

## A Viable Solution for One Portion of the School Lunch Debate

Dear Editor / Reporter / Producer:

The School Nutrition Association is actively lobbying to revise the National School Lunch program in order to *not* require children to take food that they have no intention of eating. The heated debate between democrats, republicans, USDA and school nutrition professionals continues, while most of industry is on the sidelines waiting to see how it plays out. Some companies, however, have responded to the regulations with innovative new products that achieve the goals of the White House, while helping schools implement the regs more easily, and ultimately getting kids the nutrition they need. “We applaud the White House, Congress and USDA for updating the regulations and believe the goal should not be to serve kids *less* fruits and vegetables. Instead, schools should be allowed to use various ways to get kids to eat and enjoy them,” says Krista Ward, mom of three and CEO of Hooray Puree, which provides single ingredient pureed vegetables to families and schools.

School garbage cans may be the biggest consumers of fruits and vegetables instead of the kids at school. In a recent study conducted in Boston elementary and middle schools, researchers from Harvard found that students threw away 60-75% of their vegetables that they were served, and in Los Angeles schools, nearly \$100,000 worth of food gets thrown away on a daily basis, mainly in the form of fruits and vegetables. National school food waste is escalating to nearly \$4 million a day, which is a major contributor to driving up costs of the National School Lunch Program—nearing the \$12 billion dollar mark.

“Research shows that kids will eat more fruits and vegetables when exposed to them over time but we need solutions NOW to bridge the short gap between current consumption and leading health authorities’ recommendations,” says registered dietitian nutritionist and author of *The Best Things You Can Eat*, David Grotto. “Purees help develop their palates, while getting them the nutrition they need.”

“There are simple solutions to getting kids to enjoy nutrition by adding vegetable purees to their favorite foods such as macaroni and cheese, taco meat, pasta, pizza and even muffins and desserts,” says Chef Timothy Cipriano, dad of four and Hooray Puree’s new VP of Brand Development. “And, for those that don’t think purees pack a punch, a 2 oz serving of our spinach puree is equivalent to 4 cups of raw spinach!”

Penn State researcher Dr. Barbara Rolls found that adding vegetable purees into meals and snacks of children reduced their overall calorie intake while boosting their vegetable intake by over 50%! In addition, the consumption of foods with purees had no effect on whether the children ate vegetable side dishes. Currently, the USDA allows schools to use purees, but only if they are served with a visible vegetable. However, it is the “visibility” for many kids that is a deal breaker when it comes to consumption, so allowing them to get acclimated to new tastes over time, by using purees, also gets them the nutrients and sustenance necessary for a productive school day.

Ward, Cipriano and Grotto are available to discuss a real solution to getting kids to eat their vegetables at school by using purees readily available in the market place, while lowering labor and waste costs and reducing the seasonality issues associated with dependency on fresh produce.

Contact Brittney Hillebrand at 847-813-9355; ext 104 to book Ward, Cipriano & Grotto.



**Krista Ward, JD/MBA**, CEO of Hooray Puree, & mom of three, decided her true calling was in the health & wellness industry, after surviving a rare & aggressive cancer. During her recovery, she was introduced to healthier eating & pureeing vegetables, which was a cumbersome task for her after multiple surgeries. She knew there had to be an easier way to get veggie purees and other healthy, but convenient food, for people that faced medical difficulties, busy parents and K-12 schools serving kids.



**David Grotto, MS, RDN, LDN**, formerly the national spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, is the founder and president of Nutrition Housecall, LLC and the author of *The Best Things You Can Eat*. Grotto lives in the Chicagoland area and has three daughters.



**Chef Timothy Cipriano**, a former School Nutrition Director is a White House Champion of Change recipient and was named one of the Top 20 Most Influential People in non-commercial food service by FoodService Director Magazine. Cipriano lives in Connecticut and has four children.

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