

# NEW YORK STATE HARVEST OF THE MONTH EDUCATORS TOOLKIT

NEW YORK STATE HARVEST OF THE MONTH

GET FRESH... ...ALL YEAR 'ROUND!

New York State Agriculture and Markets  
USDA FARM to SCHOOL PROGRAM

Fruits, vegetables and dairy products that are FRESH, TASTY, HEALTHY and from New York State farmers!

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**Agriculture  
and Markets**



**FARM to SCHOOL**  
PROGRAM

# Table of Contents

What are Farm to School and Harvest of the Month?.....	1
How to Use This Toolkit.....	3
a) Materials in this toolkit	
b) Planning ahead	
13 New York Harvest of the Month Items.....	5
Serving Local on the Lunch Line.....	6
a) Procuring from local farms and processors	
b) Kitchen and Staff	
c) Presentation	
Planning a Taste Test.....	9
Harvest of the Month in the Classroom.....	11
a) Health and Nutrition	
b) <i>Chef in the Classroom</i> cooking lessons	
Financing and Marketing.....	15
a) Fundraising	
b) Promotion	
Resources.....	17
a) New York State Harvest of the Month posters	
b) NYS Harvest Calendar	
c) Harvest of the Month recipes	
d) Links to other resources	

# What are Farm to School and Harvest of the Month?

**Farm to School** is a national initiative that promotes student wellness and improved child nutrition by connecting schools and local farms. In doing so, the bounty from local farms can be served in school cafeterias and this allows for more nutritious meals and rich nutrition education opportunities. Farm to School empowers children and their families to make informed food choices, it strengthens the local economy, and reduces the ecological footprint of our food systems.<sup>1</sup>

The Farm to School movement started over a decade ago in response to:

- The dramatic increase in childhood obesity in the United States due in large part to the increase in cheap, processed foods available and marketed to children.
- Children not knowing where their food comes from.
- Food insecurity – Many kids do not have adequate access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

Farm to School programs differ from school to school but may include one or more of the following:

- Procurement: Locally grown foods served in the cafeteria and/or served as a snack in the classroom.
- Education: Educational activities related to agriculture, health and nutrition.
- School Gardens: Hands-on gardening as well as standards-based garden lessons in science, math, ELA, social studies and the fine arts.

With the reauthorization of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act in 2010 and Michelle Obama's *Let's Move!* Initiative to solve the problem of childhood obesity within a generation, the United States Department of Agriculture and Markets (USDA) made sweeping changes to the nutritional standards for the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs. One component of these new standards is the requirement that students must take either a fruit or vegetable every day as part of their reimbursable school lunch. This regulation was reinforced with the My Plate Initiative that shows that half of a healthy plate should contain fruits and vegetables.

Encouraging kids to try new, locally-grown ingredients is where the National Farm to School Movement and **Harvest of the Month** in particular can play a key role.

## Harvest of the Month

**Harvest of the Month** is a Farm to School initiative that promotes a different locally grown food in the school cafeteria each month. The goal of this is to increase access and consumption of fruits and vegetables and to encourage healthy food choices. School cafeterias generally serve the featured produce 2-3 times during the month and the more the ingredient is integrated on the menu, the better! Farm to School programs all across the country are utilizing **Harvest of the Month** to educate students about eating healthy and increasing their preference for these smarter meal options. Taste tests have been held in the cafeteria, curriculum connections made in the classroom and many local ingredients integrated into menus.

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<sup>1</sup> Learn more about Farm to School on the National Farm to School website: <http://www.farmtoschool.org/about>

**New York's Harvest of the Month** program promotes New York grown fruits and vegetables as well as New York dairy products. Ultimately, **Harvest of the Month** supports New York farms, gets kids to try new foods and promotes better learning and academic achievement.<sup>2</sup> Due to its size and topography, New York has a multitude of growing conditions making it a leading agricultural producer for a variety of products. While many people may know that New York is the second largest producer of apples in the United States, some may not know that New York ranks number two in cabbage production and ranks third for milk and dairy production<sup>3</sup>. Some of New York's leading vegetable crops are squash, sweet corn, onions and tomatoes. **Harvest of the Month** posters feature 13 local products that are procured from farms and sold to schools across the state.

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<sup>2</sup> Cornell Cooperative Extension produced a toolkit in 2007 called Farm to School in the Northeast. See pg. 57, Making the Classroom Connection: [http://farmtoschool.cce.cornell.edu/files/2014/06/fts\\_toolkit\\_oct07\\_full-v6i32y.pdf](http://farmtoschool.cce.cornell.edu/files/2014/06/fts_toolkit_oct07_full-v6i32y.pdf)  
<sup>3</sup> 2015-2016 Agricultural Statistics Annual Bulletin: [https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics\\_by\\_State/New\\_York/Publications/Annual\\_Statistical\\_Bulletin/2016/2015-2016%20NY%20Annual%20Bulletin.pdf](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/New_York/Publications/Annual_Statistical_Bulletin/2016/2015-2016%20NY%20Annual%20Bulletin.pdf)

# How to Use this Toolkit

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets developed this toolkit to assist New York State schools in implementing **Harvest of the Month** programs. Featuring a different local product in the cafeteria each month can be as simple serving local apples, raw carrots, cherry tomatoes, or local salad greens on a salad bar. Some simple cooked options might include corn on the cob, steamed broccoli, roasted potatoes, roasted winter squash, or mac and cheese with New York State cheddar.

In addition to featuring a different New York State-grown food as part of the reimbursable school lunch program in the cafeteria each month, school cafeterias can run monthly taste tests featuring those same items. Schools with gardens can also grow many of the **Harvest of the Month** items for students to taste in the classroom. **Harvest of the Month** can also be coordinated with a *Chef in the Classroom* cooking program, where students create recipes under the supervision of a professional chef. Those recipes can then be shared with the entire school during a taste test in the cafeteria.

This toolkit comes with:

- Recommendation of 13 local New York State foods to feature each month
- Overview on serving local foods in the cafeteria
- Guide to starting a *Chef in the Classroom* cooking program
- Guide to planning a cafeteria taste test
- Promotional materials to download
- Where to find Harvest of the Month recipes
- Links to several outside resources

The information and materials in this toolkit is useful for school administrators, food service providers, teachers, parents, and non-profits working with schools.

## Materials in this Toolkit

This toolkit includes downloadable links to **Harvest of the Month** posters and reference links to recipes incorporating ingredients on the state's website. There is also a link to a major thematic Harvest of the Month poster. The Resources section includes links to USDA Best Practices and Local Procurement guides for food service providers, and educational tools that include Agriculture in the Classroom lesson plans and Fruit and Veggie Fun Fact Flyers. Teachers can incorporate the educational materials into their lessons to make classroom connections to the **Harvest of the Month** program.

New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets developed 13 different **Harvest of the Month** posters and one large thematic poster that features all **Harvest of the Month** items. They are available on the New York Farm to School website for schools to download and print. To request already printed posters, please reach out to [farmtoschool@agriculture.ny.gov](mailto:farmtoschool@agriculture.ny.gov).

These posters can be used at schools to promote the featured New York State product each month. Schools have the flexibility to choose the month they want to feature each item

according to the growing season in their region and product availability. For example, in the North Country, there may not be access to fresh tomatoes in September, but there may be an abundance of broccoli. In this case, featuring broccoli as a **Harvest of the Month** item would make sense for September. If it is available in November and the school district is further south in Long Island, then broccoli could be featured as a **Harvest of the Month** item in November. The intent is to give each school district the flexibility to make their **Harvest of the Month** program easy to run, cost effective, and as successful as possible.

## **Planning Ahead**

When launching a **Harvest of the Month** program, it is important to plan ahead. It is helpful to know what fruits and vegetables are available during the different months of the school year (See NYS Harvest Calendar in the Resources Section). Not every school district will be able to start out doing the full ten-month **Harvest of the Month** program. If this is the first year implementing **Harvest of the Month**, pick and choose what to feature and when to begin. Start simple. Choose the easiest months when New York items are most readily available in the region. Start small and grow the program slowly.

# The 13 Harvest of the Month Items

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets uses 13 New York State-grown products to feature for **New York's Harvest of the Month** program. These products were chosen based on availability, versatility and ease of preparation, preference among children, and suggestions from food service directors with active Farm to School programs.

**Tomatoes** – Available June through October. Nice option for September. Can be frozen in the summer and used in school pasta sauce later in the year. Easy and fun to grow in school gardens.

**Apples** – Available year round. Easiest local product for schools to purchase and *jump start* a Farm to School program. Kids love them. Lots of curriculum connections as many schools go on apple picking farm visits in the fall.

**Squash** – Available August through January. Easy to roast or make into soups. Lots of curriculum connections: Native American 3 Sisters Garden, Halloween, Thanksgiving.

**Corn** – Available August through November. Easy to serve fresh on the cob or freeze for later in the year. Popular with kids. Curriculum connections: Native American 3 Sisters Garden, Thanksgiving.

**Broccoli** – Available June through November. Easy and versatile to prepare and freezes well.

**Cabbage Family: Cabbage** is available June through March. A favorite among food service providers due to its low cost and versatility. **Kale** is available June through December. Increasing in popularity. Easy to grow in school gardens. Kids love it raw, as chips, in soups and with pasta.

**Carrots** – Available July through April. Kids love them. Easy to prepare raw for salad bars or roasted.

**Onions and Garlic** – Onions are available year-round. Garlic is available from July through December. Popular ingredients in many dishes. Easy to grow in school gardens. Lots of curriculum connections, like with plant science.

**Potatoes** – Available all year. Inexpensive for schools to purchase and very easy to prepare. Fun to plant in school gardens.

**Beets** – Available June through February. Easy to roast or pickle. Fun to grow in school gardens. Good vegetable for taste tests as many kids have never eaten them.

**Lettuce** – Available May through October, or year-round in greenhouses. Great local item to include on salad bars and for taste tests. Easy to grow in school gardens or start early in classrooms for micro-greens.

**Spinach** – Available May through October. Versatile. Can be included on the salad bar, or cooked in pastas, frittatas or stir-fries. Easy to grow in school gardens and to start indoors.

**Dairy – Milk, Yogurt and Cheese** are available all year. Add to pasta sauce, mac and cheese, pizza, soups, muffins and fruit parfaits.

# Serving Up Local on the Lunch Line

## Procuring from Local Farms and Processors

It is important to remember there are **virtually no barriers** to incorporating local produce into school cafeteria menus. With the USDA rulings on geographical preference effective May 23, 2011, “institutions receiving funds through the Child Nutrition Programs may apply an optional geographic preference in the procurement of unprocessed locally grown or locally raised agricultural products.” Generally speaking, food service directors can purchase local products without going through a formal bidding process or special contracts<sup>4</sup>

Additionally, New York State is one of eight states participating in a USDA Pilot Project for Unprocessed Fruits and Vegetables<sup>5</sup>. As part of the 2014 Farm Bill, the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) are conducting a pilot project in up to eight States to provide more purchasing flexibility and options for unprocessed fruits and vegetables. This pilot project allows participating states to (1) use multiple suppliers and products established and qualified by the Secretary and (2) designate a geographic preference, if desired.

How to find local produce?

The ‘Getting Local Food into New York State Schools’ toolkit developed by New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets has specific answers. Please look for this in our ‘Resources’ section of our Farm to School website: [www.agriculture.ny.gov/f2s](http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/f2s). Some ideas for looking for local produce are below:

- Current distributor: Find out if the distributor(s) the school district is working with is a USDA Approved Vendor for the USDA Pilot Project or ask what local products are available through the distributor(s). Create the demand for local ingredients.
- Connect with local farms at farmers’ markets and local farm stands.
- Contact a Cornell Cooperative Extension office to get a list of local farms nearby.
- Locate CSA<sup>6</sup> farms and buy shares for the cafeteria.

Think Outside of the Box:

- Set up relationships with farms for a monthly contract. Request pricing for seconds (B-grade quality products are hard for farms to sell and great to use in soups and sauces).
- Set up relationships with local supermarkets for B-grade produce – they might even donate for special events.
- Work with food hubs, local processors and local distributors.

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<sup>4</sup> See USDA worksheet: Geographic Preference – What It Is and How to Use It [http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/F2S\\_GeographicPreference\\_March2014.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/F2S_GeographicPreference_March2014.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Over 800 New York State School Districts currently in the National School Lunch Program have USDA funding (over \$80 million) to procure commodities through this pilot program. Fresh fruits and vegetables, minimally processed items such as apple slices, baby carrots, and shredded lettuce, as well as individually quick frozen (IQF) frozen locally sourced produce, are all eligible under this program for year-round purchasing. As soon as a vendor is placed on the USDA Approved Vendor list, they can begin to do business under the pilot program. The goal of the Pilot Project is to develop additional opportunities for schools to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables with entitlement funding, while using pre-existing commercial distribution channels and school relationships with growers, produce wholesalers, and distributors. The pilot supports the use of locally grown foods in school meal programs using entitlement funds.

<sup>6</sup> Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a food production and distribution system that directly connects farmers and consumers. Consumers buy “shares” in a farm’s harvest in advance and receive a portion of the weekly harvest of vegetables.

- Connect with gleaning groups (contact a Cornell Cooperative Extension office nearby).

## Kitchens and Staff

There is a huge opportunity to serve locally grown ingredients even in a very basic kitchen. Some kitchens lack equipment and storage facilities and rely almost exclusively on ovens and microwaves to heat up frozen foods.

Here are some ways to incorporate local, fresh produce for a **Harvest of the Month** program.

- Local Salad Bar: Serve local lettuce, spinach, kale, tomatoes, broccoli, and carrots in season.
- Roast local potatoes and other root vegetables
- Fresh fruit and yogurt parfaits

If upgrading the kitchen space is an option, the addition of a walk-in cooler to store the fresh produce would be ideal. A cooktop like a portable induction burner would make it possible to create fresh soups and steamed vegetables. Additional tools: chef knives, fruit and vegetable slicers and peelers would also be helpful. If the school cafeteria does not have a salad bar, apply for a Let's Move Salad Bars to Schools grant.<sup>7</sup>

## Staff Training and Menu Selection

If the school kitchen staff has not done a lot of scratch cooking, look for training opportunities in the area. BOCES offers professional development programs for school cafeteria workers in the summer. Offer a training workshop like the Finger Lakes Farm to Cafeteria "Hands-On Training Workshops to Increase Local Farm Product in the Cafeterias" held in Ontario County.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service website has a number of informative resources on food safety including a Best Practices for Handling Fresh Produce in Schools guide that can be downloaded and distributed to kitchen staff.<sup>9</sup>

Recipes that feature fresh fruits and vegetables can be found on the USDA's Team Nutrition website under *Recipes for Healthy Kids*. The recipes are categorized by whole grains, orange and dark green vegetables, and legumes. Vermont Farm to School has a *New School Cuisine* cookbook of kid-tested recipes that meet the USDA dietary guidelines. This can be downloaded for free on their website. (Links to these websites can be found in the back of this toolkit under *Resources*.)

Promotion of Farm to School can be the key to success. When sending out the monthly menu to school families, make sure the word **LOCAL** and **Harvest of the Month** are clearly shown on the days that local produce is part of the meal. This will encourage parents to get their children to buy on those days.

Keep the momentum going with signage in the cafeteria and in the halls, email blasts, announcements on the school website, and letters to families. Download our **Harvest of the Month** posters each month and post the thematic **Harvest of the Month** poster in high traffic

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<sup>7</sup> To get a salad bar in your school, go to: <http://saladbars2schools.org>

<sup>8</sup> Finger Lakes Farm to Cafeteria "Hands-On Training Workshops To Increase Local Farm Products in Cafeterias" <http://www.cceontario.org/cce-site-documents/F2C-Training-Workshops.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> USDA's Food and Nutrition Service webpage on Food Safety: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/food-safety/produce-safety-resources>

areas so kids will see them often. A great place to start promoting **Harvest of the Month** is on the cafeteria walls where the lunch line forms. These colorful, informative signs will engage the kids in conversation about what they will be eating for lunch that day as they wait in line.

It is important to get kids directly involved with the program. Encourage them to create their own posters promoting taste tests, harvest fests, fundraisers, and other **Harvest of the Month** events happening in their schools. Get the school art department involved as well. Promoting **Harvest of the Month** and getting students involved and excited about the program can make a big difference in their willingness to try the featured local item on the menu.

## Presentation

Presentation and placement are critical to encouraging children to make healthy food choices. Small, subtle changes can have a huge impact.

Kids have a limited amount of time to eat lunch in school. Making fruits and vegetables more convenient by offering them in bite-size pieces, will increase consumption. According to a study conducted by Cornell University, when kids were given freshly sliced apples as opposed to whole apples, apple sales went up 71%.<sup>10</sup> To offer this, schools may need to invest in a commercial grade fruit sectionizer and apple corer, which will cost approximately \$250. It will be worth the investment. Schools will see more fresh fruit consumed and far fewer whole apples ending up in the compost pile or landfills.

Here are some additional tips:

- Place fruit in attractive bowls by the cash register and create signs urging kids to eat it. (Placing fresh fruit at the end of the line, a place usually reserved for impulse buys like cookies, can increase fruit sales by 70%).
- Place healthy foods like broccoli, carrots and kale at the beginning of the line and give the dish an exciting name like “X-Ray Vision Honey Glazed Carrots.”
- Moving the salad bar away from the wall and into the path of the kids walking through the lunch line can triple salad sales.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Kids More Likely to Eat Apples when Fruit is Sliced: <http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/2013/04/kids-more-likely-eat-apples-when-fruit-sliced>

<sup>11</sup> For more helpful hints, go to <sup>11</sup> The Smarter Lunchroom: <http://smarterlunchrooms.org>

# Planning a Taste Test

A taste test is a great way for food service providers to try out new recipes with minimal investment, and at the same time, create excitement in the lunchroom and increase participation.

Taste tests empower students to make more nutritious choices! Kids are more likely to try a bite of something new rather than commit to an entire serving. Let students know that if the taste test is popular, then that dish will be incorporated into the monthly menus. For the younger students, give out colorful stickers that say, "I Tried It!" or "Veggies are Awesome!" to encourage them to sample the new dish. Stickers are also a great way to generate conversation at home and engage the family in the **Harvest of the Month** program.

## Taste Test Logistics Timeline

At the beginning of the school year, plan out the number of taste tests to conduct for the whole year. Will there be one per month for each **Harvest of the Month** item? Or will it be limited to a few times a year?

### Two- three weeks prior to taste test

- Decide to do a taste test for a single fruit, vegetable or dairy product, or taste testing a special dish created in a *Chef in the Classroom* program, or a potential new menu item to be served in the cafeteria.
- Determine how many sample-size servings are needed and adjust the recipe accordingly.
- If prepping is labor intensive, find parent volunteers to help in the kitchen or ask the Home and Careers teacher if his/her students can make the dish.
- Find at least two parent volunteers to run the taste test in the cafeteria.
- Check with current distributor to find out if they can source the fruit or vegetable locally. If not, contact local farmers through farmers' markets, local farm stands, Cornell Cooperative Extension, or New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.
- If there is enough produce growing in the school garden, such as kale, lettuce, spinach, or cherry tomatoes, then get the students to harvest them for a special student-run taste test.

### One week prior to taste test

- Advertise the taste test:
  - School website with link to recipe, nutritional information, fun facts
  - PTA or Cafeteria Facebook page
  - PTA email blast
  - **Harvest of the Month** posters in the halls
  - School newspaper
  - Invite the local media
- Check with food service providers to make sure all necessary food items have been purchased and marked for delivery on the date needed.

- Prepare a taste test survey. Make sure there are materials, tools and equipment prepared for the survey. Such as:
  - Ballots or beans
  - Buckets or jars decorated with happy face, neutral face and sad face, or thumbs up, thumbs sideways or thumbs down
  - Stickers to hand out to encourage sampling
  - Dry erase board with markers for surveying
  - Poster board, markers, and small dot stickers for surveying
  - Easel

### **Day of the taste test**

- Promote taste test in school announcements and in the classroom. Make sure signs are up in the halls.
- Food prep volunteers come in early to prepare the dish.
- Taste test volunteers set up tasting and survey areas.
- Takes pictures to document the taste test and publish the results.

### **Follow up**

- Send home a family newsletter with the recipe, photos, and results of the taste test.
- If the dish was part of a *Chef in the Classroom* program, the class that made the dish with the chef could tally up the votes and present the results to the school on the school bulletin board, website or blog, or in the school newspaper.

### **Option:**

For a more accurate account of the outcome – Measure the success.

If there is already a composting program at school for its leftovers in the cafeteria, weigh the compost bin before and after the taste test to determine how much the kids are actually eating of the samples rather than just tasting and tossing.

# Harvest of the Month in the Classroom

## Health and Nutrition

Studies show that kids that actively engage in cooking are more likely to try new foods. Instead of being told what to eat, kids take ownership and pride in creating the dishes themselves.

Getting kids to make healthier food choices can be a challenge. According to a 2012 report by the Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity, the fast food industry spent \$4.6 billion to advertise mostly unhealthy products targeting children and teens.<sup>12</sup> A research brief by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found that nearly all (98 percent) of food advertisements viewed by children are for products that are high in fat, sugar or sodium.<sup>13</sup> The sooner children are exposed to healthier food choices, the more likely they are to eat them during school lunches.

## Chef in the Classroom: A Recipe for Success

Cooking classes are a fun, hands-on way to get students excited about eating fresh fruits and vegetables. The class can be as simple as making a salad with lettuce, spinach, or kale purchased from a local farmers' market or grown in a school garden. It can also be more involved, like making a butternut squash soup. The most important thing to remember is it must be **fun and hands-on**. This is not a cooking demo. The students work as a team, guided by the chef instructor.

Before a date is set for the first cooking class, look for a chef and make a plan.

### Finding a Chef

When looking for a chef, consider the following:

- Parent volunteer with cooking and teaching experience
- Volunteer chef from a local restaurant or catering company
- Student or recent graduate from a culinary school or BOCES
- Partnership with a chef registered with the Lets Move program, <http://www.chefsmovetoschools.org/>
- Professional chef educator

### Make a Plan

Once a chef is selected, make a plan. Here are some useful questions to ask:

- What is the Harvest of the Month item to be featured?
- What dish will be made and where will the ingredients come from? Choose recipes with a small number of ingredients, but lots of prep work so everyone will have the opportunity to do something. Try to find recipes that include produce from the school garden.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://news.yale.edu/2013/11/04/fast-food-companies-still-target-kids-marketing-unhealthy-products>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.policyarchive.org/handle/10207/21370>

- What is the duration of the class? For most cooking projects 45 minutes is normally earmarked for a cooking project.
- Are there any students with food allergies? Plan recipes accordingly.
- Will ingredients be cooked or dishes made with using only raw fruits and vegetables?
- Is there a Home and Careers room with a working kitchen that can be sued? Or will the chef need to bring in a “mobile kitchen?”
- What are the ages of the students involved in the cooking demo? Make sure the recipe is age appropriate regarding skills needed to accomplish it.
- How many kids are in the class? For large groups, seek out volunteer help.
- Is there a specific budget to work with?

### **Steps to Setting up a Chef in the Classroom Visit<sup>14</sup>**

First, determine how much time is needed for the cooking demo. Typically, a cooking class takes approximately one hour from set-up to clean-up.

Next, decide on a recipe. Determine if there are any students with food allergies. The recipe should be appropriate for the abilities of the age group involved and assign enough tasks so that everyone has a chance to participate. The recipe must feature fruits, vegetables or dairy products that are readily available locally. Consider the cost of the ingredients as well, since it is important to encourage the children to make this dish again with their families.

### **Here is a basic breakdown of a typical class:**

#### **Set-up (10 minutes)**

Chef arrives and sets-up equipment, supplies and ingredients. Chef sets up food prep stations with cutting mats, child-safe knives and other tools the students will need for the recipe. This is a good time for kids to wash their hands.

#### **Introduction (5 minutes)**

Chef introduces the recipe and goes over interesting facts about the local item being featured. (See Resources section of this toolkit for links to *Fun Fact Flyers*)

Some key points to address:

- Where are the ingredients from? – Talk about the local farms that grew the produce.
- Ask students if they have eaten these fruits or vegetables before? How were they prepared? Do they like them?
- What are the health benefits of these fruits and vegetables?
- Why is it important to eat local, seasonal produce?
  - Health
  - Community
  - Environment
- What does sustainable farming mean?

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<sup>14</sup> The Kids Cook Mondays website has a helpful online resource called, The Kids Cook Mondays Educators' Toolkit. <http://www.thekidscookmonday.org/toolkits/>

## **Cooking Rules, Kitchen Safety and Hygiene (5 minutes)**

Review personal hygiene rules when cooking and go over kitchen safety (caution around outlets, hot surfaces and hot liquids, blenders and sharp tools.) Demonstrate the proper way to hold a knife safely when chopping fruits and vegetables. Remember to work as a team. Never criticize and remind students not to “yuck someone’s yum.”

## **Review of recipe and tasks to be done (5 minutes)**

Introduce the ingredients and demonstrate how they should be cut or measured. Go over recipe instructions and assign tasks to each student.

## **Preparation (20-25 minutes depending on the complexity of the recipe)**

Go around the room assisting students with their tasks. (It is helpful to have an assistant or volunteer, especially with younger children. Ask the PTA to help find a parent volunteer or ask a high school student from Home and Careers or Health class to pitch in and get community service credit).

## **Serving and tasting (5 minutes)**

Involve students as much as possible in all aspects of the class – ask for volunteers to hand out spoons, forks, napkins, and help serve. As students taste their culinary creation, ask them to summarize how it was prepared. What were the ingredients? What did we do first?

## **Wrap up and clean up (5 minutes)**

How did it taste? Ask for a thumbs up, down, or sideways to get a sense of how they liked it. As a follow up to this class, have the kids chart the results. Those that didn’t like it, ask ‘why’- too bland, too salty, not sweet enough, too thick, too strong? Ask what they would do differently – add this, take out that?

Ask kids to help clean work surfaces and tools. If the school has a compost pile, ask for volunteers to put all fruit and vegetable scraps into a bucket.

Prompt students to come up with a fancy name for their dish. Encourage them to take recipes home and share with their families. Ideally, this dish can be served in the school cafeteria and offered to all the students to sample in a school-wide taste test. (See section on Planning a Taste Test)

## **Related Materials**

To further reinforce the topics of sustainability and the importance of eating locally-grown farm produce, use these educational materials:

- Fun facts flyers on featured fruit or vegetable (See links in Resources Section)
- New York State Harvest Calendar (See Resources)
- List of related books on sustainable farming, gardening and cooking (See Resources). Get school librarian involved to read a book supporting this activity
- For older students, show the film, *What’s On Your Plate?* or *Food Inc.* and use supportive lesson plans

## **Kids Cooking Kit**

Rather than depend on the chef to bring in the cooking kit each time there is a cooking class, it is a good idea to keep a cooking kit in the school. Below is a list of the essential items for a cooking kit:

- 1 large bin to store all supplies
- 1 portable cooktop. (An induction burner is the safest option)
- 1 adult chef knife and cutting board
- 4 large mixing bowls (plastic or stainless steel are best)
- 4 medium mixing bowls
- 4 mini prep bowls
- 1 large stainless steel skillet
- 1 8-quart stainless steel stockpot
- 1 3-quart stainless steel saucepan
- 1 set of measuring cups
- 1 set of measuring spoons
- 2 large mixing spoons
- 2 spatulas
- 1 ladle
- 2 potato mashers
- 1 whisk
- 20 plastic cutting mats
- 10-20 kids' nylon chef knives (try Curious Chef Knives)
- 4 vegetable peelers
- 2 box graters
- 1 micro plane for zesting
- 1 strainer or colander

Paper towels, wipes, disinfectant cleaner, paper plates, bowls, napkins, cutlery, etc.

## **Costs and Budget**

How will this be paid for?

A cooking class with a volunteer chef and donated ingredients can cost virtually nothing and can be accomplished with a dedicated group of parents, teachers and administrators. A typical cooking class with a professional chef, an assistant, and fresh ingredients from the farm may cost upwards of \$200. Possible sources of funding may come from the PTA, a school foundation, local grants, community businesses, etc.

The Kids Cooking Kit can cost \$250-\$500. Fundraising ideas are referred to on the next page.

## **Document**

A picture says a thousand words. In advance of the class, send photo release forms to parents/guardians. Photographs of the students are a fun way to promote their tasty creations on the school website, local newspapers, and in school newsletters.

# Fundraising

Funding suggestions for your **Harvest of the Month** program:

## Apply for Grants

If the school has a foundation or there is a community foundation with a mission to promote student health and wellness, one can apply for grant for a specific event like a Harvest Festival, a field trip to a local farm, or a school-wide taste test in the cafeteria. A larger grant can underwrite a larger program like monthly *Chef in the Classroom* cooking classes or monthly taste tests in the cafeteria.

## Host a Fundraiser

Have a PTA fundraiser. Instead of the traditional bake sale, sell:

- A 5 lb. bag of local apples or corn
- Local farm products like jams or sauces, plants and flower bouquets, holiday pies
- In the springtime, sell seed packets and seedlings
- If there is an established school garden, have a plant sale or set up a “Farmers’ Market” on campus
- School cookbook with kid-tested and approved recipes

Sponsor an event like a Harvest Dinner at a local farm or a Barn Dance. Plan a Community Spaghetti Dinner in the school cafeteria.

## In-Kind Support

Ask for in-kind donations from local businesses in the form of materials (like plants, seeds, soil, tools and equipment) or services such as carpentry and landscape design to help build a school garden. Instead of paying for a professional chef to run the *Chef in the Classroom* program, ask different chefs in the community to donate their services.

## Promotion

It is important to get the word out about the **Harvest of the Month** program. Be sure to document the events with lots of photos of the students enjoying New York-grown foods in the cafeteria, cooking in the classroom, harvesting and tasting in the school garden, visiting local farms and participating in taste tests. Post pictures of families and the community enjoying Harvest and fundraising events. Here are some additional suggestions:

- Send a press release to the local media to highlight a special event at school
- Make announcements on school and community email blasts
- Post stories and recipes on PTA or community social media and other online platforms
- Have a presence at Back to School night, PTA picnics, fundraisers and other school events
- Get elementary school kids involved in making posters to hang in the halls and cafeteria
- Set up a table at a local farmers' market with materials promoting Farm to School programs and events
- Send out monthly newsletters to keep parents informed about what their kids did that month and how parents can get involved
- Involve middle school and high school students: Encourage them to write articles in school newspapers and student blogs

# Online Resources

## New York State Harvest of the Month

Posters that promote fresh foods grown in New York State are available on the Department's Farm to School website: <http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/f2s>

- Harvest of the Month 24 x 36 thematic poster
- Harvest of the Month 11 x 17 product posters:
  - Apples
  - Carrots
  - Tomatoes
  - Lettuce
  - Broccoli
  - Onions
  - Dairy: milk & yogurt
  - Spinach
  - Cabbage family
  - Squash
  - Beets
  - Corn
  - Potatoes

[New York State Harvest Calendar: From A\(pples\) to Z\(ucchini\), your guide to New York's produce](#)

## Harvest of the Month Websites:

Buffalo City Schools Harvest of the Month  
<http://buffalofarmtoschool.org>

Penfield Central School District Harvest of the Month  
<http://www.penfield.edu/departments.cfm?subpage=1355075>

Vermont Harvest of the Month  
<http://www.vermontharvestofthemonth.org>

Green Mountain Farm to School Harvest of the Month  
<http://greenmountainfarmtoschool.org/programs/harvest-of-the-month/>

Massachusetts Harvest of the Month  
<http://www.massfarmtoschool.org/programs/hotm/>

Island Grown Schools Harvest of the Month  
<http://www.islandgrowschools.org/harvest-of-the-month>

## Harvest of the Month Recipes

Please refer to our website under the 'Resources' page: [www.agriculture.ny.gov/f2s](http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/f2s)

## Farm to School Websites:

National Farm to School Network <http://www.farmtoschool.org>  
Cornell U. Farm to School Programs <http://farmtoschool.cce.cornell.edu>  
Massachusetts Farm to School <http://www.massfarmtoschool.org>

New Jersey Farm to School <http://farmtoschool.nj.gov/>  
Vermont FEED <http://www.vtfeed.org>  
Vermont Farm to School <http://vermontfarmtoschool.org>  
Hudson Valley Farm to School <http://www.hvfs.org>  
Farm to Cafeteria Ontario County <http://www.cceontario.org/temp2.asp?id=farm-to-cafeteria>

### **National Farm to School Website Resources:**

The Benefits of Farm to School – 3 page brochure  
<http://www.farmtoschool.org/Resources/BenefitsFactSheet.pdf>

Getting Started with Farm to School – 2 page brochure  
<http://www.farmtoschool.org/Resources/Getting%20Started%20with%20F2S.pdf>

Funding Farm to School – 2 page brochure  
<http://www.farmtoschool.org/Resources/Funding%20Farm%20to%20School%20Factsheet.pdf>

Celebrate Farm to School Month – 2 page Brochure  
<https://www.nafcc.org/file/f38e56ad-ef3d-4ae5-885c-9245e370116d>

National Farm to School Month 2016 Resources  
<http://www.farmtoschoolmonth.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/sample-menu1.pdf>

### **How-to Guides**

Farm to School in the Northeast Toolkit  
[http://farmtoschool.cce.cornell.edu/files/2014/06/fts\\_toolkit\\_oct07\\_full-v6i32y.pdf](http://farmtoschool.cce.cornell.edu/files/2014/06/fts_toolkit_oct07_full-v6i32y.pdf)

Tools and Resources form VT Feed  
<http://www.vtfeed.org/tools>

The Kindergarten Initiative by the Food Trust  
[http://thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media\\_items/the-knidergarten-initiative.original.pdf](http://thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media_items/the-knidergarten-initiative.original.pdf)

Going Local: Paths to Success for Farm to School Programs  
<http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/going-local-paths-to-success-for-farm-to-school-programs>

### **Cooking with Kids in the Classroom:**

Jamie Oliver's Learn Your Fruits and Vegetables Program: YouTube video  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uOWSUekV2s0&feature=youtu.be>

Jamie Oliver's Know Your Fruits and Veggies Program  
<http://www.jamieoliver.com/pdfs/us-veg-sample.pdf>

New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets Veggie Trading Cards and Lesson Plans  
[http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/f2s/documents/NYS%20DAM\\_Produce%20cards3.2009.pdf](http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/f2s/documents/NYS%20DAM_Produce%20cards3.2009.pdf)  
<http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/f2s/documents/Classroom%20Lessons-8-2009.pdf>

Fruit and Veggie Fun Fact Flyers and Chef in the Classroom lesson plans  
<http://www.hvfs.org>

Chef in the Classroom Recipes  
<http://www.hvfs.org/#!/recipes/cic0>

Chef in the Classroom Lesson Plans and template  
<http://www.hvfs.org/#!/lesson-plans/c8tf>

Sylvia Center Sample Curriculum and recipes:  
<http://www.sylviacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/2016-Winter-TSCExpandedED-Sample-Curriculum.pdf>

Days of Taste Culinary program for 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> graders developed by AIWF  
<http://spoonsacrossamerica.org/pg/12>

Cooking Matters: Cooking Demo Toolkit  
<https://cookingmatters.org/sites/default/files/CMCK.pdf>

Kids Cook Monday Toolkit  
<http://www.thekidscookmonday.org/toolkits/>

Chefs Move to Schools Calendar  
<http://www.chefsmovetoschools.org/chefs/>

### **Farm to School Curriculum:**

National Agriculture in the Classroom Lesson Plans  
<http://www.agclassroom.org/teacher/matrix/>

New York Agriculture in the Classroom Lesson Plans  
<http://www.agclassroom.org/ny/resources/lesson.htm>

USDA Standards Based Nutrition Education: Dig In  
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/dig-standards-based-nutrition-education-ground>

Groundworks Center  
<http://farmtoschool.tbaisd.org/lesson-plans/>

High School Lesson Plans  
<http://www.iatp.org/documents/farm-to-school-youth-leadership-curriculum-all-lessons-and-worksheets>

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project  
<http://growing-minds.org>

Growing Minds Farm to School Lesson Plans  
<http://growing-minds.org/lesson-plans/>

Growing Minds Farm to School: Children's Literature  
<http://growing-minds.org/childrens-literature/>

Growing Minds Farm to School: Teachers Resources  
<http://growing-minds.org/teaching-resources/>

Poughkeepsie Farm Project  
<http://www.farmproject.org/education/>

### **Cafeteria:**

Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs  
[http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/f2s/F2S\\_Procuring\\_Local\\_Foods\\_Child\\_Nutrition\\_Prog\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/f2s/F2S_Procuring_Local_Foods_Child_Nutrition_Prog_Guide.pdf)

Hands-on Training Workshops to Increase Local Farm Produce in Cafeterias  
<http://www.nyschoolnutrition.org/documents/F2C%20Training%20Workshops.pdf>

Best Practices for Using Fresh Produce in Schools  
[http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/foodsafety\\_bestpractices.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/foodsafety_bestpractices.pdf)

Recipes for School Food Service from USDA  
<https://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/recipes-healthy-kids-cookbooks/recipes-healthy-kids-cookbooks-cookbook-schools>

Team Nutrition Resource Library  
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/resource-library>

What's Cooking? USDA Large Quantity Recipes  
[http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/schoolmeals/Recipes/recipefinder.php?cuisine=&search\\_type=special&mode=results&spec=4&&submit=Search](http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/schoolmeals/Recipes/recipefinder.php?cuisine=&search_type=special&mode=results&spec=4&&submit=Search)

Recipes for Healthy Kids from USDA  
<https://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/recipes-healthy-kids-cookbooks/recipes-healthy-kids-cookbooks-cookbook-schools>

New School Cuisine: Recipes from Vermont Farm to School  
<http://vermontfarmtoschool.org/resources/new-school-cuisine-cookbook-nutritious-and-seasonal-recipes-school-cooks-school-cooks>

Menu Planning from the USDA  
<http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/menu-planning-0>

Fruit and Veggie Quantity Cookbook from USDA (includes taste test surveys)  
<http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/dphs/nhp/documents/cookbook.pdf>

2015 Healthy Lunchtime Challenge Cookbook  
[https://www.whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/featuredlinks/healthy\\_lunchtime\\_challenge\\_kids\\_state\\_dinner\\_cookbook\\_2015\\_1.pdf](https://www.whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/featuredlinks/healthy_lunchtime_challenge_kids_state_dinner_cookbook_2015_1.pdf)

Smarter Lunchroom Project  
<http://smarterlunchrooms.org/ideas>

Ohio Action for Healthy Kids

Taste Testing in School Resource Guide – Interesting survey

<http://www.ohioactionforhealthykids.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/OAFHK-2012-Taste-Testing-Toolkit-WEB.pdf>

Taste Tests

<http://vimeo.com/71532219>

Farm Procurement

<http://www.hudsonvalleybounty.com>

The Big Apple Crunch

<https://bigapplecrunch.squarespace.com>



[www.agriculture.ny.gov/f2s](http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/f2s)

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