

# Kids Stuff

## Culinary contest reveals children's joy of cooking



Courtesy photo

Fourth grader Lilah George prepares gypsum roses.

**BY ANGELA COOPER-MCCORKLE**

Children from throughout the Snohomish school district donned tall white chef's hats and showed off their culinary skills at an April 27 competition.

Nearly 100 fourth to sixth graders entered recipes in the Snohomish School District's Junior Chef Challenge and 20 were selected as finalists.

The kids blended, beat and browned ingredients into award-winning shape at Glacier Peak High School as they hurried to prepare 75 servings for a hungry crowd of families, school staff and judges.

The contest is "a way to foster that excitement and enjoyment of cooking," and showing that "making food for themselves and others that's nutritious and healthy

and fun," said school district food service assistant Kim Horton.

Children tempted the judges with mouth-watering desserts such as banana cream cookies, berry lemon tarts, apple rolls and Oreo cookie bites.

Scrumptious snacks were on order, too, such as sriracha-roasted chickpeas, homerun peanut butter dip with fruit, and apple chicken quesadillas.

Some recipes were original, others borrowed, and some students took foods they knew and added a twist.

"I kind of like those Red Lobster biscuits so I kind of used biscuit mix and added my own special stuff to the top," said 10-year-old Lauren Hufford, whose homemade buttery biscuits won the Judge's Choice award.

The young chefs had the

support of culinary arts students from Glacier Peak plus local community chefs. Older students and professionals helped with hot tasks and made sure nothing went awry as students sliced and diced their way through the timed competition.

"Basically I ran around and checked on everybody and did a nice version of Chef (Gordon) Ramsay," said Marty Grasa, the district's food service director. "It's not like 'Chopped' on TV. You don't want them to mess up, (you) don't want them to fail."

The kids felt the excitement as they hurried to finish their recipes.

"It was a little scary and one of the people was announcing how much time we had left (but) it was fun and it was a little interesting being the one telling the adult what (ingredients) to find," said Lucy Ross, age 11. The fifth grader won the health-conscious foods award for her oatmeal energy bites.

Rachel Papson, 10, had a hint she might win too when the judges came by: "They took a lot of samples," the fourth grader said. Her mini lasagna bites made with wonton wrappers won best fun food.

Every finalist earned a framed certificate, medal, chef's coat, and a book containing all the contest recipes. Winners also took home professional grade sheet pans, saute pans, whisks, spatulas, and spoons.

But the real prize every participant shared was being empowered to cook well for themselves, friends and family.

## Kids enjoy farm field trip



Courtesy photo

Kindergartners are dwarfed by sunflowers at Oxbow Center.

**By ANGELA COOPER-MCCORKLE**

It's not show and tell time, but kindergartners at Frank Wagner Elementary in Monroe are so excited about farming, they're wriggling around like earthworms.

They've been learning about how worms help break down materials into compost that helps crops grow from educators at Oxbow Farm and Conservation Center.

The children have been on field trips to the farm in Carnation and have done science experiments in class.

The worms are the stars as the five- and six-year-olds talk about visits from Oxbow farmers who let them learn about composting by doing it themselves.

Charity Johnson, 5, still recalls making a lettuce and paper "soup" for the worms.

The children also remember vividly their first taste of farm fresh produce. Marlena Cole, 6, puckers a little at the thought of the sour taste of some tomatoes.

Ethan Bryan, 5, shares about daringly eating the apple seeds with the apple during their produce tasting adventure.

Kindergarten teachers used pumpkins from Oxbow for a special experiment in decomposition. The fuzzy grey and black lump in a soda bottle on teacher Andrea Vye's classroom windowsill shows just how fast a pumpkin can become mush.

But the rotting pumpkin is really a lesson in science practices. It helps students learn to make observations, collect data, make predictions and use maps as they study nature.

They have also learned through games and exploring nature about animal habitats, the needs of plants and animals, and crop life cycles.

In one game, kids rolled dice with different animals on them to move around the food chain and see if they would end up eating something or getting eaten! The food chain started with energy from the sun helping plants grow. Insects might eat the plants and a salmon might eat the insects.

Oxbow has also applied for a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to grow the two-year old program: they hope to create teams of kindergartners and fourth graders called garden buddies.

No matter what the lesson of the day is, Adriana Villagomez, 6, summed it up with "we love the farm!"

And they've learned about enemies of the farm too: "pollution is the bad guy," Cole said.

Their school's next big project with Oxbow Center is to set up their very own green space at school, with nonprofit partners Farmer Frog. They hope to build it next spring.

Oxbow Education Program Manager Hallie Harness looks forward to the kids "getting their hands in the dirt and feeling that sense of pride," she said.

## Ready for camp?

Children are ready for new experiences at different stages. Parents know their children best and these questions can help gauge if

your child is ready for camp.

Does your child talk about camp on a sustained basis?

Has your child had positive overnight experiences away from home?

What does your child expect to do at camp? Learning

about the camp experience ahead of time allows you to create positive expectations.

Are you able to share positive messages about camp? Your confidence in a positive experience will be contagious.