

From farm to fork: Enjoy summer's bounty

By Blair Farris

Fresh tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers are piled high and overflowing at the farmers markets. The watermelons are juicy and sweet and the peaches are perfectly ripe. Summer has been good to us this year and we have wonderful fruits and vegetables to be used in delicious meals.



St. Patrick's Catholic School partnered with The Brookstone Schools this past year when both schools received a Front Porch Grant generously funded by the Foundation For The Carolinas. The purpose of these grants was for the students to work toward a common goal: cultivating gardens at both schools. And not only did they plant the gardens, the children from all socio-economic, religious, racial and cultural backgrounds built bridges and cultivated friendships.

They had an incredible time. Community volunteers helped the children and their families construct the raised beds in the enclosed vegetable gardens. The children planted the seeds, watered the plants and spread worms out to aerate the soil. They learned about soil, seeds and what it takes for the plants to grow: water, nutrients and sun.

Children shine when you teach



Students from St. Patrick's Catholic School and The Brookstone Schools work together to cultivate gardens

them how to grow their own food, the importance of eating right and how to take care of their own bodies. Carmen Johnson, a board-certified health coach and Barret Butler, a registered dietician, spoke to the children about eating well and making good food choices. They explained that everything we eat makes a difference in the quality of our overall health and in our energy levels.

Marc Jacksina, the chef from Halcyon Restaurant, helped the students harvest the summer garden. It was amazing to see the smiles on their faces when they picked gorgeous fruits and vegetables that they had grown from seed. With the harvested

vegetables, Jacksina showed the children how to make gazpacho and bruschetta, tasting as they went. He captured their attention when he pulled out his kitchen blow torch to melt the mozzarella on the bruschetta and complete the farm-to-fork day.

At summer's end, plant your cool season garden

Now is not only time to harvest your summer garden but it's also time to prepare and plant a cool-season garden.

You will need to amend the soil

with compost, which is one of the most important parts of the garden. It is what makes yesterday's waste become tomorrow's fertility using such things as decomposing banana peels, leaves and coffee grounds. Learn more about soil and composting at www.gardening.cornell.edu. It is best to go organic without pesticides. There are many natural ways to deal with pests.



Gazpacho Recipe

Provided by Chef Marc Jacksina and owner Karen Teed of Halcyon Restaurant.
500 S. Tryon St.
Charlotte NC 28202
www.halcyonflavors.com

- 4 tomatoes, chopped
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 cucumbers, peeled, seeded, chopped
- 1 bell pepper, chopped
- 2 tablespoons basil or cilantro chopped
- 1 tablespoon lemon or lime
- Jalepeno peppers if you like it spicy

Put all ingredients in a large bowl and puree with a hand mixer.



Gardeners show off their lettuce!

