



Farm to School Scoop

USDA Enjoys Lunch at Mill Creek

On Wednesday, Oct. 20th, Columbia Public Schools welcomed Bob Gorman, Mountain Plains Regional Farm to School Officer from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), for a tour. Through a generous grant from the USDA, the Columbia Public School District has substantially grown their Farm to School Program, a healthy eating initiative that focuses on preparing school meals utilizing locally grown produce.

This tour gave Columbia Public Schools a chance to showcase the exciting local foods they offer, nutrition and gardening coursework they provide, and updated kitchen equipment they're using to

increase the healthy foods offered to students.

Community partners from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and University of Missouri Extension were in attendance. DESE oversees the National School Lunch Program. University of Missouri Extension served as co-author of Columbia's Farm to School grant and worked closely with CPS on the implementation of this program.

On this occasion, Mill Creek Elementary's lunch included local roasted eggplant and squash, local peppers, carrots, broccoli, whole grain pizza or whole grain corn dogs, and local apples for dessert.



Local produce on Mill Creek's salad bar



The hydroponic growing system in Ms Newton's classroom.

Science Class Hones High Tech Gardening Skills

Ms. Newton's Oakland Middle School sciences classes are learning first hand food growing techniques using hydroponic gardens. The class is starting with strawberries and expanding to spinach this winter.

Students are learning about the plant growth cycle, soilless growing techniques, and innovative agriculture. Newton is incorporating the garden into her students' coursework throughout the year. She is hopeful that future classes will be able to take field trips to see a full scale farm as part of their yearly science camp.

Thanks to Newton and the USDA's Farm to School Grant, Columbia students are learning about the science behind the foods they eat.

Great Green Tongs!

Tongs are now the coolest cutlery on the block. Green tongs are now being used by Columbia Public Schools to identify healthy, local food options. The goal of these green tongs is to connect students to Missouri grown produce or products. Students know that if it has a green tong, it came from a local Missouri farm.

Local foods offered in CPS vary greatly. During the fall, foods like apples, eggplant, sweet potatoes, peppers, tomatoes and squash are in season. As winter comes, butternut squash, zucchini, apples and onions will feature prominently. In the spring and summer, asparagus, cucumbers and onions will bring a burst of color to the kids' plates.

Using local foods allows students to try foods at their peak ripeness and flavor which means they taste better and students are more likely to eat them. Other benefits of using local foods include: Local often has a longer shelf life because it hasn't spent as much time in transport; Support for local farmers and the Missouri economy; A reduction in our carbon footprint.



Keep an eye out for these great green tongs!

Extend the Season For a Reason

With the best growing months in Missouri falling in the summer, providing fresh produce for the school year can be a challenge. New equipment is empowering Columbia Public Schools to offer local produce to children year-round. The Farm to School grant awarded to Columbia Public Schools by the USDA supplied funding that has allowed CPS to purchase a blast cooler, robot coupe (a whole food processor), and two vacuum sealers.

These machines will help to extend the use of local products beyond the limited growing

season in Missouri. Produce will be purchased at the peak of its season and quickly sealed and frozen for later use. Freezing the products greatly extends their shelf life. The processing machinery also helps to safely ship foods from the regional production kitchen to other schools.

Food processors, like the robot coupe, allow Nutrition Services to use local produce to be made into finished products such as tomato sauces or applesauce. Thanks to this processing, these local products can be served all year round.



The Farm to School grant awarded to Columbia Public Schools by the USDA supplied funding to purchase processing machinery like the vacuum sealer above, to extend the use of local products beyond the limited growing season in Missouri.



Garden Bars Make Farm to School Delicious!

Columbia Public Schools staff care using garden bars to display delicious produce. From interesting baked squash to expertly prepared legumes, garden bars are offering a veritable

smorgasbord of foods for students. Studies show when children choose foods for themselves they are more likely to eat it. Self service also results in children selecting only the amount they will eat which

helps control waste and costs. Schools are offering white peppers, sliced zucchini, red grapes, and local tomatoes. With such a wide variety, there is something that everyone can enjoy!

Columbia Area Career Center Caters Conference

Students in the Culinary Arts program at Columbia Area Career Center (CACC) served up a delicious spread of local foods for the recent Farm to School Conference. The conference, hosted by the University of Missouri Extension and the USDA, connected food producers with schools looking to expand the amount of local products they serve to students.

Students prepared dishes taking advantage of a wide variety of locally grown foods. They created sweet potato muffins and habanero kettle corn for energizing snacks. For lunch, they pulled out all the stops, serving roasted root vegetables, balsamic glazed greens, roasted chicken with herbs, seasonal vegetable pot pie, and an apple crumble for dessert. For the final snack, CACC students thinly sliced sausage and served it with pickled beets, carrots, and radishes grown in their garden. The conference attendees were ecstatic to eat local food prepared by very skilled students. Attendees

offered a warm round of applause for all the culinary students' hard work.

Knowing that a career in the culinary arts is more than honing recipes for fun, the students cleared plates and thoroughly cleaned the kitchen at Bradford Farms. Profits from this and other catering events help students purchase materials needed for their culinary lab classes. Additionally, students create a Thanksgiving Buffet each October. This lunch helps to start their holiday sales for soups, stocks, stuffings, turkeys, and even tur-duck-ens!

Sweet potatoes grown in the CACC garden were used in the roasted root vegetables served at the recent Farm to School Conference. The conference, hosted by the University of Missouri Extension and the USDA, connected food producers with schools looking to expand the amount of local products they serve to students.

To contact the Culinary Arts Program go to:
www.CACCculinary.com
or email:
@CACCculinary

To get on the Culinary Arts Program email list contact:
bharlan@cpsk12.org



Local Apples Served in Columbia's Lunch



Meet the Rasas

Located just 90 miles from Columbia, the Rasa Family Orchard in Lexington, Missouri proudly grows some of the thousands of apples served each year in Columbia Public Schools' meals. Since 1922, when August Rasa, Sr first purchased the original 54 acre farm, the Rasa family has been in the apple business. Today August's grandsons Bob, Edgar and Norman and their wives Bernice, Ruby and Susan; and great-grandson David continue to run a thriving family operation that has grown to 180 acres. In addition to many more apple trees, the farm now also includes a packing house where apples are washed, buffed, waxed, dried, sorted by size and packed before they are shipped to schools and businesses throughout Missouri and other states.

The Rasas exemplify the dedication and care



Several apple varieties are grown at Rasa Orchards.



Containers of apples await processing.



Norman and Susan Rasa, and their son David



Edgar, Ruby, Bernice and Bob Rasa

Missouri family farmers take to grow healthy, delicious produce. Although the Rasa brothers could easily retire, their love for the land and trees keeps them working in the orchard. Their desire to continue to be good stewards of the land and to grow even better apples each year keep them coming back.

From Tree to Tray

Getting the Rasa's apples from the trees to the students' lunch trays is quite an undertaking. Beginning around August of each year the apples begin to ripen. They are handpicked and placed in large plastic containers and driven with a forklift to the processing building.

In the processing building, the apples are submerged in a water bath before they begin their journey on the conveyor belt. The apples proceed into a large machine that dries, waxes and buffs each apple.

Once buffed the apples enter a computerized machine that sorts and grades the apples. Workers then place stickers on the apples that list the apple variety and a grocery store code. The apples are then boxed or bagged and placed in the cooler to await pick up by a food distributor.

The school purchases the apples from a food distributor who delivers the apples to the schools for use in the school lunch.



Water pushes apples from the bath to the conveyor.

Farm to Families

From July to November each year, the Rasa's operate a retail market at their orchard too. Located just 8 miles east of Lexington, Missouri on Highway 24, the market provides families the opportunity to purchase the same apples that their children receive at school in their lunch. A trip to the market is a great way for children to see the hundreds of trees that produce some of the foods they eat.



Apples move into the computerized sorter.



Apples wait in the cooler to be transported to stores and schools.



Families can purchase apples at the Rasa retail market.

CPS Nutrition Services is Offering More Nutrition Classes

Thanks to additional funding and dedicated experts, Columbia has expanded the discussion about Farm to School in the variety of nutrition courses offered to students.

Classes are currently available for all elementary schools students, and are taught by registered dietitian Janie Garrett and field supervisor Betty Buchheit.

Classes are scheduled at the request of the teacher. Students that participate receive a healthy snack and a MyPlate poster outlining the five food groups. Classes range from Happy Face Snack Sandwiches oriented towards preschoolers, to Media and Me, where fourth graders discuss the impact of media on food and drink choices.

With the addition of Farm to School information students will learn about the hard work that goes into producing food.

Last year, 243 nutrition education classes were offered. 5,634 students were reached through these courses. The annual number of classes taught continues to grow each year.

Find us on social media

 Facebook: **cpsnutrition**

 Twitter: **cpslunch**

 Instagram: **cpslunch**



This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.



**Want to learn
more about
Farm to School?**

**[http://www.
fns.usda.gov/
farmtoschool/
farm-school](http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school)**

**Do you have
questions about
CPS's Farm to
School?**

**Contact
Nutrition
Services at:
lunch@
cpsk12.org**

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI
 **Extension**
an equal opportunity/ADA institution