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Kids learn about nutrition in the kitchen

LOCAL CHEFS, HIGH SCHOOL CULINARY STUDENTS TEACH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN TO COOK

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First graders from Johnson Elementary learn kitchen skills from chefs and students in Jordan High School's culinary program.



About 60 students from local elementary schools learned about nutrition last week at the first Child & Chef program in Columbus.

The program, started by the American Culinary Federation, a professional organization for chefs, implemented the program to teach children about cooking nutritious meals. Austin Scott, who teaches culinary arts in the Muscogee County School District at Jordan High School, opened his teaching kitchen to the students with help from two executive chefs, Eric Arceneaux, of the Big Eddy Country Club, and John Chapiewski, of Hilton Garden Inn. , and about 60 children from two elementary schools. Another chef, Jamie Keating, was ready to help, but he's in Germany competing in the 2008 Internationale Kochkunst Ausstellung, or Culinary Olympics for the American team.

According to the ACF, one in six children in America goes hungry every day. The USDA says more than 12 million children are "food-insecure," meaning they are hungry or at risk of being hungry. The Center on Hunger and Poverty at Brandeis University in Waltham, Mass., reports that children who are hungry have difficulty learning in school, have a shorter attention span and suffer more absences because of illness.

Local ACF members say besides teaching nutrition, they are hoping to bring the rate of childhood obesity down through this program.

Scott's culinary arts' students helped the younger children make soup and sandwich wraps under the supervision of Arceneaux and Chapiewski.

Arceneaux manned the soup making, while Chapiewski was in charge of the wrap stations.

"We're teaching them very basic things," Chapiewski said. "It's more to empower them and teach them about nutrition."

Two groups of first graders from Johnson Elementary and three classes of fifth graders from River Road Elementary were among the 60 kids.

The first thing the kids learned was to wash their hands.

Scott told the youngsters to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds or long enough to sing their ABCs.

Patrick Thompson, 17, a Jordan High School senior, called the day a learning experience.

"I learned how to speak to children," he said. "It gave me a fun time. And I got to see what the future is going to be like."

Jennifer Collins, 17, a junior at Northside High School, is taking the culinary arts classes with her twin, Megan.

"It was exciting," she said. "They were so cute and so easy to teach."

While Jennifer loves the class, it's her twin who is going to pursue a career as a chef.

"It was exciting to work with Chef John and Chef Eric," Megan Collins said, who plans to go to Cordon Bleu in Atlanta after getting a business degree at Columbus State University.

Another Jordan senior, Fred Jenkins, 17, said he liked teaching the little ones and seeing them smile as they studiously made their sandwich wraps.

"It's really fun," Jenkins said. "The best part is meeting people from other schools."

One of those people from "other schools" is Kevona Banks, 16, a junior who goes to Kendrick High School. She had so much fun that she wished events like this happened more often.

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Untilere King, 17, a Kendrick High junior, like Thompson, said she learned from the kids.

"They showed me how to make a wrap," she said. "Each one had their own way to make a wrap."

After the first group of first graders, Monica Aplin, 15, a Jordan High sophomore, said she was ready to work with the next group of students.

"I didn't know what to expect," she said. "Now, I'm more ready for this next group."

Among the fifth graders was Carlos Nieves, 10, who said he had made a sandwich wrap before. And he'll make more at home.

"This is better than school food," Carlos said.

"No, it's way better than school food," said

"This is fun. It's almost like you're going to a restaurant but you make your own food," Philip James, 9, said.

Kraig Lisenby, an 18-year-old Jordan High senior, has a life plan in mind. He's joining the military so he can learn to fly airplanes, and when he retires, he'll open a restaurant.

Clay Kitchens, 16, a Jordan High junior, was relegated to washing dishes because he failed to bring his chef's coat to a previous class.

He plans to keep cooking, not washing dishes for a living.

Dianna Moore, was celebrating her seventh birthday on Thursday. She wore a birthday badge on her shirt and said she'll make a wrap at home.

As a class project, Scott's students went through each recipe's nutritional value.

At the end of the day, some of Scott's students had been on their feet seven hours.

"I loved it," Thompson said. "I got the chance to hang with little kids."

Aplin was laughing as she said one girl, Alexis Hines, 6, told her that she wanted to be in high school so she could take the class.

QUICK & EASY LUNCH WRAP

1 tablespoon cream cheese
1 tablespoon ranch dressing
1 tortilla wrap
2 ounces cheese (sliced or shredded)
6 tomato slices, thin
4 ounces turkey or ham
2 Romaine lettuce leaves

Combine the cream cheese and ranch dressing. Leave the cream cheese at room temperature for a few minutes if it's too firm.

Smear 1 tablespoon of the cream cheese/ranch dressing mixture all over the tortilla.

Using the top third to half of the tortilla, layer 1 ounce of the cheese, three tomato slices, 2 ounces of turkey (or ham) and 1 Romaine lettuce leaf on the tortilla.

Carefully roll up the tortilla, tucking each end into the roll. Cut in half.

Nutritional information: 438.5 calories; 21 grams of protein; 45 grams of carbs; 19 grams of fat; 71 milligrams of cholesterol.

JORDAN'S FRUIT JUICE GELATIN

1 cup fruit juice (your favorite)

1 package unflavored gelatin
1 cup heated juice (the same as the first)
Sliced fruit (optional)

Heat 1 cup of juice in the microwave about one minute.

Open one package of unflavored gelatin and pour into a medium-sized bowl.

Pour the warm fruit juice over the gelatin and mix until the gelatin is completely dissolved.

Add the cold juice and stir.

Pour the gelatin into a shallow pan and put in the refrigerator.

Chill for an hour or until firm.

Nutritional information: 110 calories; 2 grams of protein; 27 grams of carbs; 0 grams of fat; 0 grams of cholesterol.

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CHEF ERIC'S EASY ASIAN SOUP

4 ounces turkey slices or pieces
2 tablespoons scallions, chopped
1 mushroom, sliced
2 tablespoons celery, chopped
2 tablespoons carrots, shredded
2 cups of water
1 package of ramen noodles (chicken flavor)

Place the turkey, scallions, mushrooms, celery and carrots in the bottom of a microwavable bowl.

Open the package of ramen noodles and take out the flavoring package. Pour flavoring over the top of the other ingredients. Break the ramen noodles in fourths and place in the bowl. Pour in the water. Place a lid over the bowl and microwave for three minutes. When done, let sit for five minutes. Take off the lid and stir.

Nutritional information: 273.5 calories; 11.5 grams of protein; 28 grams of carbs; 10.5 grams of fat; 36 milligrams of cholesterol.

LUNCH KABOBS

12 wooden skewers
1 cup baby carrots, cut into thirds
20 broccoli florets
20 cherry tomatoes
1/2 yellow bell pepper, cut into large cubes
8 ounces pineapple chunks
1/2 pound cooked ham

In a large, shallow dish, soak skewers in water for 30 minutes. Remove skewers from the water and allow them to dry. Place all the vegetables except the pepper in a steamer. Steam five minutes or until tender. Do not overcook. Thread the ingredients onto skewers.

Drizzle with your favorite dressing. We recommend Apple-Ginger dressing. Eat cold or microwave for 30 seconds.

Nutritional information: 42.4 calories; 38 grams of protein; 6.2 grams of carbs; .6 grams of fat; .4 milligrams of cholesterol.

BANANA BOAT

1 banana
1/2 cup mini-marshmallows
1/4 cup chocolate chips

First, peel back one section of peel from a ripe banana, making sure to keep the peel attached at the ends.

With a butter knife, cut halfway through the banana, lengthwise. Widen the slit and fill the space with miniature marshmallows and chocolate chips (about a dozen of each).

Replace the peel and securely wrap the banana in aluminum foil. Place the banana in the hot coals of a grill, to melt the chocolate and marshmallows, for about five-10 minutes. Carefully open the foil, and allow it to cool. Then dig in with a spoon.

Nutritional information: 42.4 calories; 38 grams of protein; 6.2 grams of carbs; .6 grams of fat; .4 milligrams of cholesterol.

TUNA BOAT

1 large cucumber, with seeds removed
4 plum tomatoes, with pulp removed
1 yellow bell pepper, cut in half
1/2 cup tuna salad
1-2 carrot or celery sticks
1 lettuce leaf
1 ounce cheddar cheese
1/2 cup fish-shaped crackers

Fill the veggie vessels (cucumber, plum tomato and yellow bell pepper) with tuna salad.

Push one end of a carrot or celery stick into the salad and set a triangle "sail" of pepper, lettuce or cheese next to it.

For the full effect, serve the lunch on a blue plate scattered with fish-shaped crackers.

Nutritional information: 406.5 calories; 41 grams of protein; 35 grams of carbs; 28 grams of fat; 47 milligrams of cholesterol.

STICKWICH-SANDWICH ON A STICK

2 slices of bread
1 ounce of cheese
2 ounces lunch meat
4 grape tomatoes
1 lettuce leaf
1 pickle, sliced
3 olives

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Cut up cubes of bread, cheese and lunch meat (we ordered 1/2-inch-thick slices of ham and turkey at the grocery's deli counter).

Slide the cubes on a skewer with other foods you child likes, like a grape tomato, lettuce, pickle or olive.

Set out a side of mayonnaise or mustard for dipping.

Nutritional information: 675 calories; 41 grams of protein; 22 grams of carbs; 47 grams fat; 250 milligrams of cholesterol.

VEGGIE WRAP

1/2 cup of cream cheese at room temperature

4 stalks of chives

Dill or basil, fresh

2 tortilla shells (8-10 inch ones)

1 tomato, sliced into thin rounds

8 spinach leaves

Place the cream cheese into a small bowl.

For herb cream cheese, use scissors to snip the herbs into tiny pieces, then mash them into the cream cheese with the back of a spoon.

Spread a little cream cheese on each of the spinach leaves, then spread the remainder in a thin layer on the tortillas.

Place three tomato slices in a row down the middle.

Top with the spinach leaves, cream cheese facing up.

Roll up each tortilla tightly into a log.

Pin the seams shut.

Use a serrated knife to slowly slice each log cross-wise into five or six pinwheel sandwiches.

Nutritional information: 387 calories; 10 grams of protein; 40 grams of carbs; 20 grams of fat; 45 milligrams of cholesterol.

SUPER CHEESY MacNCHEESE

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 cup heavy cream

1 cup half-and-half

2 egg yolks

1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg

8 ounces extra sharp cheddar cheese, grated

8 ounces Swiss cheese, grated

8 ounces Parmesan cheese, grated

2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce

1/2 teaspoon white pepper

1 cup bread crumbs

3 cups elbow macaroni

Heat oven to 400 degrees.

Grease a large casserole dish (three or four quart-sized) and set aside.

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil.

Add the macaroni and cook until tender but still firm to the bite, about 5-7 minutes. Drain well and transfer to the baking dish. Toss with olive oil to prevent pasta from sticking together.

Combine the cream, half-and-half, egg yolks and nutmeg in a medium saucepan. Place over medium heat and add 1 1/2 cups each of cheddar, Swiss and Parmesan cheeses.

Stir gently and cook until the cheeses are melted and the sauce is smooth, about 5-10 minutes. Do not boil. Season with Worcestershire sauce and white pepper.

Pour the sauce over the macaroni and stir until the pasta is completely covered. Sprinkle the remaining cheeses on top.

Bake until the sauce bubbles and the edges are slightly browned, about 15 minutes.

When the macaroni is cooked, remove from the oven. Set the oven to broil. Sprinkle the bread crumbs evenly over the macaroni and put it back in the oven. Broil for a minute or until the top is golden brown.

Serve immediately.

Nutritional information: 416 calories; 19.75 grams of protein; 24.7 grams of carbs; 27.1 grams of fat; 131.5 milligrams of cholesterol.

FUN LASAGNA

32 ounces of your favorite pasta sauce

1 small yellow onion, diced

10 ounces ground turkey

10 ounces lean Italian sausage

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon pepper

1 teaspoon Italian seasoning

2 large eggs

3 cups low-fat ricotta cheese

1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese

3 cups shredded mozzarella cheese

12 cooked lasagna noodles

Heat the oven to 350 degrees. Prepare two 7-by-11-inch pans by coating them with cooking spray and spreading 1/2 cup of the pasta sauce in the bottom of each pan.

In a large saucepan, brown the onion, ground turkey and sausage. Drain any fat, then add 1 jar of pasta sauce and the salt, pepper and Italian seasoning. Bring the mixture to a boil and simmer for 15 minutes.

In a bowl, lightly beat the eggs, and stir in the ricotta, Parmesan and 2 cups of the mozzarella until thoroughly mixed.

Boil the noodles in salted water until tender. Rinse in cold water and set them aside. When they've cooled, cut each noodle in half, length-wise.

On a tray, lay out a strip of noodle and spread about two tablespoons of the cheese mixture along the entire length. Then spread about two tablespoons of the meat mixture on top of the cheese.

Carefully roll up the noodle and place it, frilled edge up in one of the prepared pans. Repeat with the remaining noodles.

Pour the remaining sauce over the rolls and garnish the top of each roll with the last cup of the mozzarella. Cover each pan with aluminum foil and bake the rolls for 30 minutes.

Remove the foil and bake for 15 minutes more.

Makes 24 servings.

Nutritional information: 428 calories; 26 grams of protein; 21 grams of carbs; 27 grams of fat; 140 milligrams of cholesterol.

INSIDE-OUT BURGERS

1 pound lean ground beef
1 onion, minced
2 teaspoons mustard
Salt and pepper, to taste
1 cup low-fat cheese, grated
1 tablespoons ketchup
2 scallions, diced
4 hamburger buns

In a large bowl, mix the beef, onion, mustard and salt and pepper.

In a small bowl, mix the cheese, ketchup and scallions.

Divide the ground beef into eight equal portions and flatten those into patties.

Spread four of them with the cheese mixture and top each one with another patty.

Wet the edges and press them together to enclose the filling.

Cook the burgers under a hot broiler, in a heavy skillet or on a grill until they are cooked through, at least five minutes on each side.

Serve on toasted buns.

Nutritional information: 463.3 calories; 22.36 grams of protein; 26.3 grams of carbs; 19.78 grams of fat; 82 milligrams of cholesterol.

CORNFLAKE CHICKEN

3 cups cornflakes
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon paprika
1/2 teaspoon onion powder
1/4 teaspoon ground sage
1/2 cup milk
1 eight-cut chicken

Heat the oven to 375 degrees.

To make the coating, pour the cornflakes into a sealable gallon-sized plastic bag and use a rolling pin (or your hands) to crush the cereal.

Open the bag and add the flour, paprika, onion powder and sage. Shake salt and pepper (about 1/3-1/4 teaspoons each, depending on your family's taste) into the bag, reseal and shake until well-combined.

Pour the milk into a shallow bowl. Rinse the chicken pieces. Dry each piece. Dip one piece into the milk, drop it in the bag of cornflake mix and shake until the chicken is thoroughly coated.

Place the chicken skin-side up in an ungreased baking pan. Repeat until all the pieces are coated and are in the pan. Discard any leftover coating and wash your hands thoroughly after handling the raw chicken.

Bake for 50 minutes or until done.

Meanwhile, prepare side dishes such as potatoes, carrots and biscuits.

Nutritional information: 664 calories; 50.4 grams of protein; 22.5 grams of carbs; 41 grams of fat; 241 milligrams of cholesterol.