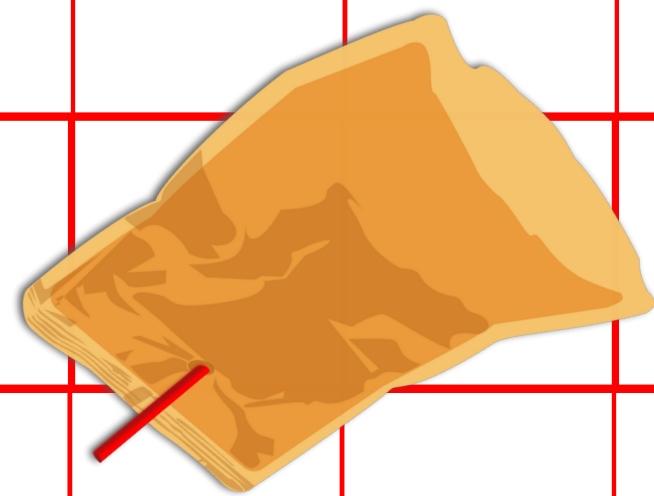


# LEFT OVER



EPIISODE 3

## "Somebody Other Than Us is Planning Our Menus Right Now"

\$40. That's how much one Milwaukee student says she spends each week on snacks instead of eating the food in her public school cafeteria. For decades, school nutrition leaders in Milwaukee resisted what many other programs around the country were doing: transitioning away from scratch-cooked meals to serve more processed, pre-packaged food. They ultimately switched to save money. Reporter Jessica Terrell digs into the proliferation of processed foods on school menus to better understand why the same foods show up across the country.



"Look at a menu from a public school district in the Midwest and in the Pacific Northwest. **You're gonna find the same pizza, the same quesadilla, the same sandwich.**"

-Josh Goddard

## DID YOU KNOW

School nutrition programs undergo audits that ensure they're serving meals that meet the National School Lunch Program's exact nutrient specifications. If they aren't, they risk losing access to federal funding,

# A Debate Over School Lunch in the 1970s: Len Fredrick vs. Thomas Farley

In August 1977, Len Fredrick and Thomas Farley, the heads of nutrition for the Las Vegas and Milwaukee school districts respectively, appeared on the MacNeil/Lehrer Report to discuss their opposing approaches to school lunch.

**"You can't take space age teenagers and feed them a horse-and-buggy lunch."**



Fredrick pioneered a "fast food lunch" in his district in Las Vegas. He described the challenges of going up against aggressive fast food marketing campaigns and picky student taste buds. His lunches included nutritionally fortified fries and burgers to give students the nutrients they needed while capitulating to their taste preferences. If you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

Farley went in the opposite direction, offering scratch-cooked and vegetable laden recipes approved by a panel of students. He argued that, if given the right food, students would have the taste fruits and vegetables beyond the stereotypical adolescent fast food diet. Milwaukee continued to offer scratch-cooked food until the mid-2000's, when the district switched to pre-packaged food made in a central kitchen to cut costs.

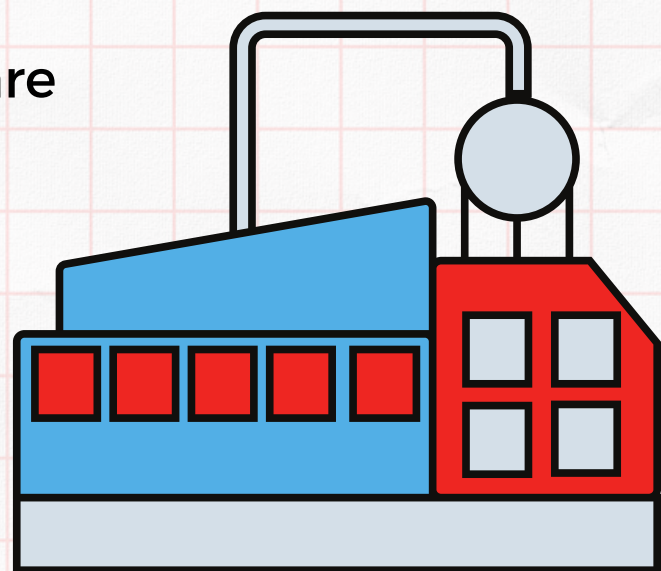
**"I want to give them something they can take to the rest of their life."**



# The Journey of a Processed Lunch Today



**STEP 1:** The USDA sets nutritional requirements for school lunch reimbursement. Schools are also provided with low-cost USDA commodity foods, which are purchased by the government to support farmers.



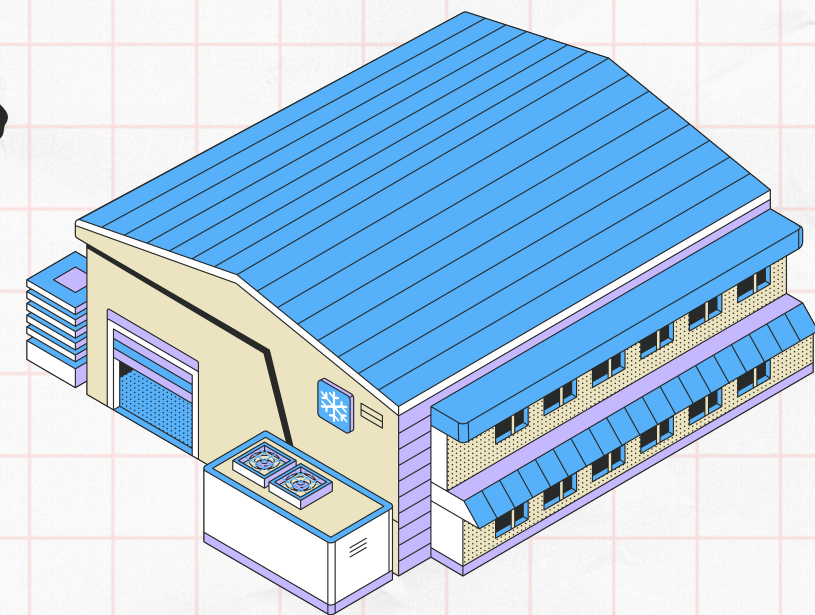
**STEP 2:** Manufacturers create pre-packaged food made to meet the NSLP's exact nutrition requirements using USDA bulk commodities



**STEP 3:** Food gets shipped to district warehouses and central kitchens, where they're prepared to be shipped to schools that might not have kitchen equipment to cook onsite



**STEP 4:** Schools reheat processed food in large ovens and serve to students



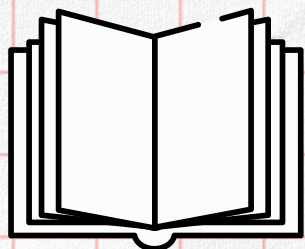
# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



**Watch**

**Watch the full MacNeil/Lehrer television program on school lunches from 1977 here, courtesy of the American Archive of Public Broadcasting**

**It Happens Every Noon, a 1966 Agriculture Department film promoting the NSLP.**



**Read**

**The FDA's Food Failure -- a longform investigation by Politico on the ways the FDA is struggling to effectively regulate the US food system**

**You Are What You Eat: Discrimination in the National School Lunch Program by Anna Karnaze of the Northwestern University Law Review**

# Team

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