

'Smoothie Lift-Off' a Hit at Ethel Jacobsen Elementary, LBI Grade Schools

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By Juliet Kaszas-Hoch



(Photos by Juliet Kaszas-Hoch)

Healthy smoothies – made with fruit, yogurt and milk or, for those with food allergies, non-dairy products – have landed on the menu at the Ethel A. Jacobsen Elementary School in Surf City and the Long Beach Island Grade School in Ship Bottom. On Monday, March 27, all students were able to sample a smoothie, and starting the following day, the delicious drinks were among the options for school lunch.

The consensus among the schoolchildren? Overwhelmingly thumbs up.

In the E.J. cafeteria on Monday, most students were given a sample of a strawberry banana smoothie, with a “cinnamon bun” alternative, made with apple juice, apple sauce and vanilla soy yogurt, for those who have to avoid specific foods.

School nurse Bianca Aniski and Jill Robinson, from Sodexo, the district’s food service provider, said other flavors to come include blueberry banana; creamsicle, made with orange juice; and a “samurai smoothie” that is only blended fruit, with no dairy.

As Aniski also explained, the student health offices in both schools – which includes nurse Denise Lake at the LBI School in addition to Aniski at E.J. – were the recipients of an AtlantiCare Nutrition Innovation Grant that enabled the district to purchase industrial-grade blenders to make the smoothies.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service, meanwhile, has worked out how to offer smoothies in school meals so that students are still getting the recommended amounts of fruits, vegetables, grains, meat or meat alternatives and milk or milk alternatives in their lunches (and breakfasts, depending on the school).

During lunch, first-grader Anaya Mehta, 6, said her strawberry banana smoothie was “so, so, so, so, so good ... 100 million sos.” Greta Jones, also 6, concurred: “So delicious.” Across the table, classmate Charlie Johnson agreed the drink was “really yummy.”



Kindergartener Jacob Kaskela sips on a smoothie he ordered during lunch at the E.J. School on Tuesday. (Supplied photo)



Sullivan Harter, a kindergarten student at the E.J. School, gives his strawberry banana smoothie a thumbs up. (Supplied photo)



Monday was the 'Smoothie Lift-Off' at both the Ethel A. Jacobsen Elementary School in Surf City (pictured) and the Long Beach Island Grade School in Ship Bottom. (Photo by Juliet Kaszas-Hoch)



These second-graders are excited about the new smoothie option on the school menu. (Photo by Juliet Kaszas-Hoch)



Anaya Mehta, a first-grader at the E.J. School, is a big fan of the strawberry banana smoothies. (Photo by Juliet Kaszas-Hoch)



(Supplied Photo)

At a first-grade table nearby, Josh Hernandez had one of the cinnamon smoothies, which he really liked. "That was so good," he attested. Next to him at the table, Alice Haggart said of hers and friend Alaina Mehta's smoothies, "Ours were strawberry banana. I loved it." Mehta said she could taste the various ingredients, and even the strawberry seeds.

Across the room, a table of second-graders were nearly unanimous in their enjoyment of the smoothies. "Strawberry banana was delicious," remarked Gus Calmeyn.

Classmate Brody Rechenberg explained how he'd gotten a strawberry banana smoothie at McDonald's, and froze it in an ice pop mold to create a frozen treat. (Note to school staff in the case of any leftover smoothies!)

E.J. Principal Frank Birney made a short announcement at lunch on Monday, thanking everyone from the school and Sodexo, which helped with the smoothie rollout, and then left the students to their meals and their happy chatter.

And as Aniski reported later in the week, the smoothies have been a big hit in both schools, with Robinson at E.J. and fellow Sodexo employee Carol Borkowski at the LBI School "blending smoothies frenzied-ly to keep up with demand!"

— Juliet Kaszas-Hoch



Lena Sclarow looks on as Autumn Costello tries her smoothie sample during lunch at the E.J. School. (Photo by Juliet Kaszas-Hoch)



(Left to right) First-grader Alice Haggart sips a strawberry banana smoothie sample while classmate Josh Hernandez tries out the 'cinnamon bun' flavor. (Photo by Juliet Kaszas-Hoch)



(Clockwise from left) Brooke Kingi, Evangeline Kawash-Cintron and Ava Crugnale are all smiles during the 'Smoothie Lift-Off' at the LBI School. (Supplied photo)



(Clockwise from left) Parker Larsen, April Li, Addison Stabile, Kamryn Fluehr, Anna Kiernan, Caleb Rice, Tighe Jacobs and Austin Hoffman enjoy their smoothie samples. (Supplied photo)



One of the district's new blenders is put to the test. (Supplied photo)