

Farm to School Newsletter



Harvest of the Month: LENTILS

Hello Arrowhead Families!

Happy 2024! You will notice some changes to the monthly newsletter for the remainder of the school year. We will continue to provide a brief update on what we did in Farm to School for the month. In addition, Farmer Kelly is going to provide a monthly update on an exciting local food grant the school received this fall. So, the newsletter will be a bit more lengthy, but will be full of some great updates and changes to the food program at Arrowhead!

Week 1: To kick off 2024, we decided to put a twist on Althea's award winning Mac n' cheese from November and taste test a butternut squash Mac n' cheese. This particular dish is a kid favorite in Livingston schools and was our first time to make it here at Arrowhead. We had to make some tweaks as the classes progressed throughout the day, but with those minor adjustments, we can say the Arrowhead students gave it a thumbs up! Our goal is to have it placed on the lunch menu soon!

Week 2: The students had their Harvest of the Month lesson, exploring all the different varieties of lentils. They learned about what varieties grow in Montana and the differences in taste, texture, and cooking preparation.

Week 3: We were back in the kitchen for another taste test and honored our Harvest of the Month by preparing a lentil chili. The kids had a lot of great feedback on the chili...while many thought it was delicious, many were also able to articulate their dislike for the texture of the lentils. It was great to have such honest feedback!

Week 4: We spent the day in the classroom sprouting a variety of legumes, including lentils. We wrapped the seeds in damp paper and "put them to bed" for the week. Each student will check next week to see if they have any sprouts! We also worked with each class on their "wish list" for what they would like to try to grow in our school garden.

Week 5: We checked our legumes and were so excited to see so many had sprouted! The kids were all invited to take their sprouted legumes home to plant and take care of. In addition, each student got to pick a plant that they would like to grow in the school garden this spring. We had a wide variety of seeds for them to choose from and they each got their hands dirty in some soil and planted their seed. Farmer Kelly took all of their babies back to her greenhouse where she will take good care of them until they are ready to be put into the garden. The kids enjoyed knowing each and every one of them has their very own plant for the garden. We should have a nice selection of peppers, strawberries, tomatoes, and flowers that will have a good head start for spring!

February's harvest of the month is.....Beets!

Please send us any questions, feedback, successes at home, anything and everything to farmtoschool@arrowheadk8.org! We would love to hear from each and every one of you!!

Hugs,

Farmer Heather and Farmer Kelly

Lentil Chili

2 Tbsp olive oil
1 medium onion, chopped
1 red bell pepper, chopped
4 garlic cloves, minced
4 tsp chili powder
1 lb dry brown lentils
2 14.5 oz cans diced tomatoes
1 bay leaf
2 32oz cartons vegetable stock
1/3 cup fresh cilantro

In a large pot, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add onions and pepper and cook for about 10 minutes until softened and lightly browned. Stir in garlic and chili powder and cook for about 30 seconds. Add lentils, tomatoes, bay leaf, and stock. Season generously with salt and pepper and simmer, partially covered, over medium-low heat for 30 minutes or until lentils are tender. Remove from the heat and discard bay leaf. Transfer 3-4 cups of chili to a blender and process until smooth. Add the pureed chili back into the pot and stir to combine. Taste for salt and pepper and stir in cilantro.

Butternut Mac n' Cheese

1 medium butternut squash (2 cups cooked)
4 tsp olive oil
2 cups milk
1 tsp garlic powder
1 tsp onion powder
1 tsp sweet paprika
1/2 tsp ground mustard
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp black pepper
10 oz grated cheddar cheese
1 lb short cut pasta, cooked
Parsley, optional

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Cut squash in half, remove seeds, and drizzle with oil. Bake cut side down for 30-45 minutes. In a blender, blend cooked squash with 1 cup of milk to make a puree. Combine puree with spices and remaining 1 cup of milk in a pot over medium-low heat. Add shredded cheese and cook until melted and the sauce is velvety. Mix in cooked pasta and top with parsley.

Favorite Student Quotes in January:

“How did the bean grow a tail?”

“I love 99% of the things we make, but I do not like this one at all!”

“Do you promise to take very good care of our babies, Farmer Kelly?”

“Can I have a third serving please?”

Photo Gallery:



Local Food for Schools Grant Update

In late October, Arrowhead found out we received a sizable grant award from the USDA that has two main objectives. The first objective is to support local farmers and ranchers within a 400 mile radius of the school and procure items for the school breakfast and lunch program from these local sources. The second objective is to utilize these local resources and incorporate more scratch made cooking into the school's food program.

Glenda and I spent November and December mapping out a strategy on more scratch made cooking, despite the limits her current kitchen places on such a large task. The school has purchased Instant Pots to help incorporate more scratch made food into the kitchen until a true kitchen remodel can be actualized. In addition, I have spent a lot of time identifying local farmers and ranchers to begin to build relationships with in our community. We wanted to first identify any purveyors that exist within our Arrowhead community and be able to support families at the school with these grant funds. Secondly, we wanted to support farmers and ranchers in Paradise Valley and the surrounding area to increase the likelihood of building strong relationships and support our neighbors who these funds could significantly impact. And finally, utilize a wholesale distribution line who could connect us with purveyors that still meet a need for the school but was not evident in our community. We have been successful in securing local chicken, beef, and lamb providers all within a 50 mile radius of the school!

The chicken will be purchased from Black Dog Farm in Livingston. The farm is run by a husband and wife and their little girl, Dottie. Being a mom, Kira has a strong desire to raise chickens she could feel good about her daughter eating. She and her husband Tim have one of only two state inspected processing facilities in the entire state of Montana! In 2022, they became Certified Animal Welfare Approved for their meat chickens, a label that guarantees animals are raised outdoors on pasture for their entire lives on an independent farm using truly sustainable high-welfare farming practices. Kira and I have become fast friends, and she is over the moon excited that the children at Arrowhead will be able to eat some of the most nutritious, high quality, and happiest chickens around. We have a field trip planned in May to take the students to the farm and meet Kira, Tim, Dottie, and of course all the chickens!

The beef for the school will be purchased from Cowgirl Meat Co. in Big Timber. This is another family ranching operation, run by Jaimie and Austin Stoltzfus and their two small children. As a ranch wife, mother, cowgirl, and farmer, Jaimie takes pride in knowing exactly where her family's food comes from. She believes that good, honest food starts with responsible sourcing, which is why she is dedicated to raising quality meat for everyone. She has been a joy to work with and get to know, and is so excited that Arrowhead has this opportunity and she can be a part of it!

The lamb is from Wolf Ridge Icelandics right here in Paradise Valley. Barb Gunness has some of the best lamb I have ever tasted and knowing her product was going to be served in the local school literally brought tears to her eyes. She is so grateful to have this opportunity to support our kids through providing her lamb on their lunch trays.

Most of the Farm to School cooking lessons for the remainder of the school year will be focused on recipe testing new menu items for lunch. The success of these grant funds is contingent upon us being able to demonstrate how we utilized these local purveyors, built relationships with them, and ultimately translated that into healthier food on the student's plates. So, I will be taking every opportunity I can in the cooking

lessons to gauge the student's interest in a new lunch or breakfast item and ultimately adding it to the menu. This grant hasn't been offered before this school year so it's important we demonstrate success in order to increase our chances of being awarded again next year, if they continue the program.

In addition to new menu items, you will also begin to see local substitutions on the current lunch menu. For example, cheese that is currently being used in a menu item will now be substituted for Lifeline cheese and will be reflected on the menu. This way, as parents, you can have full transparency as to how many local ingredients are being utilized in the menu on a monthly basis.

This has been a FUN project for me to be a part of! It is not an easy task, but the challenge has made it that much more rewarding. Having trusted team members like Glenda and Mrs. Taylor have been instrumental in being able to reimagine our children's school meals. We will be able to set up next school year for great success in this area, having our children eating local, quality, and healthy foods.

If you have any feedback, questions, or suggestions on local purveyors, the grant in general, or ideas of how to further engage our community in this project, please reach out to me at kellykearney2@me.com. I will continue to provide monthly updates for the remainder of the school year and at times may need to ask the Arrowhead community for some help.

It's a pleasure and joy to be with your kids on a weekly basis in Farm to School and now to be a part of taking what they learn in Farm to School and putting it on their plates at school.

Hugs,

Farmer Kelly