Students Who Garden, Greenhouse, Eat their Garden Produce and Compost It Too!

*Farm to School Webinar Series*

Thursday May 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 2012

2-3 p.m.

Questions & Answers
1. Beth, how was the scratch cooking initiative introduced and adopted into the Denver Public Schools?

Denver Public Schools decided to develop and implement Scratch Cooking in our schools early in 2010. We evaluated our equipment on hand and skill set prior to developing training. Most prep kitchens contain a convection oven and a flat top gas range, a small 20 qt., and medium 30 qt. mixer, and a slicer. Many kitchens also have a steamer, some have a 60 qt. mixer and a few have tilt skillets or working steam jacketed kettle. We still have several staff members who were with DPS in the “old days” prior to the late 80’s when the scratch cooking era gave way to the “heat and serve” production method. With this knowledge, we proceeded in our training plans. We gave ourselves a three year time limit to complete the training in all schools.

We developed a three week Culinary training program, in the areas of Cold Food Prep/knife skills, Cooking plus 1+ hour Employee ServSafe® training, and Baking. In July of 2010, we trained 100 staff members so that we could start the school year with 30 prep sites and 13 carry in’s with our new production method. In implementing that summer training, we partnered with Slow Food Denver (http://slowfooddenver.org/) and had six volunteer chefs and two volunteer bakers help train staff along with the Area Supervisors. We also had our Chemical provider do the ServSafe® training.

The menu stayed the same for all schools, however, the preparation method changed, i.e., mac and cheese for non-scratch schools remained as the cook-in-the-bag, and the scratch schools made it from scratch. Non-scratch schools used cooked beef crumbles for items such as spaghetti and Sloppy Joes while the scratch schools cooked raw beef to crumble. We kept and continue to keep our finger on student preference and favorites, so we have not seen a decrease in student participation. Please note, that we evaluate every menu item, and prepare what makes sense in our commercial kitchens. We marinate and season the 8-way precooked chicken instead of cooking from raw because it works very well for us and the label is clean. We still serve chicken nuggets because that is the kids number one food, however, we will not make these from scratch and instead found a clean label (we have a list of ingredients that we will not allow) un-breaded chicken nugget.

After the initial training for the 100 employees, we developed a three week Culinary program to be held several times per year, Monday – Thursday from 3-6 pm in Baking, Cooking and Cold Food Prep/knife skills (exactly the curriculum described above). Experienced Managers were taught to train employees with this program. The class is mandatory for staying employed with our district. As of December 15th, 2012, we completed training all staff in all schools (minus a few new employees and

www.ColoradoFarmToSchool.org
stragglers). We now have all of our schools serving fresh baked breads and muffins (all bread made from scratch, except sliced), items made with raw beef (like meatloaf, spaghetti sauce, tacos, etc.) along with other items made from scratch. Please refer to our definition of scratch on the webinar. (Beth Schwisow, Denver Public Schools)

DPS Food and Nutrition Services website: http://foodservices.dpsk12.org/

2. Charlee, how are the chefs recruited? Are they volunteers?

Douglas County School District has a unique partnership with the Colorado Chef’s Association through which chefs have been recruited to volunteer in our schools. If you would like to learn more about how chefs can help in your school or about how to match your school with a chef, visit www.chefsmovetoschools.org. (Charlee Roberts, Douglas County School District)

DCSD Nutrition Services website: https://www.dcsdk12.org/nutritionservices

3. Charlee, was that a state or federal grant for the gardens?

In 2011 our Douglas County School District garden program was made possible through a Communities Putting Prevention to Work grant that we received from the Tri-County Health Department. This was a one-time opportunity to receive federal funding for this project. (Charlee Roberts, Douglas County School District)

4. Charlee, are the Douglas county guidelines available to others? If so, how can I get them?

To receive a copy of DCSD’s garden guidelines, please email Charlee.Roberts@dcsdk12.org (Charlee Roberts, Douglas County School District)

5. Tammy, where did the greenhouse grant come from?

The Greenhouse was a grant submitted and received from the local Food Bank. It was from the Colorado Home & Garden Show. (Tammy Westerman, LiveWell Bent County)

6. How have the garden committees been able to manage the gardens through the summer?
In Crested Butte and Gunnison, we run garden-based / environmental education summer camps three days a week who do garden jobs as part of their day. We have a parent / community work day once a week, and students take turns being the leaders. (Holly Conn, Mountain Roots Food Project)

In Las Animas one of our school district employees is the garden manager. He has three student helpers, and a community intern working under him. The gardens run by community volunteers like clubs, faith communities, and student organizations. (Tammy Westerman, LiveWell Bent County)

7. In our high, mountain desert climate, what kinds of produce are grown? fruit? veggies? flowers?

Depends on exactly where you are. In Crested Butte (8,888 ft.), we can grow all kinds of greens - tender lettuces and mesclun, and dark leafy greens such as kale, chard, spinach, etc. Kohlrabi and brassicas do well (broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage) and hardy herbs (cilantro, parsley, thyme). All roots crops grow very well (beets, carrots, potatoes, turnips, parsnips, radishes, peas). We can’t grow tomatoes in Crested Butte, although we can in Gunnison (7,000 ft.) if we select for hardiness and short maturation dates. In Gunnison we can grow beans, squash, cucumbers, etc. as well, but not melons or pumpkins. Basically you have to check your frost dates and determine your growing season, then compare against your maturation dates of the varieties you want to plant, and also use row cover to maintain warmer night temperatures and extend your season. (Holly Conn, Mountain Roots Food Project)

8. How does small farming help more than buying from big companies?

In Denver Public Schools (DPS), we have one acre farms on the land of three of our schools. We pay the farmers the same price for their produce that we pay our regular produce company (as per our contract with them). Having the freshest of fresh (organic but not certified organic) produce delivered from the farm, across the parking lot into our kitchens is the best. The kids see the produce growing and then see it in the cafeteria on their salad bar. They love it! (Beth Schwisow, Denver Public Schools)

9. What percentage of gardens are at the HS level?

From Denver Public Schools (DPS): We have no active gardens in High Schools as part of the Slow Food Garden program in DPS. North High school has a small garden with Denver Urban Gardens off the school grounds, but don’t participate in Garden To
Cafeteria. Andy Nowak, Slow Food Denver has consulted with Englewood High School to put together a community garden. We had two middle schools call last year and ask for information but did not proceed. All our current gardens are at elementary or K-8 School; Kepner Middle School has a garden but they don’t provide produce for the Garden To Cafeteria program. (Beth Schwisow, Denver Public Schools)

In Las Animas we have high school and middle school students involved. Elementary students who do plant education and grow plants get to have their project growing in the garden as well. (Tammy Westerman, LiveWell Bent County)

10. Can you recommend some equipment to improve our already growing garden beds?

We have found the following equipment helpful (Holly Conn, Mountain Roots Food Project):

- Soil test kits are good for students to learn about soil content.
- Most people in CO need row covers and / or shade cloth for season extension.
- Cold frames are something to consider.
- Some gardens use a portion of the space to demonstrate an interesting technique, such as a potato cylinder or a vertical garden.
- A compost bin.
- Raised beds.
- Perennial beds that showcase native plants.
- Bird houses (use Audubon website for recommendations) and / or plants that attract birds and pollinators.
- Harvest baskets (shopping baskets) - lots.
- Scissors, trimmers, clippers, trowels, shovels, rakes, pitchforks - both kid and adult sized, but "real" tools not toy tools.
- Kids garden gloves.
- Kids rubber boots, assorted sizes.

11. Have you experienced theft of the food you grow?

At Denver Public Schools (DPS), we do experience some theft from the gardens, but it is not common. We hope that the food that is taken is being consumed by needy people rather than being trashed. We have discussed aiming the school security cameras at the garden beds to track this better. We would need to determine who would monitor the tapes on a regular basis for safety and security reasons. (Beth Schwisow, Denver Public Schools)
12. You mentioned helping the Food Bank, do you help out anyone else: homeless shelters, soup kitchens, etc.?

In Crested Butte / Gunnison we work with Latino groups, a senior citizens group that meets for senior meals at the Recreation Center, a senior living facility, a Big Brother / Big Sister program called Partners. We give them food donations and also to invite them into the gardens to work and then share the harvests (teach a man to fish...) (Holly Conn, Mountain Roots Food Project)

From Denver Public Schools (DPS): Slow Food Denver is working on getting gardens to grow food for the hungry of Denver. They will soon announce a program where school gardens can donate to a local food pantry. Currently, individual gardens can definitely choose to donate to whoever they want. Most likely, their yields may not allow them to donate much outside of their existing commitments- garden classes, school foodservice (us), and selling the produce at youth farmers’ markets. (Beth Schwisow, Denver Public Schools)

We are a small community so we don’t have either but it would be a great idea!! (Tammy Westerman, LiveWell Bent County)