



## SWEET RED PEPPERS



- All red peppers start out green, then turn red.
- Red peppers have calcium for healthy bones.

## WINTER SQUASH



- Squash has Vitamin A for healthy eyes.
- Orange vegetables help you have healthy hair.

## CABBAGE



- Cabbage is related to broccoli and cauliflower.
- Cabbage has lots of Vitamin C.

## APPLES



- Apples have healthy natural sugars.
- Apples have lots of fiber.

# RETHINKING SCHOOL LUNCH COOKING WITH CALIFORNIA FOOD IN K-12 SCHOOLS

# NUTRITION EDUCATION CARDS AND HOSPITALITY TRAINING FOR SCHOOL NUTRITION SERVICES STAFF

## CHARD



- Chard has iron for a strong body.
- Chard has Vitamin A for healthy eyes.

## TOMATOES



- California grows most of the tomatoes in the United States.
- Tomatoes have lots of Vitamin C.

## STRAWBERRIES



- Strawberries have more Vitamin C than oranges.
- California grows most of the strawberries in the United States.

## MANDARINS



- Mandarins have Vitamin A for healthy eyes.
- Orange fruits help your heart stay healthy.

## BEETS



- Beets are roots.
- Beets have Vitamin B for strong fingernails.

## SPINACH



- Spinach has Vitamin A for healthy eyes.
- Spinach has Vitamin C for fighting colds.

## KIWIFRUIT



- Kiwifruit grows on a vine.
- California grows most of the kiwifruit in the United States.

## SUGAR SNAP PEAS



- You can eat sugar snap peas raw or cooked.
- Sugar snap peas have iron, for a strong body.

## PLUMS



- Plums are related to roses.
- Plums have Vitamin C for fighting colds.

# NUTRITION EDUCATION CARDS AND HOSPITALITY TRAINING FOR SCHOOL NUTRITION SERVICES STAFF

## **SUGGESTED PROTOCOL AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Nutrition Education Cards and Hospitality Training Program is designed for use by California school districts wishing to increase the amount of fruits and vegetables offered in the school lunch program.

School student nutrition service employees are on the front line of food service for both education and marketing. They frequently know each child by name and have daily contact with the students. This training program was developed to assist nutrition services staff with understanding seasonality of fruits and vegetables and their nutritional value or role in California agriculture and to provide a simple, hospitable way to share this information with students.

The program has two parts: Part I consists of 20 cards, each with an identifying picture of a different seasonal fruit or vegetable, with nutritional, botanical, or agricultural facts in English and Spanish. These cards are designed to be put into a pocket or in the cash register for easy access and review.

Part II consists of protocols for delivering five-minute training sessions on using the cards, along with hospitality suggestions to be used in the lunchroom setting.

### **The training is based on these premises:**

- School lunch is part of the educational day

This training program is designed to encourage frontline and kitchen employees to grow personally in their own knowledge of food and nutrition, to think of school lunch as an integral part of the educational day, and to think of themselves as educators.

- Hospitality is integral to the dining experience

Hospitality allows each student to feel they are important and welcome and encourages a behavior of civility and respect for all. Instructors in this program are encouraged to

introduce one or two of the hospitality ideas listed below per training session, and to integrate them into the practice as they see fit.

- Nutrition information impacts school lunch choices

The cards provide facts on the nutrition content of various California fruits and vegetables and how that nutrient supports students' health. References for this information are included at the end of this document.

## **HOW TO USE THIS PROGRAM**

### **THE INSTRUCTOR**

The instructor may be the director of Student Nutrition Services or a designee.

### **PREPARATION**

The instructor should:

- Consider integrating the cards and hospitality training into a regular staff meeting or training opportunity four times a year, prior to each season.
- Ensure that all participants have a copy of the cards.

### **SUGGESTED TRAINING PROGRAM—FIVE MINUTES**

Provide opportunities for employees to realize how much they already know about the seasons and what foods grow in them, and to develop confidence in offering the factual information to the students over time.

#### **1 Background**

Introduce the background to each season very briefly. See background information below.

#### **2 Questions**

Begin with a question to get people thinking seasonally and to encourage them to participate, such as “What do you think of when you think of this season?” There is no wrong answer. Participant observations are based on personal experience. You may want to add to their responses from your background.

Other questions: What fruits do you associate with this season? What vegetables? (See background information below for some of the crops that might be mentioned.) Are we serving these fruits and vegetables in our lunchroom?

### 3 Facts

Review the card data for the season and talk about what might be offered in school meals.

### 4 Practice

Have employees practice with each other in partners using the data as they would to a student in the lunch line. (If employees are receiving cooking lessons, using the cards to discuss what they have prepared provides a way of integrating the information with what they will be serving.)

## HOSPITALITY TRAINING IDEAS

This training encourages staff members to think of the school lunchroom as the front end of a restaurant. The students are school lunch customers and satisfaction as well as their repeat business is valued. The staff members provide hospitality as well as serving as educators who are teaching students about nutrition.

Select from these options, and add more of your own.

- Warmly welcome each student in line. Greet them with a smile as they come through your line. Call them by name if you know it.
- Comment positively on a choice the student has made, calling the entrée or fruit or vegetable by name where possible.
- While they are going through the line or checking out at the register, be a part of their learning day, be their healthy lunch teacher. Provide information about what is on the menu today and offer information about its preparation.
- Use the facts on these cards.

## **SEASONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **FALL (SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, NOVEMBER)—THE CROSSOVER SEASON**

In California there are still summer fruits and vegetables like tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, zucchini and melons being harvested in September, but fall fruits and vegetables, such as apples, pears, persimmons, pomegranates, pumpkins and other hard-skinned winter squash are being harvested as well. Fall in California begins warm, and then cools as the days shorten. The cooler weather brings on the harvest of cool weather crops like the leafy greens — cabbage, kale, chard, spinach, collards, and lettuce, as well as early broccoli, Brussels sprouts and cauliflower.

Some other fall fruits and vegetables: jicama, cucumbers, zucchini, cherry tomatoes, plums, peaches, beans, sliced tomatoes, sweet peppers, zucchini, sweet peppers, Asian and other pears, Hachiya and Fuyu persimmons (Fuyu are the crunchy ones students like to eat raw similar to apples), kiwi, tomatoes, and root vegetables (carrots, potatoes, turnips, parsnips).

### **WINTER (DECEMBER, JANUARY, FEBRUARY)—THE SEASON OF ROOTS AND CITRUS**

Even in the cold days of winter California farmers are producing fruits and vegetables. The citrus crop — oranges, mandarins, lemons, tangerines, and grapefruits — is harvested up and down the state. Kiwis are being harvested also. Lettuce, celery, and leafy greens continue to thrive in cool weather. Broccoli and cauliflower, cabbage, kale, chard, and collards are at their peak. Storage roots and fruits, harvested in fall to keep through winter – sweet potatoes, turnips, rutabagas, onions, winter squash, apples, pears, Fejoa (also called pineapple guava), and quince come to market as well.

### **SPRING (MARCH, APRIL, MAY)—THE SEASON OF NEW GROWTH**

The lengthening days and warming weather of spring bring new growth to plants. Young pods, like peas and fava beans are harvested, along with artichokes. Shoots of asparagus appear, along with strawberries, spring's earliest ripening fruit. Radishes, carrots, turnips and beets, spring root vegetables, are harvested, as well as new crops of tender lettuces, early garlic, and onions.

Other spring fruits and vegetables include mandarins, jicama, cucumbers, spring onions, zucchini, cherry tomatoes, carrots, apricots, cherries, and sugar snap peas.

## **SUMMER (JUNE, JULY, AUGUST)—THE SEASON OF ABUNDANCE**

During the long warm days of summer, California's fields, orchards, and vineyards are overflowing. Fruits start with cherries and apricots, followed by peaches, nectarines, plums, melons, watermelons, and grapes. Cherry tomatoes and sliced tomatoes (tomatoes are actually a fruit as well, though many treat them as a vegetable), eggplants, peppers, and thin-skinned summer squash like zucchini and crookneck come to market, as do new potatoes, okra, green beans, snap beans, cucumbers, jicama, and corn. In the cooler coastal regions, lettuce and leafy greens production continues, as does the strawberry harvest.

## **REFERENCES**

The 20 vegetables and fruits and their respective seasons included on the cards were taken from a list on the Harvest of the Month (HOV) website, an official website of Network for a Healthy California, California Department of Public Health and Public Health Institute. The one exception is spring: sugar snap peas, which are popular with students, used frequently raw on salad bars, and often grown in school gardens, making that connection familiar for students. HOV was the source for some of the nutrition and other information.

Harvest of the Month Featured Produce are selected based on the following criteria:

- California grown
- In season during month featured
- Represent a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables
- Familiar to children
- Affordable when purchased in season
- Align with the *Network for a Healthy California Campaigns and Programs*
- Easy to use for classroom taste testing
- Recommended by school produce buyers for seasonal availability and cost.

## **ADDITIONAL REFERENCES**

- *The New American Vegetable Cookbook—the Definitive Guide to America’s Exotic and Traditional Vegetables*, by Georgeanne Brennan, Isaac Cronin and Charlotte Glenn. (1985: Aris Books, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc.).
- *The Oxford Companion to Food*, by Alan Davidson. (2006: Oxford University Press).
- *The Farmers Market Guide to Fruit, Selecting Preparing and Cooking*, by Jenni Fleetwood (2001: MQ Publications Ltd, Sourcebooks, Inc.).
- Agricultural Marketing Resource Center; Agricultural Issues Center, University of California.
- California Avocado Commission.
- *Great Greens*, by Georgeanne Brennan. (2003: Chronicle Books).
- California Strawberry Commission.
- 2007 Census of Agriculture.
- [www.nutritiondata.self.com](http://www.nutritiondata.self.com)

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Ann M. Evans and Georgeanne Brennan

## FALL FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SELECTIONS BY SEASON WITH FACTS



### SWEET RED PEPPERS



- All red peppers start out green, then turn red.
- Red peppers have calcium for healthy bones.

### WINTER SQUASH



- Squash has Vitamin A for healthy eyes.
- Orange vegetables help you have healthy hair.

### APPLES



- Apples have healthy natural sugars.
- Apples have lots of fiber.

### KIWIFRUIT



- Kiwifruit grows on a vine.
- California grows most of the kiwifruit in the United States.

### KALE



- Kale has Vitamin A for healthy eyes.
- Kale has Vitamin C for fighting colds.

### TOMATOES



- California grows most of the tomatoes in the United States.
- Tomatoes have lots of Vitamin C.



## WINTER FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SELECTIONS BY SEASON WITH FACTS



### MANDARINS



- Mandarins have Vitamin A for healthy eyes.
- Orange fruits help your heart stay healthy.

### BEETS



- Beets are roots.
- Beets have Vitamin B for strong fingernails.

### CHARD



- Chard has iron for a strong body.
- Chard has Vitamin A for healthy eyes.

### BROCCOLI



- California grows most of the broccoli in the United States.
- Broccoli is related to cabbage and cauliflower.

### CABBAGE



- Cabbage is related to broccoli and cauliflower.
- Cabbage has lots of Vitamin C.

### ORANGES



- California grows lots of oranges.
- The California missions grew oranges.

## SPRING FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SELECTIONS BY SEASON WITH FACTS



### AVOCADOS



- California grows most of the avocados in the United States.
- Avocados have Vitamin E for healthy skin.

### CARROTS



- California grows most of the carrots in the United States.
- Carrots have Vitamin A for healthy hair.

### ASPARAGUS



- California grows most of the asparagus in the United States.
- You can eat asparagus raw or cooked.

### STRAWBERRIES



- Strawberries have more Vitamin C than oranges.
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### SUGAR SNAP PEAS



- You can eat sugar snap peas raw or cooked.
- Sugar snap peas have iron, for a strong body.

### SPINACH



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## SUMMER FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SELECTIONS BY SEASON WITH FACTS



### CORN



- Corn has carbohydrates for energy.
- Corn has Vitamin B that gives us energy.

### ZUCCHINI



- Zucchini is related to melons and cucumbers.
- Zucchini has Vitamin C for fighting the flu.

### LETTUCE



- California grows most of the lettuce in the United States.
- The darker green the lettuce, the more vitamins.

### MELON



- Melon is related to zucchini and cucumbers.
- Melon has Vitamin C for fighting colds.

### GRAPES



- California has grown grapes for 200 years.
- Raisins are really dried grapes.

### PLUMS



- Plums are related to roses.
- Plums have Vitamin C for fighting colds.