

Dietary Guidelines

Some religions have rules about what foods people can eat and what foods they can't eat. Some people also choose specific diets—such as being vegetarian—for reasons that are not based on their religion or faith. Read the information below to find out about some dietary restrictions you might see at your school. You will use what you learn to research how different students might be affected by what is and is not available in your school's cafeteria.

ISLAM

According to Islamic law, some foods are permitted and others are not. The permitted foods are called *halal*. *Halal* is Arabic, and it means “permitted.” For Muslims, most foods are *halal*. Some foods, however, are called *haram*, which is another Arabic word. *Haram* means prohibited. It identifies foods that Muslims are not supposed to eat.

When it comes to school lunches, *haram* foods include: products made from pigs, products that were made from animals that were not slaughtered according to Muslim laws, carnivorous animals, and blood and blood byproducts.

JUDAISM

Jewish dietary law establishes foods that are fit or allowed to be eaten. Those that adhere to dietary or ceremonial law are called *kosher*. *Kosher* is Hebrew, and it means “proper” or “pure.”

When it comes to school lunches, kosher food excludes: shellfish, products made from pigs, products that were made from animals that were not slaughtered according to Jewish laws, and blood and blood byproducts. Kashrut, or the rules about keeping kosher, also prohibit eating meat and dairy products together.

HINDUISM

Many Hindus are vegetarian, meaning that they eat only foods that come from plants rather than animals. Hinduism does not specifically prohibit eating animal products, but it identifies the benefits of not eating meat. So for many Hindus, vegetarianism is part of *sadhana*, or spiritual practice. There are many other reasons that people choose to be vegetarian. Some people find that vegetarian eating is healthier than eating meat products. Others believe that it is morally wrong to eat animals. Still others choose to eat vegetarian because doing so puts less stress on the natural environment.

When it comes to school lunches, vegetarians would eat only plant products, such as vegetables and fruit. They would not eat animal products, such as meat. Some vegetarians eat eggs and dairy products, like milk, but others do not.