

# CAN THIS LUNCH BE SAVED?

By MICHELLE CROUCH



LETTUCE  
OLDER  
THAN YOU

CARROTS,  
MAYBE?

TRY THE  
PUDDING IF  
YOU DARE

MYSTERY  
MEAT ON A  
BUN

DESTINED  
FOR THE  
TRASH

**Mushy green beans. Questionable beef patties with fake grill lines. Overripe fruit that the lunch lady says you have to put on your tray. We take you behind the cafeteria counter to reveal why so many school lunches are unappetizing, why you should care, and what you can do about it.**

# SCHOOL LUNCH



## 2. THE FLAVOR SAVIOR

**She convinced her school to implement simple solutions to make lunch taste a lot better.**

Dismayed by the lack of options in her Fairfax, Virginia, school and the blandness of the food, **Kyra West, 18**, knew there had to be a better way to lunch. She asked to meet with her school's lunch director to suggest some small improvements.

The school implemented one of Kyra's ideas right away—a spice bar with seasonings like nacho cheese, chili lime, and ranch so students could add some flavor to their meals.

Kyra's other idea was a bar where students pick a base of a grain, lettuce, or a wrap, and then choose toppings. She got the idea after hearing about a similar concept at another high school.

The school ran a pilot of the program for two days, and it was a hit. Now school officials are considering making it permanent.

**Kyra's Tip:** Don't assume your school is the enemy. "What I learned is that schools really do want to make meals that kids love, but there are a lot of challenges," Kyra says. "So if you have an idea to make your lunch better, my advice would be: Just ask."

**"Don't just say the food is gross."**

—Chef Ann Cooper

**Chef Ann Cooper, aka "The Renegade Lunch Lady,"**

**who helps schools get the equipment and training to serve better food, offers advice for turning your school's yuck to yum:**



● **DO RESEARCH:** Conduct a survey so you have data about what students think about the food and what changes they want to see.

● **INVOLVE THE ADULTS:** Once you have facts and figures, ask for a meeting with your school's principal or lunch director.

● **KEEP IT POSITIVE:** "Don't just say the food is gross," Cooper says. "Give examples of other schools that serve better food. Suggest solutions."



table was set up last November, and by the end of the school year, more than 2,400 items had been rescued from the local landfill. Now, Cameron and his classmates are working to expand the concept to other schools.

**Cameron's Tip:** Learn from others who've done it before. Cameron connected with John Williamson, founder of K-12 Food Rescue ([www.foodrescue.net](http://www.foodrescue.net)), who shared advice on how to navigate state regulations and most efficiently share and distribute the food.