

NIBBLES

LOCALLY-GROWN SALAD BAR PROGRAM EXPANDS TO MIRAMONTE AND MEINERS OAKS SCHOOLS

After an overwhelmingly successful pilot program last Fall at Topa Topa Elementary, the Food For Thought weekly Salad Bar and related programs will launch at Miramonte School in January, Meiners Oaks in February, and San Antonio in March. The Salad Bar features items to make a complete meal, with most of the fresh fruit and vegetables coming from local growers. FFT Salad Bar day is Thursday.

TOPA TOPA PARENTS SHARE SALAD BAR WITH THEIR KIDS

Many parents are taking advantage of Salad Bar Thursdays to come to school and eat lunch with their children. It is a win-win for everyone - great lunch for parents, it supports our FFT salad bar program and OUSD food service, and gives parents some quality time with the kids. The adult salad bar price is only \$3.50 - the best lunch deal in town!

FUNDING AND SUPPORT FROM OJAI VALLEY INN & OTHERS

To date, Food For Thought has raised \$25,000 to fund equipment purchases, farm visits, gardening supplies, and other expenses. The Ojai Valley Inn has committed \$5,000, while \$15,000 has been donated by the Homeland Foundation and \$5,000 by the UC Hansen Trust. We have also just learned that Slow Food USA has selected FFT and the OUSD as one of three school programs nation-wide, that they will support for their garden-based learning program. Although we still have a ways to go to meet our fundraising goals, these funds and support will help us get started on nutrition education, garden-based learning, farm field trips and expansion of our salad bar program to the elementary schools in the District. Special thanks to Topa Topa PTA for their help and support.

FARM VISITS TO START THIS SPRING

With the funding from the UC Hansen Trust (Faulkner Farm), many children will get the opportunity to visit a real working local farm, talk to the farmers and see how their food is being grown. Also, local farmers will visit classrooms to offer produce samples and talk about what they are growing. We hope that these experiences will help our kids value our local farmers' efforts, understand the importance of fresh produce for their health and nutrition, and learn to make healthy choices that last a lifetime.

SALAD BAR ON THURSDAYS

COME AND
JOIN YOUR KIDS!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

The percentage of young people overweight today has more than doubled in the past 30 years. "At roughly 13.2%, the rate of obesity in Ventura County is above those for the U.S. as a whole..."
(Ventura County Community Alliance State of the Region Report)

"Studies show that eating habits and obesity can affect risk for premature cancer, diabetes, liver and heart disease, and many other health problems. ...much of how we eat and what we like to eat is powerfully programmed by our experiences in childhood..."
(Wall Street Journal Dec. 9, 2003)

High-fructose corn syrup (found in soft drinks, juice drinks, processed snack foods) is linked to rise in obesity.
(LA Times March 24, 2003)

IN-CLASS TASTE-TESTING OF SEASONAL PRODUCE

As part of our efforts to help kids appreciate the superior taste, nutritional value and variety of locally-grown fresh fruits and vegetables, we have been conducting in-class taste tests with in-season items. Since September, Topa Topa students tasted locally-grown yellow watermelon, sweet bell peppers that came in four different colors (yellow, red, green and purple--purple was the hands-down favorite!), as well as kiwis, Asian pears, Pixie and Clementine tangerines and Fuyu Persimmons (with and without lime juice). At Miramonte, kids have also been treated to Fuyus and given a quick overview on how to build a nutritious balanced meal at the new salad bar. In the coming weeks, a wide variety of winter/spring fruits and vegetables will be offered on the Salad Bar including snap peas, cauliflower, tangerines, Valencia oranges, and a lot more. Because FFT selects the best-tasting, ripest seasonal produce, there will always be new and exciting items on the salad bar.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

We need volunteers to help with Salad Bar Thursdays and other FFT programs at Topa Topa (contact Susan DeCordova 640-7808) and at Miramonte (contact Syd Galbraith 798-1475). Bring your skills and lend a hand! Also, our Food For Thought booth was a hit at Ojai Day, and we'll have another opportunity to introduce this program to the Ojai community with a booth at Martin Luther King Day on January 19th. We will be selling Food For Thought organic cotton t-shirts (from Patagonia) for \$15 to raise funds for our programs and will also be distributing informational materials. If you are interested in helping us staff this table and/or get involved in other Food For Thought efforts, please let us know (contact Marty Fujita at 646-4412 or email msfujita@sbcglobal.net).