



Education
Programs
2023/2024



WESTERN FAIR
district
PARTNERS IN FOOD & AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION



GROWING  Chefs!
GROWING CHEFS!



Growing Chefs!
Ontario
Impact Reports
2023-2024



By the numbers!



423 Food Education Programs



85 School and Community Partners



12,326 Food Education Participants from

- 5,682 School Programs
- 5,220 Community Programs
- 1,424 Public Programs

Un-BEE-lievable!
Our buzziest year
to date!



10,192 students participating in our **Cultural Diversity Snack Project** with the Ontario Student Nutrition Program



15,246 online resource views and downloads





London

LICIOUS

Thank you to all of our sponsors!

The Londonlicious Festival supports us in realizing our vision of a healthy community that is engaged with our food system! All sponsors of the bi-annual festival also support our children's education projects.

Feedback from a guest at a participating restaurant:
“I feel like The Chef's Table is a hidden gem downtown. When you go there, you're not just getting a delicious meal; you're also supporting Fanshawe students to get hands-on experience in all aspects of working in restaurants. It's a win-win. And if you go during Londonlicious, you're supporting Growing Chefs! **So really, it's a triple win.**” - Shelby W.



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For more information on the new Londonlicious Festival visit www.londonlicious.ca



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Growing Chefs! Ontario

Impact Report - Garden Programs



Notes from the Field!

Through our greenhouses, learning gardens and food forest, as well as visiting school and community garden projects, we've been able to deliver an amazing variety of garden programs over the year. We've worked with Childreach, the London Public Library, Indwell, Junior Achievement Camp, the Western Fair District, Kensal Park French Immersion, the City of London and more to deliver these hands-on and impactful programs. We were also able to build on our partnership with the South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre to provide access to our free community food boxes over the summer months, allowing uninterrupted support to the families we reach through the school year in partnership with the Ontario Student Nutrition Program - Southwest Region.

Gardens can teach us about seasons, ecosystems, and how to grow food. But more than that, gardens allow us to build bridges between cultures and ability levels, create connections, share memories and exchange knowledge. We take pride in being able to facilitate programs for english language learners and newcomers who exchange vocabulary words with us, share memories of their favourite recipes, and express their excitement to see a vegetable or herb growing in our garden that they haven't been able to find in Canada yet. Our Garden Programs Coordinator, Ilana, searches out rare and culturally-significant seeds that represent the diverse backgrounds of Londoners, and makes sure she saves and shares them as much as possible. Some of these include Palestinian kusa squash, Lebanese za'tar, Caribbean seasoning peppers, Chinese and Turkish varieties of eggplant, and many more fragrant herbs and culturally relevant greens. **There's nothing we love more than bringing people together through food!**

Keep reading for a taste of what we've had growing on in our gardens lately!

- Christy Cook, Education Projects Manager



Our Know Your Roots Campers loved exploring our Growing Community Gardens on a garden scavenger hunt!

They tasted new flavours, practiced their photography skills, and got up close and personal with pollinators!



Program spotlight: Children's Gardening Program!

For the third spring and summer in a row, we partnered with Childreach to welcome toddlers and their parents to our HQ Learning Garden for our Children's Gardening Program series. For four weeks, little ones and their families explored with us, got their hands dirty, munched on garden snacks, and expanded their vocabulary! Lessons centred around the parts of plants, the things plants need to grow, the pollinators and animals that call our garden home, and exploring our senses through play and games.

One of our families shared with us that by the end of the series, their young gardener (pictured below on the right) convinced them to install a raised garden bed in their backyard, which they check on everyday to water, make mud pits for worms, and observe the insects that are living in the habitat they created. It's stories like these that keep us growing!






Dig in!
It's harvest time
in the garden!



Testimonials



“The program was well thought out with lots of visuals and hands-on experience. Ilana and Lauren adapted the program on short notice because of the rain so that it could be indoors. They also came on an earlier date to look at our garden so the program could feature our own edible plants. Our English Conversation participants were given time to ask questions and share their own knowledge. I know they were impressed with the depth of knowledge Ilana and Lauren have and especially appreciative of Ilana's familiarity with Arabic and Spanish. We can't thank them enough!”

- Frances C, Literacy Facilitator, London Public Library



“In-person gardening is awesome! My little girl can see and touch the real plants!”



- Miya C, Children's Gardening Program

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Growing Chefs! Ontario Impact Report - School Programs



Notes from the Classroom!



Renovations can't keep us down! While our elementary field trips were put on pause this school year due to renovations at The Grove, we refocused our energy outdoors and into classrooms. **This impact report will focus on telling the stories of these school programs!**

We started the school year off strong with outdoor field trips, such as Western Fair School-Ag Tours, and high school greenhouse visits with alternative education programs. **One theme that keeps popping up in feedback is that participants feel an instant sense of community with us. We couldn't be more proud to hear that, and want everyone reading this to feel apart of our community too!**

One teacher reflected, "the students really enjoyed seeing how the garden was set up, tasting and sampling different plants that were growing, and taking home pears and poaching them. The strawberry scones and mint tea were such a lovely treat. Ilana and Lauren were both very knowledgeable and friendly. We felt very welcome with an instant sense of community!"

This school year, our team of chefs, educators, garden experts and volunteers also:

- delivered Growing Chefs! Ontario in the Classroom to nearly 2000 students at Kensal Park, Westmount and Glen Cairn Public Schools
- wrapped up our School Garden pilot program
- scaled up our Cultural Diversity Snack Project with the Ontario Student Nutrition Program to reach over 10,000 students by the end of the school year
- worked with Knowledge Keepers and cultural advisors for the London District Catholic School Board to deliver in-school cooking classes showcasing Indigenous culture
- offered engaging and interactive webinars for primary students
- launched our new Kindergarten Kitchen program in classrooms across the city, and when word spread quickly, scaled up to reach as many classrooms as possible

Keep reading to see what hands-on food systems education looks like in practice!

- Christy Cook, Education Projects Manager

Program Spotlight: Kindergarten Kitchen!

This winter we launched a brand new in-school program for Kindergarten classes to explore food waste in a fun and engaging way! Students got hands-on making salsa and guacamole to enjoy with tortilla chips. While they munched away on their snack, they learned how to regrow the green onions ends and sprout the avocado pits they used in the recipe. They then took turns holding our composting worms and turning the rest of the food scraps into worm compost to be used in the garden!



Testimonials



"A huge thank you to you for a wonderful day filled with loads of learning, yummy food, and a ton of fun! All the teachers involved came to me to let me know how impressed they were and how appreciative they were for the opportunity to experience something like this for our students. I agree it was wonderful! Your kind, calm, and caring approach with the children was key in the delivery of something so new for them. Also the ability to have them all participate in the making of the food was very special."

- Kendra C, Teacher, Old North Public School



"This is what my class learned -> Then we had the kids taste the snack again and choose their favourite. Amazing program. It was so good and the salsa and guacamole were outstanding. Everyone loved it. You need to expand!"

- Becky T, ECE, Lambeth Public School

Growing Chefs

- una → How to grow plants
- Amyra → cooking
- Amber N → how to hold worms
- Drake → worms eat compost and po
it out!
- Keenat → plants grow with seeds
- Bronson → worms need water
- Ivor → worms like the dark
- Simone → how to cook
- Owen → fruit grows from fruit seeds.
- Aurora → worms eat compost
- Levi → I know how to scoop out avacod
- Amra → I cut something up
- Jodie → I learned that worms eat comp
- Hailey → I learned cooking



WESTERN
FAIR
**SCHOOL
AG-TOURS**
Educational, Fun & FREE!

In September, we partnered with the Grove at Western Fair District, along with Ontario Pork and Dairy, Beef, Grain and Egg Farmers of Ontario to lead 1500 students through a week of hands-on field trips exploring the entire food system!



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Growing Chefs! Ontario Impact Report - Public Programs



Notes from the Learning Kitchen!

Families Ask, We Listen!

Every new program we add or existing program we expand is always a direct response to the valuable feedback we receive from families whose children participate in our cooking classes. **This impact report will highlight some of the feedback we've gathered from our public programs!**

- Due to popular demand, we are now offering double and triple the number of our much-requested Monthly Kid's Cooking Classes. Parents and guardians expressed that the classes were selling out too fast to get spots - we can now meet that demand for classes!
- Over the years, we've witnessed children grow up within our programs and have always received requests for continued participation even after they outgrow the classes! So we've started offering new Teen Cooking Classes on a regular basis.
- The reason that our 8-week Culinary Programs (Advanced, Children's, and Beginner) were established was because families voiced the need for their children to have a consistent weekly opportunity to progressively build on their culinary skills.

Selena, a parent with multiple children in our programs, shared her positive experience, "My child has attended both the Advanced Culinary Program and the Teen Cooking Classes. She loves that the chefs treat the young chefs with trust and respect. You provide well-considered structure and instructions, and prioritize a positive food experience. The confidence she has gained in your classes has transferred to other areas of her life - and she is much more confident cooking food at home and trying new things - both new food and new experiences. Honestly you are the one extra curricular activity that both my kids will consistently happily attend. It takes no convincing because they know you are awesome humans, and they will have fun and learn, no matter what they are cooking. And I know they love the desserts the most, but I also deeply appreciate that you teach a full range of foods from a wide variety of cultures. Thank you for being a part of our lives!"

For more family testimonials, keep reading!

- Christy Cook, Education Projects Manager

Program Spotlight: Our 8-Week Culinary Programs!

We take pride in providing three distinct 8-week programs tailored for various age ranges: Beginner, Children's and Advanced. We focus on having fun, getting creative, learning new culinary skills and tasting like a chef! On the final day of each program, our budding chefs host a restaurant with their own family as the guests of honour. We couldn't be more elated to see the pride our young chefs have in showcasing their skills when their families arrive!



“We enjoyed absolutely everything! The level of care and detail put into the entire program from weekly emails, staff support (and patience!), curriculum & skill development, tasty & fresh food, and the final family restaurant event. My children were both enrolled, one in each age group, and have loved every class. Their confidence has increased and they are excited to try new foods and to continue to develop their skills. They are sad the 8 weeks have now ended but look forward to registering for more classes. My youngest even hopes to one day work for Growing Chefs! Every child should have the opportunity to take this program!” - Katie B

Testimonials

“Our kids LOVE the monthly cooking classes. It’s a great introduction to a range of ingredients and flavours, and I love the truly kid-friendly way that the chefs, staff and volunteers approach tasting and trying new things.”

- Selena H



“My child enjoyed baking with others. She loves the fun and energy of the group, and the treats! Her confidence in the kitchen, and interest in cooking at home is increasing with every sessions she attends! She felt fully involved and was so proud of her contributions.”

- Shawna I



“The kids loved learning about the food and were very excited about safe knife use! They were both extremely proud of the finished result and ate everything!” - Meagan M





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Growing Chefs! Ontario

Impact Report - Community Programs



Notes from the Community!

Community Engagement

Over the past year, we have successfully held nearly 100 community programs, engaging over 5,000 participants. Our efforts have strengthened our community connections and partnerships across the city.

Community Event Partners: We participated in several key events including Seedy Saturday, Doors Open London, Science Rendezvous, Punk Rock Flea Market, Forest City Road Races, and Fall Food Fest at the Covent Garden Market. These events allowed us to connect with the community and share our interactive educational activities.

Highlights of our Community Event Activities Include:

- Fresh Apple Cider Pressing
- Miracle Berry Taste Tests
- Garden-Themed Sensory Exploration
- Seedling Planting



Community Program Partners:

We also collaborated with diverse organizations such as the London Public Library, Indwell, Junior Achievement, Childreach, Investing in Children, South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre, London Urban Services Organization, Hutton House, Cross Cultural Learner's Centre, Nshwaasnangong Child Care and Family Centre, the London Knights and many more, offering programs like foraging workshops, culinary classes, greenhouse tours, conference seminars and family garden programs.

Our successful community engagement is due to the dedication of our team and the support of our partners. We look forward to continuing these efforts in the coming year.

For program spotlights, keep reading!

- Christy Cook, Education Projects Manager



Program Spotlight: Family Garden Programs!

Spending time in the garden is a fun activity for all ages! We host a variety of family garden programs for caregivers and their children.

Having programs that are inclusive of multiple generations has several important benefits such as family bonding, knowledge and skill sharing, and inspiring curiosity in trying new foods. When compared to trying new foods at the dinner table, children are much more likely to try a new fruit or vegetable when they pick it straight from the garden!





Program Spotlight: Community Events!



We love getting out in our community! For the second year in a row, our staff have both ran and walked in the Forest City Road Races and had an educational booth! Our booth in the children's zone gave out free fruit-infused water, and featured sensory exploration and seedling planting activities for toddlers and children. We love being a part of such a great cause that benefits charities across the city!



The 2023-2024 School Food Education Project is presented by our Title Sponsor:



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and Community Partners:



Colborne Street United Church
Local Outreach Committee



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Thank you for your support!

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