



Students sample new dishes offered at John Dewey High's "Energy Factory." News photo by Ed Molinari

Lunch Full of Pizza-zz

Students Sold on Fast Foods

By BOB KAPPSTATTER

The mystery meat was still there (it was turkey parmesan yesterday), but it just wasn't selling as fast as the hamburgers, french fries and milk shakes.

"That's the slowest mover. It's the same old lunch; nobody's interested in it," said 17-year-old Lydia Hill as she moved on the line in the student cafeteria at John Dewey HS in Bensonhurst.

Everything else — the short-order food, the salads and the pizza — were getting a heavy play from the students in a new, innovative school-lunch program that just may finally put an end to all the old jokes about school cafeteria food.

Someone, it seems, had the good sense to ask the students just what they would like. Their answers, and a united effort by a number of public and private organizations, resulted in The Energy Factory, the new name for the school's cafeteria.

It Has No Junk

The place has taken on the atmosphere of a fast-food operation, with one big difference: The junk food is junkless.

The hamburgers, now grilled instead of oven-baked to cardboard consistency, are five ounces of pure beef. The rolls are made of unbleached flour.

The french fries are quick fried and enriched with Vitamin C and iron.

There's a salad bar where students can put together their own leafy concoctions with hard-boiled eggs, sliced delicatessen meats and cottage cheese.

And, thanks, to federal and state subsidies that cover 82½ cents of every dollar spent, the cost of a complete lunch — for example, hamburger, french fries, and milk or shake — is only 55 cents for the student. A la carte, hamburgers cost 85 cents.

"This week is the most time I've ever spent in the cafeteria in the four years I've been in school," said 17-year-old Leslie Simmonds. He was a leader of a school group that surveyed the students' likes and dislikes.

Heavy Food Waste

The experimental program, which has been packing the cafeteria every day this week, is the result of the combined interest and efforts of Local 372 of the American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees, District 37 and the Board of Education.

With declining cafeteria use, the union was concerned with the prospect of diminishing job slots for its workers. The board was concerned with heavy food waste.