

Chicago School Bans Home Lunches: OK or Outrageous?

Adapted from an article by Lisa Milbrand for iVillage.com

American school lunches are under fire! Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution and the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act are both fighting to replace the pizza and tater tots with fresher, healthier options. But as cafeteria-provided lunches improve, one Chicago school has gone to the other extreme, banning brown bag lunches for everyone but kids with food allergies. Many people, including moms, are fighting back.

Many parents are upset that they will have to pay \$2.25 each day for lunch. "How can you require someone to spend that much money?" says Bradley Brown. "I couldn't afford \$5 a day on lunches for two kids. The purpose of school is to educate my kids, not make their nutritional choices for them. I don't need them eating junk or throwing away food I was forced to pay a lot for because they do not like it."

Others say it is taking away parents' rights. "Parents should have the right to send their own lunches, even if they are not healthy -- are they going to come into your house and see what you eat for dinner, too?" says another parent.

Some even worry that there won't be enough time for all kids to get through the lunch line. "The article doesn't say how big this school is, but [often] they only have about 20 to 25 minutes for a lunch period," says Arryl. "That is not enough time for all the kids to get their lunches, and also have time to sit down and eat it."

Many think that brown-bag lunches are healthier than anything served in cafeterias, even now that they are new and improved. Plus, there are other reasons the ban on home lunches isn't fair. "Aside from nutrition, people have religious, cultural & philosophical preferences about food," says another parent. "This seems like a violation of rights."

"The lunches they serve at my kids' schools are so awful -- chicken nuggets, gross pizza, mozzarella sticks," adds Ken Player. "My daughter is a total foodie and packs herself a gourmet lunch every day. If the school forced her to buy their garbage, she just wouldn't eat."

What do you think? Are brown bag lunches a parent's right?