

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fairfax County Public School Food Service Scraps 100% Beef Burger to Serve 26-Ingredient Burger

Real Food For Kids (RFFK) recently learned that Fairfax County Public Schools' Food and Nutrition Services has quietly removed a 100 percent beef burger from the school lunch menu -- a little more than a year after introducing this nutritious offering with considerable fanfare.

In the spring of 2012, Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) received accolades in the press for introducing the 100 percent beef burger as a replacement to an additive-laden burger with 27 ingredients.

Now, without any announcement or public explanation, FNS has replaced the 100 percent burger with a 26-ingredient burger from Don Lee Farms, from whom FNS had previously purchased the 27-ingredient burger (the new burger does not include calcium pantothenate).

"RFFK does not endorse this new product or other highly processed items being included in the lunch program," said RFFK President JoAnne Hammermaster.

In a response to RFFK's inquiry, FNS Director Penny McConnell wrote that the change was made "due to students' poor acceptance of the [100 percent] burger," and that "students are our customers and we listen to them and implement their requests if possible."

Hammermaster said that while "RFFK highly values input and feedback from students, we believe that decisions must be made in the best interest of students' health."

FNS said that it will be searching "the market and working with manufacturers and students to find ... acceptable 100 percent beef precooked patties."

RFFK proposes removing the 26-ingredient burger from the menu during the search.

RFFK actively supports the on-going efforts of FNS to improve the quality of school lunches. It has promoted the changes that FNS has made to the menu, particularly FNS' claim that it has removed 91% of the artificial additives, dyes, and preservatives from ingredients in its lunch program.

"We hope that this return to a highly processed hamburger is not representative of a reversal in strategy," said Hammermaster. "The significant buying power of FNS, the 11th largest school district in the country, should go far to strongly influence suppliers to remove a majority of the remaining additives from the foods served to our children in the school lunch program."

About *Real Food For Kids*

As the local face of the national school wellness movement, Real Food For Kids is committed to working collaboratively to increase the quantities of healthy foods in Fairfax County Public Schools and

supporting programs that educate students and their families to make healthier lifestyle choices. Real Food For Kids has successfully advocated for an independent assessment of the current food program, aiming to find innovative ways to bring more fresh, less processed foods to students. It also has spearheaded the move to a soda-free school pilot in eight middle and high school that launched in fall 2013 and a pilot kitchen at George C. Marshall High School that opened in September 2013. More information on Real Food For Kids is available at www.realfoodforkids.org.