

## **North Dakota FAQs on Using Bulk Milk Dispensers**

### **What are the benefits of using a bulk milk dispenser?**

- Milk stays cold, and students report that the milk tastes better.
- Potential milk cost savings as bulk milk is usually priced less.
- Reduced milk waste
- Environmental benefits such as less trash from cartons.

### **What are the disadvantages of using a bulk milk dispenser?**

- Storage space for milk bags, cups, and other needed equipment.
- Space for the bulk milk dispenser near an electrical outlet.
- Labor for daily maintenance, student monitoring, and washing cups.
- Physical labor to change out milk bags when needed.
- The potential for students to spill an open container of milk.
- Students and staff will need training in the process of using bulk milk dispensers.
- Sourcing milk in bulk may be difficult.
- In all but the smallest schools, milk bibs will usually need to be changed during meal service.

### **How do we meet the USDA requirements for a reimbursable meal?**

- If the dispenser is filled with 1% or fat-free milk, flavored or unflavored, the milk can be used to meet the requirements of a reimbursable meal. Students must have a glass with 8 ounces of milk in it to have this count as one of the meal components. If the school is using the offer vs. serve service method, the student may not need the entire 8 ounces if the rest of the tray is a reimbursable meal.
- Schools may offer one variety of milk in the dispenser if a second variety (cartons or another dispenser such as a gallon jug) is also available to meet USDA variety requirements.
- As of July 1, 2025, flavored milk may have no more than 10 grams of added sugar per 8 ounces of milk. Please ensure that this dietary specification is added to the milk procurement bid for bulk as well as other milk being brought in.
- Whole or 2% milk is not permitted to be part of a reimbursable meal; therefore, if the school chooses to offer whole or 2% milk, it can be offered in any size glass after the student has passed the POS where a reimbursable meal was assessed.
- As a reminder, whole and 2% milk is also not permitted to be used as part of a reimbursable meal or sold as a 'Smart Snack.' Funding/purchase of whole or 2% milk must follow specific guidelines found in 7 CFR 210.14(f) for nonprogram food. See "North Dakota Whole Milk and 2% Milk Use in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs" for 'Funding and Cost Considerations'.

**How do we source milk in bags?** Work with your dairy to get milk in bags, also known as milk bibs.

- Schools should begin discussions with dairy suppliers early to explore bulk milk options and determine order quantities that justify supplier investment.
- Dairy supply companies may offer milk in 3-gallon bags (48 – 8 oz servings); 5 gallon bags (80 – 8 oz servings) or 6 gallon bags (96 – 8 oz servings) . A school in Washington State said that their supplier’s 5 -gallon bags were too heavy. The dairy was able to fill them with just 4 gallons to make them easier to load.
- The Lunch Box, a resource for all school nutrition professionals has developed a list of milk producers who have milk bibs (bulk milk bags) available. Find the list here: [Bulk Milk Bib Suppliers](#)
- Remember to add milk bibs to the dairy procurement solicitation.

### **What equipment is needed and how much does it cost?**

*(Example is based on pricing available March 2025)*

| <u>Central Restaurant, Exclusive brand</u> | <u>KaTom Restaurant, Silver King</u> |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 2 spigot: \$2,742.06                       | 2 spigot: \$3,700.08                 |
| 3 spigot: \$3,718.18                       | 3 spigot: \$4,720.57                 |

Estimate for a school with ~ 400 students

| Item needed   | Total cost | Investment/<br>Student (400) |
|---|------------|------------------------------|
| 3-spigot stainless steel milk dispenser   | \$3,718.18 | \$9.30                       |
| Industrial cart or table for dispenser<br>Hubert Stainless Steel Equipment stand  | \$291.74   | \$0.73                       |
| 400 Washable cups. At least 9 oz capacity<br>Carlisle 9z clear plastic tumbler, \$76 for 72 (6 cases)<br>(1 per student is recommended) | \$456      | \$1.14                       |
| Dishwashing trays 17 trays holding 25 cups (\$55 each)  | \$935      | \$2.34                       |
| 2 carts to move trays to and from kitchen   | \$268      | \$0.67                       |
| 3 additional milk dispensing crates   | \$171      | \$0.43                       |

|   |                |                |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| To simplify changing milk bags during lunch |                |                |
| <b>Total:</b>                               | <b>\$5,572</b> | <b>\$13.93</b> |

A bulk milk dispenser is a type of refrigerator, so it will need to be located near an electrical outlet. Usually, a standard 110-volt single-phase outlet will do.

Miscellaneous equipment that may be required are a thermometer, a lock for the cabinet, and a waste milk pail.

### **Some ideas to Prevent Milk spillage**

- Ask staff to help the youngest students at the milk dispenser.
- Make sure enough room is allowed for a tray to be set down in front of the dispenser.
- If a cart is used to set the dispenser on, ensure that it is securely positioned so as not to vibrate, move or roll.
- Some reusable glassware has the option of disposable lids that could be used for the youngest students or as an option for any student afraid of spilling.

### **How much extra time does cleaning glassware and the dispenser unit take?**

Reusable cups are the preferred serving method with a bulk milk dispenser station. However, it can be done with disposable cups. At least a 9-oz. squat cup and, preferably, a 10-oz. cup are recommended to ensure students serve themselves 8 oz. and still have room to prevent spills.

Most districts find that washing the extra reusable glassware fits into a dishwashing routine. Manual dishwashing of reusable glassware is not recommended.

Cleaning and sanitizing the bulk dispenser unit should be done at the end of each day's use.

### **What kind of training is involved?**

It's important to educate students and staff on making the switch to self-service bulk milk prior to implementation. With proper training, students have shown they can successfully pour their own milk. Phasing in by grade levels has proven to be helpful in elementary schools.

### **Students:**

- Bring each class to the cafeteria during non-service times and demonstrate how to use the dispenser
- Possibly include a short video to broadcast on the school's television network
- Make it clear where to return cups (possibly directly into dishwasher racks to save time for foodservice/custodial staff)

**Staff:**

- Train staff in the proper way to stock the bulk milk dispenser:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5y62WBfHJJk>
- Adopt the Bulk Milk Dispenser Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) template with updates specific to your school and train staff in its use.
- Train staff in the proper way to cleaning/sanitizing and maintain the bulk milk dispenser based on the manufacturer's guidance.
- Train staff in the proper way to secure the bulk milk dispenser at the end of meal service. <https://youtu.be/Nly4qYwzr8>

**Securing the Bulk Milk Dispenser During Non-School Hours**

Milk purchased with the Nonprofit school food service account must be secured after daily meal service. There are several options to secure the milk.

- Unloading the bulk milk dispenser after meal service is complete for the day and storing the bags in a locked cooler.
- Smaller bulk milk dispensers may be carted into a lockable cooler for storage
- Larger machines now have an innovative clip to allow the dispensing tubes to be pulled up inside the cabinet for when the machines are not in service.

**Further Resources:**

Hubert: Milk Dispensers: [Reduce Waste with Milk Dispensers - Experts in Innovative Food Merchandising Solutions | HUBERT.com](#)

Midwest Dairy: [Innovate with Dairy Resources | Midwest Dairy](#)

Chef Ann Foundation/The Lunch Box [Chef Ann Foundation | Bulk Milk](#)

Nourish to Flourish: [frequently-asked-questions-bulk-milk-dispensers4-29-19-final.pdf](#)

Equipment Options – not an exhaustive list, but will get specifications started

Go Foodservice: [Silver King SKMAJ2-ESUS4 Refrigerated Milk Dispenser](#)

KaTom Restaurant: [Silver King SKMAJ1-ESUS4 6 gal Refrigerated Milk Dispenser w/ \(1\) Valve - Stainless, 115v](#)

Cook's Direct: [Milk Dispensers | Cook's Direct](#)