

# Cafeteria Style Catching on in Fast-Casual Restaurants

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This old school format has received new life from better-for-you restaurants.

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NEW YORK CITY – Cafeterias don't evoke tasty food, but that might be changing as some fast-casual concepts are embracing this old-school way of feeding people, [QSR Magazine](#) reports. "The old buffet line or cafeteria line was a way to feed people really fast without considering what they were feeding people," said Jason Anello, vice president of marketing for The Little Beet, a gluten-free, cafeteria-style restaurant chain. "The chefs asked, 'What can we feed people en masse that's fast and cost-effective?'"

Better-for-you restaurants are looking to change that perception into something fresh and modern. The Little Beet tweaked its customization approach into moving customers along a cafeteria-style line as their meals are being put together.

Lemonade asks customers to create original meals from homemade protein-based, vegetarian and vegan options in a new twist on the cafeteria line. "While some concepts allow you to choose all of the ingredients, our items are a choice of à la carte items that have been carefully developed, selected, and tasted," CEO Larry Kurzweil said. "I think when people can go up and down a line and pick and choose and go back for more, that's very empowering."

At these new cafeteria restaurants, "you don't smell those steamed vegetables that were overcooked and just sitting there under heat lamps," said Melissa Abbott, vice president of culinary insights at Hartman Group. "It's fresh, and ... you can really get a sense that there's an interest in food culture happening."