



# Buffalo to School Meals Part A: Steps

This document summarizes the logistical steps when serving buffalo in school meals. The entire process from field to tray must comply with applicable federal, state, local, and/or Tribal inspection and food safety requirements. To understand these requirements, see *Buffalo to School Meals Part B: Inspection Requirements*.

## SOURCING

WHERE WILL THE BUFFALO COME FROM?

### DIRECT FROM PRODUCER

-OR-

### SOURCED THROUGH A...

- Privately owned herd
- Tribally owned herd
- Nonprofit or conservation herd

InterTribal Buffalo Council can help connect schools with Tribal herds: [itcbuffalonation.org](http://itcbuffalonation.org)

- Processing plant or meat locker
- Broadline distributor
- Grocery store meat counter or retail butcher shop
- Food hub

Ranchers can visit classrooms or cafeterias, share a video of their operations, or be pen pals with students.

## HARVEST

WHERE & HOW WILL THE BUFFALO BE HARVESTED?

- Traditional cultural field harvest
- Conventional field harvest

- Mobile slaughter unit
- At processing plant

Students can participate in or observe a harvest.

## PROCESSING

WHERE WILL THE BUFFALO BE PROCESSED?

- Field processing
- Mobile processing unit
- Processing plant or meat locker
- Grocery store meat counter or retail butcher shop
- Licensed, inspected kitchen (such as the school's own)

The harvest (slaughter) process includes skinning, gutting, halving (or quartering) the animal, and hanging the animal to be cooled.

## CUTS

HOW WILL THE ANIMAL BE PROCESSED?

Common cuts for schools include stew meat, roasts and of course, ground!

- Whole or quartered
- Ground
- Cut and wrapped

Schools can create agreements in advance that outline the sourcing, processing and payment details.

## STORAGE & DELIVERY

Schools may work with their State Department of Education or Bureau of Indian Education contacts for procurement guidance.

- Processing plant or meat locker
- School picks up and/or stores meat
- Storage facility and/or distributor

The meat can be fresh or frozen.

Visit [fns.usda.gov/cn/serving-traditional-indigenous-foods](https://fns.usda.gov/cn/serving-traditional-indigenous-foods) for resources about serving Traditional Indigenous foods in USDA reimbursable meals.

## DONATION OR PAYMENT

### DONATION

The cost of any step in the process may be donated to the school.

### PURCHASE

A school may pay for any step in the process using their school food service account and serve buffalo as part of a reimbursable meal. Schools may specify a geographic area where the buffalo must come from, as long as it doesn't unduly limit competition. A direct buy (micro-purchase), small purchase (comparing quotes) or formal procurement (competitive sealed bids or proposals) may be appropriate, depending on the transaction.

## ON THE MENU

### RECIPES

Substitute for beef, blend with other ingredients, or create a new menu item.

Try student taste tests, feedback sessions, cooking lessons, collaborations with FACS classes or community events.

### EQUIPMENT

A typical commercial kitchen is adequate for cooking buffalo; no special equipment is needed. A tilt skillet is a popular option. A meat thermometer is recommended.

### PREPARATION

Buffalo meat contains less fat than beef so may cook quicker than expected. Cooking "low and slow" can increase tenderness. Take lower fat content into account for menu planning.

### CREDITING

Buffalo meat credits towards the Meat/Meat Alternate requirement in USDA Child Nutrition Program reimbursable meals. Crediting info can be found in the USDA Food Buying Guide at: [foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov](https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov).

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