

# Eating in the Library

After school, teens want something to eat. They also want a place to catch up with their friends and a place to study. Considering these requirements, does the library provide a welcoming atmosphere for teens? Although the “no talking” rule and the shushing librarian are now seen as relic stereotypes from the past, the “no food” rule has stayed fast. An article from the *Boston Globe* about after-class teen hangouts states that, “[f]or the cost of a cup of coffee, [cafes are] cosier than the library” (2). Teens have remarked that places like Starbucks are “a step up from the library...because there’s food” (2). Meanwhile, in addition to providing food and a place to freely socialize and study, cafés and bookstores also have longer hours and wireless Internet access. In addition, with less physical need to go to the library because of the information available on the Internet, libraries should seek ways to offer more advantages for the teen than the cafes and bookstores.

Kimberley Bolan, author of *Teen Spaces: The Step by Step Library Makeover*, noted that to attract teens, librarians should be more accommodating with

their food and drink policy (“Smells Like...”). Librarians are naturally concerned about the protection and upkeep of their books and furniture but should also try to adjust to their patrons’ needs. Some libraries have tried to balance these two opposing aims, allowing only covered drinks while others have allowed customers to eat and drink but only in restricted areas (i.e. meeting rooms or teen rooms when there is a program going on).

Recently, there have been librarians who have embraced the concept of food in the library, installing food carts, cafes and even vending machines inside the library. One library notes that “Kids check these books out and take them home and read them while they’re eating. [...] We decided food and books could coexist” (“Food for Thought”). As well as supplying additional revenue from sales or rent (if an external company sells the food), cafes can also serve as reading rooms and meeting spaces. Results have varied depending on the nature of the patrons and some structure and rules should be implemented, i.e., no strong-smelling food, lids on beverages,

discouraging disorderly behaviour that could cause spillages (although this would be discouraged regardless) (“Food in Libraries”). However, the loosening of the “no food in the library” rule would

certainly go a long way in providing a more welcoming atmosphere for teens to both study and curb their hunger pangs.

**Sources:**

*After class, teens plan on food and friends*

[www.boston.com/ae/food/articles/2007/03/07/after\\_class\\_teens\\_plan\\_on\\_food\\_and\\_friends](http://www.boston.com/ae/food/articles/2007/03/07/after_class_teens_plan_on_food_and_friends)

*Food for Thought*

[www.csmonitor.com/2002/0122/p12s01-lehl.html](http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0122/p12s01-lehl.html)

*Food in Libraries*

[lists.webjunction.org/wjlists/publib/1997-June/080123.html](http://lists.webjunction.org/wjlists/publib/1997-June/080123.html)

*Looks Like Teen Spirit*

[www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA6386669.html](http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA6386669.html)

## **Chicken Salad Wraps**

These quick and easy wraps are great for a summer picnic, and incorporate ingredients from the classic Waldorf salad. They are most easily made with leftover cooked chicken, or a rotisserie chicken from the local deli.

2 cups cooked chicken, chopped into small pieces  
1 cup celery, chopped  
1 cup red grapes, halved and seeded  
1/2 cup walnuts, chopped and roasted  
1/2 cup mayonnaise  
1/2 cup sour cream  
2 tbsp lime juice  
2 tsp dried dill (or 1 tbsp fresh)  
1 tsp paprika  
salt and pepper to taste

4-6 whole wheat tortilla wraps  
1-2 cups shredded iceberg lettuce

1. Mix the chicken, celery, grapes and walnuts together in a large bowl. Set aside.
2. In a small bowl, mix together the mayonnaise, sour cream, lime juice and seasonings.
3. Pour the dressing over the salad ingredients, tossing well to coat.
4. Sprinkle some lettuce in a line down the middle of a tortilla and top with the chicken salad.
5. Roll up the tortilla wrap, and you're done!