

Bulk Milk



Did you know that milk cartons make up at least 50% of a school's lunch trash volume? Furthermore, students waste 30% of all milk in cartons – about 4 gallons of milk waste each day per 200 students.¹ Bulk milk dispensers are an innovative, sustainable way to serve students the milk they need while decreasing waste and increasing consumption.

Why is bulk milk important?

Bulk milk dispensers hold milk at a consistent chilled temperature that naturally improves its taste and flavor. Instead of cartons, milk is served in reusable cups, so students can take whatever amount they want – decreasing the cartons and milk waste in trash cans.

Students enjoy the novelty and freedom of serving their own milk and mixing flavors. Studies show that bulk milk dispensers dramatically increase milk consumption compared to traditional cartons.¹



Increased Student Participation

According to one study, student milk consumption increased by 52%.²



Decreased Waste

Up to 91% decrease in milk packaging waste by volume.¹



Cost Savings

On average, bulk milk bags cost less than individual milk cartons.

“Since switching to bulk milk, we’ve noticed increases in consumption and decreases in waste. The kids love the taste and enjoy drinking from a cup instead of a carton. Our average milk waste was about ½ cup per child with cartons, and with bulk milk, that has decreased to less than ⅛ cup per child. We are also seeing a savings from purchasing bulk milk instead of cartons – \$285 per week at our pilot school. Additionally, there have been no issues with the reusable cups. Students return the cups to a kitchen window after discarding their trays, and staff washes the cups for their next use.”

– Rita Denton, Director of Student Nutrition
Mansfield ISD, Mansfield, Texas





Frequently Asked Questions

Q Where do I find milk in bulk?

A Before purchasing equipment, work with your local processor to ensure the availability of bulk milk sizes and flavors.

Q How are USDA requirements met for a reimbursable meal?

A By the time students have gone through the serving line, they generally already have a reimbursable meal. One variable to consider is whether your district has chosen the “offer versus serve” option for how you qualify for reimbursements. Audits in districts using dispensers have indicated no issues.

Q What type of cup is needed with the bulk milk dispenser, and where should they be located?

A We recommend reusable 9-ounce cups, one cup for each student participating at the meal period that serves the most (probably lunch). A case of 36 costs around \$30, but this can vary across the country. You can also use disposable and/or compostable cups. We recommend placing trays with the cups on a cart or on a serving line just before the milk dispensers, if space allows. Or save labor by leaving them in the dish rack rather than handling them and placing them in another container.

Q Will switching to bulk milk require additional staff labor?

A Some schools reported that additional labor may be necessary to clean the dispensing unit and reusable cups and to switch out the bags. Other schools reported that additional time to wash cups was minimal. Cups can be washed by hand or with a dishwasher, so consider your available staff and the space and cost needed for a dishwasher.

Q I’m worried about spillage. What’s the best way to educate students on serving their own milk?

A Schools have reported minimal spills after switching to milk dispensers. In fact, some reported fewer spills. Having a larger (more than 8 ounces) and wider (squat) cup helps students handle the trays better. Educating students on the new process prior to implementation will help. Bring each class and teacher to the cafeteria during non-service times and explain how the new milk dispensers work, how they get their cup, how much to pour to meet reimbursable requirements, and what to do if there is a spill. Put pictures on the milk dispensers to help them know each milk option.

More questions?

Reach out to your Dairy MAX [School Wellness Consultant](#).

References:

1. <https://www.hubert.com/content/bulk-milk-dispensers> 2. <https://www.food-management.com/k-12-schools/milk-machine-helps-curb-waste-elementary-school>