



Farm to School Cooking in the Classroom

Farm to school cooking is about more than nutrition education. It's an experience that helps children of all ages engage with food in a meaningful way. Children love the act of preparing food, and they are often excited to taste what they cook. Because of this, farm to school cooking in the classroom is an ideal way to introduce students to seasonal fruits, vegetables, and flavors.



How many times must we see kids' eyes glaze over during another dry and boring lecture on what they should eat, the food pyramid, and lots of big words that really don't have much meaning to them? Farm to school cooking focuses on hands-on experiences where the children are given the opportunity to taste, smell, stir, sift, toss and get messy!

Of the farm to school components, cooking is the best opportunity to make the home-school connection. Every family cooks, and it's the rare parent who will say "no" to preparing a recipe that a child brings home from school excited to make.

ASAP's Growing Minds provides recipes for seasonal foods that can be obtained locally. This means cooking with apples or greens instead of strawberries in February, whether it's Valentine's Day or not. Farm to school cooking is a way to teach children about the seasons and how to savor what is growing right now.

Farm to school cooking doesn't have to be difficult or overly involved. Instructors can choose to host the class in a full kitchen if the school has one, use a portable cooktop in the classroom, or opt for a recipe that doesn't involve any kind of heat at all. It can be something as simple as a fresh salsa or a cucumber sandwich, something that spans two lessons like refrigerator pickles, or a crock pot soup that simmers in the corner all morning long.

Cooking in the classroom can be a special event led by a guest chef in the classroom. It can be a simple taste test of freshly picked lettuce conducted by a garden volunteer. It can be a way to share diverse student cultures within a school. Farm to School cooking has many different faces.



You may have heard the myth that children won't eat healthy food. However, children are no different from adults in that they appreciate food that is well prepared and is presented in a pleasant manner. More to the truth, it's adults that have acquired the taste for lots of fat, salt and sugar and who may not know how to prepare healthy meals. If given a chance to have some type of relationship to food - either from growing it themselves, visiting the place and meeting the farmer who grew it, or having a hand in its preparation - children are willing to not only try the food but enjoy it and ask for more. And when you are working with fresh, whole foods, that's your nutrition education!

Above all, farm to school cooking helps children understand where their food comes from and what it looks like in its whole form. It gives them a connection to

local farms and local agriculture. It gives them a motivating way to practice skills and apply concepts they learn across curriculum, including fractions, critical thinking, reading, counting, and measuring. After all, what's more motivating than a delicious snack or meal?!