



# *Simply Safe*

**DINING**

AS COMMUNITIES PLAN SAFE IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION FOR K-12 SCHOOLS, WHITSONS SCHOOL NUTRITION UNDERSTANDS JUST HOW CRITICAL IT IS FOR SCHOOLS TO OPEN AS SAFELY AND AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AND REMAIN OPEN, TO ACHIEVE THE BENEFITS OF IN-PERSON LEARNING AND KEY SUPPORT SERVICES. THEREFORE, WE HAVE STRICT PROCEDURES IN PLACE TO HELP KEEP STUDENTS SAFE WHILE DINING AT SCHOOL.

# AS A SCHOOL NUTRITION PROVIDER TO OVER 650 SCHOOLS ACROSS THE NORTHEAST, WHITSONS' PRIORITY IS TO ENSURE THE SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF STUDENTS, FACULTY & STAFF!

While the [CDC recently stated](#) that, "there is no evidence to suggest that handling food or consuming food is associated with COVID-19," we remain committed to protecting our customers and team members through stringent, ServSafe COVID-19 approved safety protocols and practices. Whitsons will continue to formulate options and offer assistance through our operating plans. However, the CDC, health authorities, Governor's orders and each district's own directives are what will ultimately set the guidelines on how we manage each school nutrition program.

Whitsons is proactively managing the impact of COVID-19 by focusing on the safety and health of our team members, customers and the communities that we serve. As science and data on COVID-19 continue to evolve, our guidance and recommendations also will be updated to reflect new evidence.



## BEST PRACTICES: REDUCING THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

In response to the pandemic, we have established the following measures to help reduce the spread of the Coronavirus in the locations we serve:

- Requiring strict adherence to Whitsons' Illness Reporting Policy for team members.
- Providing up-to-date Coronavirus Facts from the CDC.
- Requiring team members to take heightened sanitation and personal hygiene measures, including promoting good respiratory and hand washing hygiene.
- Providing PPE, safety tools and CDC-approved cleaning agents.
- Ensuring that our team members continue strict adherence to food safety and sanitation protocols by reinforcing the sanitation standards set forth by the USDA, FDA, Department of Health and ServSafe.
- Requiring team members to telework, where possible.

## **OPERATIONAL TASK FORCE**

At the start of the pandemic, Whitsons appointed an Operational Task Force comprised of Whitsons executives and top school nutrition management professionals to help support modified service plans that districts require. This task force offers support in the areas of:

### **TRAINING**

As part of our CORE training, we provide a multi-tier training program, "Together Six Feet Apart," to instruct team members on proper sanitation, personal hygiene, protective personal equipment (i.e., face coverings and gloves), taking digital temperatures and identifying symptoms, social distancing, managing food safely, enforcing biosecurity procedures, understanding service modifications and other safety protocols required under pandemic adjusted operational guidelines. In addition, all of our managers are required to be ServSafe COVID-19 certified.

### **SOCIAL DISTANCING.**

We enforce social distancing protocols in service and seating areas, such as food shields and setting tables six feet apart.



### **RECOVERY MENUS AND MODIFIED SERVICE.**

Depending on the particular regulations and requirements, we may implement modified service options in lieu of a full service servery. We have also eliminated all self-serve stations in which students would handle any utensils or otherwise interact in favor of convenient, safe grab-and-go options. To assist your onsite team with developing a varied, nutritious, tasty and safe service, we have recovery menus available that accommodate a modified service without sacrificing quality or innovation.

### **PACKAGING.**

Protocols on safely preparing and packaging food for grab and go service are reinforced, such as specific fresh produce wrapping requirements, time stamping and sanitation.

## TECHNOLOGY.

We continue to encourage technology, such as cashless and/or pre-paid systems, to minimize personal contact.

## COMMUNICATIONS.

We empower our managers to keep an open and ongoing communication with our clients and customers and provide resources, such as online menus with nutritional and allergen information, newsletters and other website bulletins to keep everyone updated. As changes or new regulations develop, our team will make sure to keep the school administration apprised immediately.

## MARKETING.

We have developed a number of signage resources to help remind team members and students to follow safety procedures, such as wearing face coverings, social distancing (including floor stickers), how to clean and disinfect, follow CDC health mandates and more.



We are all working in an ever-changing environment as our country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic evolves. However, our practices represent some of the ways that school districts can rely on Whitsons to provide the enhanced safety that families will expect, even after vaccines are deployed. By providing a safe environment, school nutrition programs can once again focus on increasing meal participation and federal reimbursements, while working to rebuild from the challenges they have faced as a result of the pandemic.