving sizes. In contrast, prepared meals can give more accurate and efficient distribution. This not only reduces waste, but also enables nurseries to better manage their food budgets.

Cooking meals from scratch often results in surplus ingredients, such as unused vegetables, meats and spices which may end up unused or discarded. High quality prepared meals on the other hand, are designed to minimise waste by utilising precise quantities of ingredients.



This approach not only saves money but also contributes to a more sustainable environment.

Nurseries face the challenge of fluctuating daily numbers due to unpredictable absences, special events, or unforeseen circumstances. Prepared meals offer a flexible solution allowing them to adapt their menu offerings based on the number of children present on any given day. This adaptive approach ensures meals are cooked to meet daily demand, whilst reducing waste and optimising resources.

Finding hidden efficiencies

There's a lot for nurseries to consider when it comes to providing mealtimes for their little ones, and whilst scratch cooking may feel like a great idea – there are some significant 'hidden' efficiencies (aside of the obvious advantages around choice, consistency, and availability) in offering a great quality prepared meal solution.

For example, in addition to talking about making efficiencies in labour and waste, let's talk about storage and space. It takes a not-inconsiderable amount of space to run a kitchen and store all the ingredients in a safe and organised way to avoid cross contamination and prepare food in a way that is safe for children who may need special diets without contamination. And of course, as nurseries expand to meet increasing demand, space is at a premium. It has a significant value to the top line.

That's just the start. Depending on when you last refurbished your kitchen and how often it needs upgrading, it can cost many thousands of £pounds to refurbish a kitchen and install kitchen equipment. It costs money to run good equipment and there is the constant maintenance that goes alongside that and then there's time in organising and potential down time to cover when it goes wrong.

We are all aware of the cost of energy these days, which have seen bills triple – or more – into a serious cost. Whether you use gas, oil or electricity, these costs are relentless and sometimes hard to pass on. There's even a growing cost to water with talk of increasing costs being passed on to enable the water companies to address the growing issue of discharge of waste into our rivers and coastlines.

Prepared meals can make a real difference to these hidden costs through being highly efficient. You know the cost of your meal with no extras, you use minimal electricity as ovens work on prepared programmes, there is far less washing up (energy and water savings) and storage is far simpler and more straightforward meaning that you can return space to front line services.

There is also the reduction in labour requirement, which of course can help to increase cost and can make a significant difference to a nursery's bottom line.

Prepared meals Can make a real difference to these hidden costs through being highly efficient.

Let us help you make your
mealtimes more efficient

...with great tasting,
nutritious meals

that ensure you save costs,
space, and time, with no change
in quality of your meals



Find out more: www.apetito.co.uk/our-service/nursery-meal-services

Making free-from diets efficient

Emily Stuart

apetito dietitian



Emily Stuart –
apetito's in-house dietitian
– looks at the importance of
managing allergens efficiently.

It's of growing concern that 6–8% of young children are estimated to have a food allergy (that is often life threatening), and figures from 2012 suggest that at least 1 in 40 children in the UK are suffering from at least one serious allergy*.

Natasha's Law

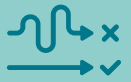


There will be very few people who haven't heard of Natasha's Law. The Law is designed to give us all confidence in the food we are buying and eating.

Nurseries will be aware that since 2014, it has been a legal requirement to provide allergen information on the foods they provide, so Natasha's Law has served to reinforce the importance of being vigilant at every turn.



Increased efficiency



A prepared meal service makes managing free-from diets highly efficient. Nurseries can cook individual meals in their kitchen that are already prepared, guaranteeing their status.

It's highly time consuming to cook for different free-from needs from scratch and it's vital to ensure the separation of foods which are at risk. Plus, additional factors need to be considered such as the opportunity for unintended cross-contamination of foods and how individual dietary requirements are met within a larger pool of children.

In the case of our own meals, we batch-test these in our on-site laboratory to ensure no allergens are present and we provide menu options that enable nurseries to be confident that special needs can be easily met and are safe for children. This takes away the need for specialist preparation areas in nursery kitchens, increasing efficiency giving peace of mind.

Our advice to nurseries is to be ever vigilant around the construction on their menus to ensure the dietary needs of each child are met in the safest possible way. Prepared meals are a great option to achieve this in an efficient way.

Interested in
finding out more about
**protecting your
little ones from
food risks**
and how you can make this
process more efficient?

Read our *Guide to managing food risk
to protect little ones & reputation*



Find out more: www.apetito.co.uk/our-service/nursery-meal-services



The cost of waste

Waste in nursery kitchens represents a significant financial burden. When food is thrown away, nurseries effectively discard valuable resources and waste money.

It's estimated that the average industry percentage of food waste that a nursery will experience is around 33%. This reduces dramatically by using prepared meals to an average of 5%. Hence, it's also more sustainable and every 1% saved is a saving that can go straight to the top line.

By implementing a high-quality prepared meals system, nurseries can mitigate this issue, improve their environmental footprint, and allocate their budgets more efficiently. By taking a more sustainable and efficient approach to mealtimes, they can foster a more sustainable and efficient approach that benefits the nursery and the wider community.

33%

**Estimated average
industry food waste
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**This reduces
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prepared meals
to an average of**

5%

How apetito Can help you become more efficient

Imagine the complexity in ordering, buying, and cooking products from scratch to produce a range of more than 200 meals. Using prepared meals makes the question of choice highly efficient.

We're proud of our extensive range of meals. With more than 200 main meals and desserts to choose from, our meals have been specially created by our inhouse chefs and dietitians to meet nutritional standards whilst providing great choice – giving something for everyone!

There are no wasted ingredients, no hidden costs that are driving up your mealtime costs – just delicious high-quality dishes that couldn't be easier and are highly efficient.

And we work with our teams to ensure you have the right tools to ensure little ones really can enjoy their food – we are partners in every sense to help you make your mealtimes enjoyable for both staff and children.

Check out:

→ **Nursery example menus**

→ **Ideas & more**

apetito.co.uk



Find out more: www.apetito.co.uk/our-service/nursery-meal-services



Did you know?

apetito is a three-time winner of the UK's highest business accolade, The Queen's Award for Enterprise, most recently in April 2019, awarded for Sustainable Development. The company is proud to be an accredited Living Wage employer, and to operate in an ethical and sustainable way that respects the environment, people, and the wider community.

apetito Ltd. Canal Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 8RJ
T. 07977 803009 www.apetito.co.uk

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