School Food Education Project

WESTERN FAIR district be entertained

GROWING CHEFS!

PARTNERS IN FOOD & AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

Growing Chefs! Ontario

Classroom Journal

2021-2022 Issue 2

Let's Get Growing!

One of the most exciting features of our new space at The Grove is our new heated greenhouse, located right in the middle of the horse racing track at the Western Fair District. A quick walk from our new teaching kitchen, this beautiful greenhouse gives us the opportunity to provide participants with a first hand look at how food grows, and immerse them into the complexities of managing an independent ecosystem (check out our praying mantises on page 8 - part of our integrated pest management strategy). Because our growing season and the school calendar don't line up, there have been a lot of limitations when trying to integrate gardening into our school project curriculum. But with our new greenhouse, we can provide participants a glimpse into the entire food system year round!

As well, the new greenhouse is able to produce a surprising amount of food! With generous help from our amazing funders (you!) and Libro Credit Union, we were able to launch our community food box program with the Ontario Student Nutrition Program (ONSP) in the fall of 2021. We harvest twice a month, package everything up into 20 beautiful food boxes, add in a few donations from the London Food Bank, and the OSNP volunteers deliver these boxes directly to families that rely on them. It has been one of the most rewarding projects Growing Chefs! has ever been involved in, and we are so grateful for all of the efforts of our partners in this incredible collaborative project.

As you explore this journal you will see photos of our greenhouse, community food boxes, and garden programs. We are so excited to share with you everything we have growing on in the new Growing Chefs! greenhouse at The Grove.

By the Numbers

Community Food Box Program

October 2021 - present

- **142** community food boxes delivered
- **368** pounds of fresh produce harvested from our greenhouse
- **751** pounds of Food Bank donations saved from the landfill
- **$5018** total value of food boxes
- **51** volunteer hours of meaningful community engagement

Educational Garden Programming

July 2021 - Present

- **28** sessions
- **591** participants and volunteers
- **22** community partners

Field Notes from Ilana

Hi, I'm Ilana and I run our garden programming, including programs in our new heated greenhouse!

Our Growing Community Greenhouse is part of our Food Education Centre at The Grove at the Western Fair District. We use this greenhouse to engage children, youth, families and volunteers, in year-round, hands-on learning about our local food systems while growing fresh, organic produce for households in need. Since our initial seeds in the greenhouse were sown in October 2021, we have harvested 368 pounds of fresh produce from our heated greenhouse, providing over 140 Community Food Boxes to families in need through our partnership with the Ontario Student Nutrition Program South West Region. We have also saved over 600 pounds of excess food donations from the landfill in partnership with the London Food Bank.

The feedback from the participating families has been that the quality of the produce is superior to what they see in grocery stores and stays fresher for longer, and that it is very meaningful and helpful to them to receive it regularly, for free, and brought right to their homes by a trusted school support counsellor.

The bulk of the produce grown in our greenhouse over the winter was greens, herbs, and root vegetables. Check out our herby pesto recipe on the next page to see how we made use of some of our greens, Find this recipe and so many more in the recipe section of our website.

I can't wait to see what our first spring in the greenhouse has in store. Let's get growing!

Herby Pesto

From the Italian word “pestare,” meaning to “pound or crush,” pesto is a perfect way to use up a surplus of basil and other greens. Traditionally made with pine nuts, we substitute pumpkin seeds to keep it nut free.

Difficulty: Beginner

Yield: 2 cups

Ingredients:

1 1/2 cups fresh herbs, packed
2 cloves garlic, chopped
1/2 cup pumpkin seeds
1/2 lemon, juiced
1/2 cup parmesan cheese, grated
1 cup olive oil, or more as needed
Salt to taste
Pepper to taste

Equipment:

Measuring cups
Measuring spoons
Food processor
Grater
Spatula
Cutting board
Chef’s knife
Tasting spoons
Dish towel

Herby Pesto

Get Organized!

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

Get Prepped!

Prepare the herbs by removing the leaves from the stem and discarding the stems.

Grate parmesan cheese.

Remove peel from the garlic and chop roughly.

Cut lemon in half, and squeeze out juice, making sure to dispose of the seeds.

Measure out pumpkin seeds and olive oil.

Get Cooking!

In the bowl of a food processor combine the herbs, sunflower seeds, garlic, parmesan, and a squeeze of lemon juice. Begin to blend.

While blending, drizzle in the olive oil to reach the desired consistency.

You can make your pesto as textured or smooth as you like. Season to taste with salt and pepper. If the pesto tastes flat, usually a pinch of salt and a squeeze of lemon is all it needs. Pulse to combine.

Enjoy!

"Thank you so much for everything you do! It is such important work for all our families. They are thrilled to have such fresh produce and are very thankful."

- School support counsellor

"It's exciting to open the bags, it's like a present! I thank you for all the love and care that you put into the vegetables, I feel lucky to receive them."

- Food box recipient

"It makes me feel good knowing what I am doing to help in the garden is going to help people who need it, everyone should have good food."

- Garden volunteer

Sponsor Spotlight

Libro exists to grow prosperity in southwestern Ontario by transforming banking. Libro invests 100% of profits back into the people, businesses and communities they serve. One of the ways they do this is by supporting organizations that are making a positive local impact.Through their Annual Grants program, Libro funds initiatives helping address local priorities aligned with their pillars of financial resilience, employment, local food accessibility and housing.

Since 2012, Libro has been a strong supporter of Growing Chefs! Food Education Projects. With Libro's generous support, our Community Food Box program has been able to flourish and grow. Together with Libro and the Ontario Student Nutrition Program Southwest Region, Growing Chefs! Ontario is increasing local food accessibility in our community.

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

WESTERN FAIR district

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London Food bank

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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