School Food Education Project

WESTERN FAIR district be entertained

GROWING CHEFS!

PARTNERS IN FOOD & AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

Growing Chefs! Ontario

Classroom Journal

2021-2022 Issue 1

Back in person!

After nearly a year and a half of not being able to run in-person programming due to constantly changing restrictions - WE'RE BACK! And we can't wait to share with you everything that we've had growing on!

In July of 2021 we were finally able to open Growing Chefs! At The Grove, our new teaching kitchen at The Western Fair District, for our **Know Your Roots summer camp**. It was such a joyful experience to be able to welcome children into our kitchen to cook with us again! Then, in September, we launched our Advanced Culinary Program, the first of our Children's Culinary Series, which ran for 10 weeks through the Fall. We also re-launched our Growing Communities programming offering **41 in-person cooking classes** with **12+ community partners**. Wow! In total, by the end of December we had welcomed over **700 children and youth** at The Grove. A feat we are incredibly proud of, especially considering the capacity restrictions in place through that time.

Back in person!

The return to in-person programming acted as a “light in the darkness” for many children and families (as well as our staff! - we missed it so much!). Many have told us how much their children have missed cooking with our Chefs. We’ve heard stories of how after coming home from our programs, parents would see their child smiling, happy and excited to talk about everything they did with us, something that we were told was often a rare occurrence through the lockdowns. We are so grateful for the opportunity to once again share our love of food directly with our participants, and hopefully to brighten their days a little.

Keep reading to see just a few of the messages we’ve received from families that have participated in our culinary programs this summer and fall:

Back in person!

Testimonials

"Thank so much for all your help getting my daughter settled and comfortable. She is now so happy to go to Growing Chefs on Tuesday nights and then come back and share what she's made. She consistently helps with food prep at home (lots of chopping veggies). Her knife skills are better than mine! I couldn't be more thrilled she is developing this interest!"

"Has been as always a wonderful program and my son loves it, and I just want to share with you that this week we had the feedback from the nutrition teacher from school and he was impressed how my son gets involved and participates actively in the class. The teacher asked us if he cooks at home and we said that yes and he goes to Growing chefs for culinary classes and he said that he sees the skills he has gained during the time that has been in Growing chefs."

Testimonials

"My daughter had such a good time, she asked if she could do it again today!"

"I just want to let you know that my daughter had the most amazing time last night. I heard all of the exciting details and she was so proud of herself. Thank you for this amazing opportunity to help her grow and foster her independence in the kitchen. We will be sure to sign up again!"

Field Notes from Chef Ryan

Hi! My name is Ryan and I'm the Lead Programming Chef at Growing Chefs! Ontario.

This past summer, we were finally able to return to in-person programs and our team was bursting with ideas! Two of them being a brand new Advanced Culinary Camp and a 10-week Advanced Culinary Program. We focused on recipes and techniques that we took straight out of our chefs' time spent in culinary school. Each day focused on a different theme:

Day one - Foundations - we learned knife cuts, how to make stock, and made a fresh pasta and a simple salad
Day two - Classic French techniques and mother sauces
Day three - Breads and pastries
Day four - International cuisine and spices

We certainly pushed the participants to try new ingredients, recipes and techniques and they rose to meet the challenge!

During our international cuisine day, the participants learned about popular spice blends from around the world and how to use them. Some of the dishes that were created from those spice blends were advieh rice pilaf, berbere chicken and lentils, togarashi prawns and cabbage, chicken tikka masala and my personal favorite, a tomato salad with labneh and za'atar. Check out the recipe on the next page to recreate it at home! We used a variety of heirloom tomatoes that were fresh from our garden and dolloped on rich, creamy labneh and finished it off with herbal za'atar. It was the perfect summer dish and a hit with the participants.

Returning to in-person classes has been so rewarding. It has re-sparked that feeling of why we're here, what our mission is and the impact we can make.

I can't wait to see what other culinary adventures await!

Tomato Salad with labneh and za'atar

"Beautiful bright heirloom tomatoes have a great texture, and are complimented with the bright lemony flavour of zaatar. This salad is a delicious accompaniment to grilled meats in the summer."

Yield: Serves 4

Difficulty: Intermediate

Ingredients

3/4 cup labneh
2 pounds heirloom or cherry tomatoes
3 tablespoons olive oil
1 clove garlic, very finely chopped
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
3 tablespoons zaatar spice
Salt to taste

Equipment

Measuring cups
Measuring spoons
Bowls
Fine mesh sieve
Spatula
Whisk
Cutting board
Chef's knife, or paring knife
Tasting spoons
Dish towel

Tomato Salad with labneh and za'atar

Get Organized!

Gather your mise en place: get together all of the equipment needed for the recipe and gather your ingredients.

Get Prepped!

Measure out labneh, olive oil, and za'atar spice.

Let the labneh sit in a fine sieve over a bowl, and leave at room temperature for 1 hour, to drain as much liquid as possible.

Very finely grate the garlic with the rasp, or chop the garlic with a chef's knife very finely.

Cut the lemon in half, and squeeze out the juice. Measure out 1 tablespoon of juice.

Cut the tomatoes into thin slices, or if using cherry tomatoes, cut them in half.

After the labneh has been sitting for an hour, roll the labneh into small balls, about half the size of a golf ball.

Mix together the lemon juice and za'atar spice, and slowly drizzle in the olive oil, whisking constantly as you add the oil. Season with salt to taste.

Get Cooking!

In a large bowl, mix together the tomatoes with about half of the dressing, and season with salt. Toss them together, and transfer them to a platter. Garnish the tomatoes with labneh balls, and drizzle with additional dressing. Enjoy!

Title Sponsor Spotlight

WESTERN FAIR
district™

As an Agricultural Society, the Western Fair District has deep roots bridging urban and rural communities. This is achieved through educational programming and facilities that help us support the needs of the regional agri-business sector, as well as the customer's desire to learn more about agriculture and food.

The District believes the more knowledgeable you are about food and farming the better you are able to support local agriculture and the community. As home of London's Best Weekend Market seven years running, Eastern Canada's largest indoor Farm Show, the National Poultry Show and the annual Western Fair's traditional school tour program, the Western Fair District continues to provide educational experiences for today's consumer.

The Western Fair District is five years strong partnering with Growing Chefs! Ontario in support of the School Food Education Project and more recently, our organizations developed a new learning experience called Agri-Food Experience. These projects allow each group to weave their educational mandates together, expanding on innovative learning activities for students and the community. We like that!

We appreciate your support in helping Western Fair District and Growing Chefs! Ontario continue to cultivate love for farmers and food.

The 2021-2022 School Food Education Project is presented by our Title Sponsor:

WESTERN FAIR district

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Thank you for your investment in food education and the future health of our community.

Growing Chefs! Ontario is a registered charity in London, Ontario and has been incorporated since 2008

Changing the way children, youth, families and the community learn about and develop healthy relationships with food

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