



COUNTY OF YOLO

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Yolo County School Districts Cooking with Yolo County Crops

(Woodland, CA) – Nutrition services staff from all five Yolo County school districts have now received scratch cooking training using locally-grown, in-season produce as part of the Farm to School Yolo program. This training is funded by a three-year grant awarded to the Yolo County Agriculture Department by the California Department of Food & Agriculture’s (CDFA) Specialty Crop Grant program. The grant seeks to increase fresh local produce sold to school districts for school lunch plates. Along with the ongoing cooking courses, the grant funded the launch of www.HarvestHubYolo.org, a website which facilitates produce sales, and related annual training for farmers conducted by Agricultural Commissioner John Young and his staff.

“Yolo County is the ideal location for a farm to school initiative as our residents have a strong connection to the wide array of agricultural products grown here,” said Yolo County Board of Supervisors Chair Duane Chamberlain.

“We are excited by the success of these milestones in the Farm to School Yolo program,” said Yolo County Agricultural Commissioner John Young. “The cooking classes have given school food service staff the necessary skills to incorporate more fresh produce into their menus. We hope these resources will also create an economically viable sales outlet for our farmers.”

All school districts selected members of their food service staff to participate in these professional development trainings created and presented by consultants, Georgeanne Brennan and Ann M. Evans, who have delivered similar trainings for school districts in Oakland, Los Angeles and Marin County. As a result of their courses, many creative and healthy dishes using Yolo County-grown produce have been developed, such spicy orange chicken, Asian greens soup with tofu, nopales and radish salad, shredded red cabbage, fajita and Mandarin orange wraps, and creamy baked broccoli and cauliflower. Along with the cooking courses, each school district was treated to a box of local citrus and a citrus tasting demonstration, compliments of Capay Organics Farm Fresh to You.

The Farm to School Yolo program is being evaluated by Gail Feenstra, food systems analyst and Jeri Ohmart, program assistant both with the University of California Sustainable Agriculture, Research and Education Program. For more information on the program, visit <http://www.harvesthubyolo.org> or contact Nicole Sturzenberger at nicole.sturzenberger@yolocounty.org.

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Attachment: Yolo County school district-specific stories

Yolo County School District Specific Stories

Esparto Unified School District

At the request of food services director Becky Jacobs, Evans & Brennan developed a healthy version of the popular spicy orange chicken using Yolo County fresh oranges for the sauce and incorporating local green onions. It received rave reviews from Jacobs and her staff, and the dish will appear on the school lunch menu in Esparto schools in the coming weeks. “I was amazed at how fast my staff could do scratch cooking,” said Jacobs at the end of the training session.

Winters Joint Unified School District

Cathy Olsen, director of student nutrition services, and a long-time practitioner of buying local fruits and vegetables, will be offering students oranges from Sparks Ranch in Winters and broccoli from Terra Firma Farms, also in Winters, as a part of the new Harvest of the Month Yolo program featuring Yolo-grown vegetables and fruits.

Washington Unified School District (West Sacramento)

Staff, under Food and Nutrition Services director Karri Pina, cooked up a slew of seasonal soups as well as several salads and a wrap. A top favorite soup was Asian greens with tofu, which is under consideration for adding to the repertoire of soups cooked weekly for students in the high school kitchen. Pina is also considering putting the nopales and radish salad on the menu as well the shredded red cabbage, fajita and Mandarin orange wrap her staff prepared as part of the cooking class.

Davis Joint Unified School District

Rafaelita ‘RC’ Curva, director of student nutrition services, and one of Jamie Oliver’s School Lunch Heroes, joined her staff at the round table tasting discussion which follows all of Evans & Brennan’s professional development cooking classes, and sampled nopales and radish salad. Curva thought the salad could be an interesting and authentic addition to secondary level school lunches, as well as the vegetarian dish, creamy baked broccoli and cauliflower.

Woodland Joint Unified School District

New director of food services, Spencer Springer was pleased for his staff to receive some extra training using local fresh fruits and vegetables. His staff prepared the shredded red cabbage, fajita and Mandarin orange wrap, spicy orange chicken and the nopales and radish salad, which some of his staff make at home on a regular basis, while for others, it was a first.