

Just Desserts: Perceptions of Food Quality in Correctional Facilities Requirements

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Given that the United States corrections system serves over five million meals each day, one would assume that more attention would be given to what is being served to the 2.3 million individuals in the system. This study sought to explore the quality of food and the perceived quality of food, in addition to personal factors (punitive attitudes, level of empathy, demographics, etc.) that may inform these opinions. Using a survey instrument, individuals (N=354) who have and have not consumed a meal in a correctional facility were asked about their perceptions and experiences. It was found that participants who had consumed a meal in a correctional facility rated their experiences higher than those who have never had such a meal. This may be due to several factors, such as the intervening time since they last consumed a meal, and normalization of food quality/experiences in the correctional facility. This finding was contrary to expectations and requires more nuance and future studies to fully explore.