

WELCOME BACK!



DEAR FAMILY,

The beginning of the school year is approaching, and we would like to extend a warm welcome to let you know that Whitsons Culinary Group has exciting plans for the school meal program. Our goal is to serve nutritious, well-balanced meals that appeal to students and the school community. We are pleased to provide a comprehensive school dining program at **LEARN and Goodwin University Magnet School System's (GUMSS) Family of Schools** that meets the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program requirements and engages students in developing a positive attitude on healthy eating.

At Whitsons we have gone back to a time when good food was simple. As part of our Simply Rooted® Food Philosophy we are focused on using ingredients that are locally sourced, all-natural, organic, or non-GMO, and minimally processed, whenever possible. We've gone back to our roots, and we would like the entire **LEARN and GUMSS** school community to join us on this journey.

Here is some information that will be helpful to begin the new school year:

FREE MEALS FOR CONNECTICUT STUDENTS

\$16 million of federal American Rescue Plan Act (2021) funds has been allocated for "Free Meals for Students" to the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) for school year (SY) 2023-24. These funds will be used to support households by allowing the provision of:

- All students will be eligible for breakfast at no charge.
- All eligible reduced students will receive lunch at no charge. The only students paying for lunch this school year will be the "paid" students, who are those not eligible for free or reduced lunch. This does not apply to any CEP accounts, they remain the same, which is at no cost to any students.

For SY 2023-24, under the NSLP and SBP, free and reduced-price meal eligibility will be determined for each individual student. Meals will be reimbursed based on a student's approved eligibility (free, reduced-price, and paid). Please contact the **LEARN Magnet Office Food Service Department, 860-434-4800 option 8 or foodservice@learn.k12.ct.us** for additional program details.

SCHOOL MEAL MENUS

Our interactive menus may be found online at www.fdmealplanner.com. Interactive menus provide you with nutritional and allergen information you need to plan your child(ren)'s school meals.



INTRODUCING REAL MEALS™ BY WHITSONS

We're excited to introduce Real Meals™, our new brand for K-12. In keeping with our mission of Enhancing Life One Meal at a Time™, we are dedicated to nourishing the students within the communities we serve with fresh, delicious meals made from scratch using wholesome, local ingredients whenever possible. Our Real Meals let the wholesome ingredients that they are prepared from shine through. Real Meals by Whitsons are made from fresh ingredients the way nature intended and they fuel the minds of our customers. Look for Real Meals at your school this fall.

SIMPLY ROOTED® CAFES

Our interactive healthy eating program motivates and inspires students to consider the many benefits healthy eating and exercise have on their growing bodies and minds. With Simply Rooted®, we are embarking on a movement to help students develop positive self-esteem and healthy eating habits by making a connection between attitudes and living healthy. It's all about making the connection between food and healthy eating habits.

At elementary schools, our award-winning Nutrition Safari® program will introduce younger students to lovable animal characters to teach them about selecting healthy choices from each different food group for a well-balanced diet. The program's mission is to encourage students to develop lifelong healthy eating practices.

At secondary schools, monthly Flaves and special event Pop-up Shops will feature trendy menu items and activities to engage older students. Whitsons has also invested in professional signage and merchandising that creates a food court-style environment. It's like going out to lunch without ever leaving the building. Our goal is to entice students to make nutritious and delicious meal choices.

OTHER INFORMATION

We're excited about our partnership with LEARN and hope to provide a great program while becoming part of the [LEARN/GUMSS](#) community.

Your opinion matters to us. If you have any suggestions for the school nutrition program, please contact Whitsons' General Manager, [Jennifer Cusack](#), at 860-447-4049 x 7118, or cusackj@whitsons.com. We are here to serve you and your child(ren)'s needs and look forward to being a part of your community for many years to come.

Sincerely,
[Jennifer Cusack](#)
General Manager
Whitsons School Nutrition

