Fed Up with Lunch: How One Anonymous Teacher Revealed the Truth About School Lunches—and How We Can Change Them!
Written by Sara Wu (also known as Mrs. Q). Chronicle Books, 2011. ($22.95)

One morning in October 2009, a speech pathologist in a Chicago elementary school found herself running late and decided that she would buy lunch in the school cafeteria. The lunch—a wiener wrapped in soggy dough, Tater Tots, Jell-O, and chocolate milk—so riled her values about educating children that she decided to do something.

In January 2010, she began buying lunch at school every day, photographing it with her cell phone, and then posting comments and photos on a new blog, http://fedupwithlunch.com. Fearing that she might lose her job, she identified herself only as “Mrs. Q.” To provide background for blog posts, she began researching foods (chicken nuggets are only half chicken, for example) and children’s nutritional and exercise needs. She investigated industrial food processing, government regulations (school lunches are regulated by the USDA, for example), and other related topics.

Within a few weeks, she was receiving e-mails from readers who had somehow discovered her on the Internet. They asked questions, pointed her to other information sources, and challenged her views. At first, she focused on food served in public schools. But as the mother of a toddler in child care, she began scrutinizing the food served there as well. It wasn’t long before she was sending home-packed lunches and snacks with him every morning. In addition, she began preparing healthier foods for her family for breakfast and dinner at home.

By year’s end, her blog had accumulated more than a million page views. Requests came for media interviews and speaking appearances at health conferences. It was not until the publishing of this book that she revealed her true identity, Sarah Wu, and her school, Haugan Elementary.

The book is readable collection of essays about her experiences with the school lunch project. “When school food is simply a mirror of the fast food available in the surrounding community, then our nation’s children grow up to face the same health problems that are currently bankrupting our health care system and our government,” Wu says. “School food has to be better because it has educational value.”

At the back of the book, she suggests remedial actions, the bulk of which are addressed to parents. The lesson for child care providers may be to expect a growing demand for fresh, healthful foods for children. Parents may want to know:

- Are lunches cooked on-site or brought in by a company?
- Is food prepared from fresh produce or does it come mostly from cans and paper packages?
- Are children eating the food served to them?
- What are they throwing away?
- How do you manage classroom snacks?

The back section also lists school lunch reform organizations and other blogs and books as resources for further information.

Sarah Wu’s goal in writing the blog and books was to raise awareness, using “the meager tools of my stomach and my cell phone.” She not only accom-
plished that goal but also learned the power of one voice in stimulating change.

**In Defense of Food: An Eater’s Manifesto**

**Food Rules: An Eater’s Manual**

It seems the more we worry about nutrition, the less healthy we become. So says Michael Pollan in his New York Times bestseller, *In Defense of Food.*

He describes how our conflicted feelings about food began several decades ago with the publishing of dietary studies that gave rise to “nutritionism.” He quickly points out that “nutritionism” is not “nutrition,” but rather an ideology that categorizes some nutrients as good and some as bad. In contrast, he believes that every egg or avocado, for example, must be considered as a whole, containing micro-nutrients as yet undiscovered or misunderstood.

As nutritionism was gaining favor, the food industry began making products claiming to be better than real food—for example, margarine that was free of the cholesterol and saturated fats in butter.

That would have been fine, Pollan says, if the food products had made us healthier. But actually they have “left us fatter, sicker, and more poorly nourished.” He cites increases in diabetes, heart disease, cancer, hypertension, and stroke that have come with changes in food refining. Specifically, he notes the production of white flour and sugar, as well as changes in agricultural practices, such as breeding for yield and not nutrition, heavy use of chemical fertilizers on crops, and administration of hormones and antibiotics to poultry and livestock.

To clear the way to healthier—and more enjoyable—eating, Pollan proposes a seven-word manifesto: Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants. While he elaborates on that manifesto to some degree in the *Defense* book, he goes further with *Food Rules,* another No. 1 New York Times bestseller.

*Food Rules* is a listing of 64 rules for eating real food in moderation and preferring fresh fruits and vegetables to processed foods and meat, foods with lots of added fat and sugar, and refined grains. Here’s a sampling of the rules:
- Don’t eat anything your great grandmother wouldn’t recognize as food.
- Avoid food products containing ingredients that no ordinary human would keep in the pantry.
- Avoid food products that contain high-fructose corn syrup.
- Avoid foods that have some form of sugar (or sweetener) listed among the top three ingredients.
- Avoid food products that contain more than five ingredients.
- Shop the peripheries of the supermarket (that is, produce, meat, fish, and dairy) and stay out of the middle.
- Eat only foods that will eventually rot.
- Eat only foods that have been cooked by humans.
- Eat mostly plants, especially leaves.
- Treat meat as a flavoring or special occasion food.
- Save the water you cooked vegetables in and add it to soups and sauces.
- Stop eating before you are full.
- Eat when you’re hungry, not when you’re bored.
- Do all your eating at a table.
- Try not to eat alone.
- Eat slowly.
- Spend as much time eating the meal as it took to prepare it.
- Use smaller plates and glasses.
- Limit your snacks to fresh fruits, vegetables, and nuts.
- Plant a vegetable garden if you have the space, a window box if you don’t.

Both books offer simple answers to questions such as: Which foods should we buy? What should we eat? How can we enjoy food without getting fat?
The Ultimate Child Care Marketing Guide: Tactics, Tools, and Strategies for Success

What’s your strategy for marketing your child care business—keeping your fingers crossed? Even if it’s more sophisticated that that, you could benefit from this guide by Kris Murray, a mom and child care business coach.

She defines marketing, not as advertising, but rather as “getting and keeping customers.” Attaining success, she maintains, requires making decisions based, not on gut instinct or luck, but rather on specific data generated by your business over time, and developing a systematic strategy for achieving goals.

She has divided the book into five parts:
1) metrics: how you track and measure your marketing efforts,
2) market: the customers, prospects, competitors, staff, and community business partners important to your program,
3) message: the words and images you use in your marketing efforts,
4) media: the methods you use to promote your program such as print and broadcast advertising, the Internet, and printed materials, and
5) action plan: a written chart that lists action steps, timeline, person responsible, measurement, and budget allocation.

The book contains 23 useful learning exercises, such as calculating your cost per new customer and listing your program’s key features and benefits. Murray uses examples from a fictional child care program to illustrate methods and offers sample ads and marketing materials. The appendix may be especially helpful with its checklist for giving tours of your program, a sample parent survey, and a fill-in-the-blanks strategic marketing plan.

Whether you provide child care in your home, want to expand your church’s mothers-day-out program, need to boost your school’s enrollment, or want to branch out into multiple locations, this book can help you accomplish your goal and make you a more savvy entrepreneur.