School meals on wheels

LeBoeuf plans food truck for concessions, summer and school-year meals

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WATERFORD — Fort LeBoeuf sports fans may be able to grab a bison burger during breaks in the action next spring.

The Fort LeBoeuf School District is in the market for a food truck to serve up concessions at games.

School officials also plan to use the food truck to serve meals for students on field trips to the Erie Zoo and other attractions and for children who have no way to get to schools for free summer meals.

The food truck also might pull up periodically outside Fort LeBoeuf High School to offer students al fresco alternatives to the cafeteria.

"It's something that's been in the back of my mind the last few years. The more I see schools in the rest of the country using food trucks, the more opportunities I see for one here," said Justin Tech, food services supervisor and executive chef for the school district.

Sure enough, school food trucks are a thing.

Rapid City Area School District in South Dakota rolled out its Dream Big food truck to serve meals to children this summer.

In Colorado, a Boulder Valley School District food truck dubbed the Munchie Machine each day serves high school students bored with traditional cafeteria fare. Its menu includes chicken curry; meatball subs; grilled cheese sandwiches made with tomato, mozzarella and pesto; adobo-braised beef tacos, and flame-grilled burgers with caramelized onions, pesto and tomato.

See TRUCK, A3
The Minneapolis
School District's Street
Food food truck offers
students orange chicken,
chicken and jerk chicken
sandwiches served up
to local produce.
Food trucks also are
serving meals on col-
lege and university
campuses. The nau-
tilly-themed Behrend
Truck, the first food
truck in the Pennsyl-
ania State University
system, serves break-
fast; lunches including
hai flank steak and
mongram chicken;
and late-night options
at various locations on
the Penn State Behrend
Campus in Harborcreek
Township.

"It has to be good and
it has to be different," Kyle
Coverdale, managing
chef at Behrend, said
early this year. "That's
the draw."

Meals meet U.S.
Department of Agri-
culture school nutrition
standards. The ingredi-
ents are just rearranged
in entrees not generally
offered in cafeterias.
Bison burgers are ex-
pected to highlight the
LeBoeuf food truck
menu, said Tech, who's
starting to cook up
ideas for meals.
Tech graduated from
culinary school at Indiana
University of Pennsylvania
in 2001 and worked in
food services for the
Hyatt Regency chain
in Columbus, Ohio, at
a retirement home and
with a food company
before beginning work
at Fort LeBoeuf seven
years ago.

"It's still early as far
as menu development,
but I know I'd like to
feature things like
bison, ground buffalo
meat, to tie back to
The Herd and what we
are here," Tech said.

Fort LeBoeuf's mascot
is the Bison. The school
district food truck will
be named Taste of The
Herd and will be appro-
priately wrapped and
painted, Tech said.

"It should be pretty
cool," he said.
Tech plans to drive
the truck and oversee
food truck operations
and to train staff and
sports boosters to cook,
deliver and serve meals
on wheels.

"This will help me
get back to some of the
hands-on work and
away from paperwork
sometimes," he said.

The food truck's first
road trips will be for
concessions.

"This all started with
boosters inquiring about
building additional con-
cessions stands," Fort
LeBoeuf schools Super-
intendent Rick Emerick
said.

The district's only
concessions building is
at the high school foot-
ball field, some distance
from baseball, softball
and soccer fields. Build-
ing more concessions
stands would be cost-
prohibitive, Emerick
said.

"Anything in the
world of construction
generally is not a cheap
date," he said. "With a
food truck, we'll have a
mobile opportunity to
provide concessions for
fans."

Tech plans to buy
the food truck from money
that he's been able to set
aside in his food services
budget, mainly from
catering.

USDA will reimburse
gasoline and mainte-
nance costs for the truck
for the summer food
program, Tech said.
The program provides
free meals to children
and young adults 18 and
under who otherwise
might go without meals
when school is not in
session.

The district served
about 2,500 meals in
this summer's seven-
week program, Tech
said.

"Right now, stu-
dents have to come to
us for those meals," he
said. "Going forward,
we want to use the
same fixed locations
plus the food truck to
reach students without
transportation."

In addition to USDA
funding, district offici-
als expect revenues
from booster organiza-
tions that use the truck
and from students on
field trips who other-
wise would pack a lunch.

"Those are revenues
we can gain back," Tech
said.

Emerick has been on
board with the food
truck idea since he and
Tech first considered
concession alternatives
about a year ago.

"We took a look at the
costs and opportunities
and think that it will be
a reasonable expense for
us," Emerick said.

Fort LeBoeuf school
officials gave the nod
this summer to seek bids
for a food truck. School
officials are accepting
bids until Oct. 5.

Tech is "pretty con-
fident" that the district
will be able to find a
food truck that's within
district means and take
delivery by Feb. 1.

"We've sent bid
documents to several
companies directly and
will be sending out specs
to more," he said.

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