

As part of the 'Eat Smart' conference held at the Teachers' House in Tallinn today, Evelin Ilves presented 'Healthy School Canteen' awards to 10 of the city's schools.

"How healthy the food is that's served up to students and how nice it tastes doesn't depend entirely on the budget, but largely also on how informed the school's directors and cooks are, and how skilled they are, and how exacting they are," Mrs. Ilves said. "In other words, it depends on the knowledge of food and the attitude towards it that adults have – most of them parents."

The 10 schools that were presented with the 'Healthy School Canteen' award were Tallinn Secondary School of Technology (Koolitoitlustuse OÜ); Järveotsa Secondary School (Koolitoitlustuse OÜ); Tallinna High School no. 32 (Koolitoitlustuse OÜ); Õismäe Secondary School (OÜ Bramos); Tallinn English College (Neitsitorni Kohviku AS); Mustamäe Secondary School (Koolitoitlustuse OÜ); Haabersti Russian Secondary School (OÜ Lianta); Tallinn Secondary School of Humanities (AS Tuleleek); Õismäe Russian Lyceum (Koolitoitlustuse OÜ); and Tallinn Arte Secondary School (Baltic Restaurants Eesti AS).

Mrs. Ilves said that school lunches, lunch breaks and canteens were as important a part of school life as the lessons the students take.

"We're talking about our children's health, which is directly linked to how successful they are in their studies, and it affects their mood and their abilities – all of which influence their behaviour and youth culture as a whole," she said. "Put simply, ensuring our kids are healthy at school is just as important as them knowing their times tables. And that's why the people who put on the healthiest spreads in their canteens deserve our recognition and the kids' respect."

This year's 'Healthy School Canteen' competition was the sixth to be held. It is primarily designed to ensure that canteens provide a healthy and diverse menu. It also aims to encourage catering companies to work with school directors and health committees and to boost students' awareness of good nutrition.

The 10 recipients of this year's title were selected by specialists from the Estonian Association

of Nutritional Therapy Consultants and Tallinn Education Department. The canteens are assessed on such points as the inclusion in their menus of fresh fruit and berries, vegetables and fresh salad items, sandwiches and their fillings and natural and freshly squeezed juices. The judges also place high value on the advisory role played by health committees and health care workers in putting menus together, the requirements of diabetic children and those with other special needs being taken into account and organic products forming part of menus.

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