

NIBBLES

THE FAMILY MEAL DEAL

Is there something missing from your dining table? If you're like two thirds of American households what's missing is your family! Studies have shown that kids who sat down to eat most often with their families-seven or more times per week-tended to have higher grade-point averages and were more well-adjusted than those who ate two or fewer family meals per week. They were also less likely to feel depressed or suicidal, to smoke cigarettes or use alcohol or marijuana. What's more, children who eat regular meals with their families also eat more healthfully, in general, taking in more fruits and vegetables and calcium-rich foods, fewer soft drinks and snack foods. They also may have a reduced risk of developing disordered eating behaviors.

Why are family meals so important? Family meals give parents an opportunity to model good eating habits. Mealtimes also provide an opportunity for connecting. When asked by researchers, kids said that they wanted to spend more time eating with their families, not less.

Here are some suggestions for getting more use out of your dining table:

- Get the whole family involved. Kids can help with meal planning, preparation and clean up.
- Speak out. If sports practice or meetings are scheduled during dinnertime, ask if they can be changed.
- If dinner is tough to commit to, try a family meal at lunch or breakfast.
- Avoid conflicts at the table. Focus on pleasant conversation.

TURKEY FRIED RICE

3 Tbsp. light brown sugar
1 tsp. minced peeled fresh ginger
¼ tsp. crushed red pepper
½ cup unseasoned rice vinegar
3 Tbsp. low-sodium soy sauce
2 Tbsp. water
1 Tbsp. crunchy peanut butter
2 tsp. canola oil
1 pound (1/4 inch thick)
turkey breast cutlets, cut into strips
2 garlic cloves, minced
4 cups cooked brown rice
½ cup finely shredded carrot
¼ cup chopped green onions
3 Tbsp. chopped unsalted,
dry-roasted peanuts

1. Combine first 7 ingredients in a bowl; stir with a whisk until blended.
2. Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add turkey and garlic, and stir-fry 3 minutes or until turkey is done. Add rice, and stir-fry 2 minutes. Remove mixture from skillet; keep warm.
3. Add vinegar mixture to skillet; bring to a boil, and cook 3 minutes. Return turkey mixture to skillet; add grated carrot and stir-fry 1 minute. Remove from heat; stir in ¼ cup chopped green onions and peanuts.

Garnish with chopped green onion tops and additional peanuts, if desired.

Yield: 6 servings (serving size: 1 cup)
318 calories, 18% fat

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE
(WWW.FOODFORTHUGHTOJAI.ORG)
WHERE YOU WILL FIND ALL OF THE
PAST ISSUES OF NIBBLES ALONG
WITH OTHER INFORMATION.
WE WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS,
SUGGESTIONS AND INPUT.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT IN FULL SWING!

Thanks to dedicated volunteer parents, supportive staff and outstanding *Food For Thought* contributors we are proud to announce that all five of our original program goals have been met for the 5 elementary schools! *Food For Thought* set out 3 years ago to not only encourage healthy food choices at the weekly salad bars, but also to promote nutrition education, foster agricultural literacy through Farm Field trips and garden-based learning and reinforce the concept of solid waste reduction. It has taken hard work, a great deal of teamwork, mutual respect and of course some patience, but much like a garden harvest, worth the wait.

Since the start of school I have seen parents filling rebuilt garden beds with organic soil, second graders eagerly gathering salad bar scraps for the worms, teachers leading their classes to plant in once fallow garden beds, confident students contributing to nutrition education lessons and kindergarteners identifying plant parts at the salad bar. This is *Food for Thought* in action. We thank every parent who has come to training sessions, taught lessons and assisted at the weekly salad bar. We look forward to our late spring farm field trips and harvests from the garden.

Please peruse this issue of *Nibbles* for more information on the programs happening at all our elementary schools and check out the *Food For Thought* display cases and posters.

Volunteer parents are always welcome!

Thanks!

Lori Hamor Program Coordinator
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GARDEN UPDATE

We are happy and excited to say that the garden based learning programs at Topa Topa, Mira Monte, Meiners Oaks, Summit and San Antonio are all up and running. The first four schools all have their garden beds full of beautiful soil, are irrigated and many have plants coming up. San Antonio has lemon crates outside the Kindergarten and 1st grade classrooms. The Kindergarten and 1st grade lessons at all schools went great; lettuce, carrots, radishes, peas, Swiss chard and broccoli are growing in the gardens. Lessons have been completed with the 5th Graders where they are conducting a science experiment. Each class has selected a variable that will change growing conditions and will test what effect the variable will have on their plant's growth. The classes have chosen the following variables: adding sugar water, adding nutrients (we are using an organic Norwegian seaweed for this), taking away light and adding horse manure. By February, all the classes should have the results of their experiments so be sure to ask the students how the experiment went. It has been a great time getting the children into the gardens and their enthusiasm has been tremendous.

I also want to welcome Mary Ann Vavette who will be my Garden Assistant for the next few months. Mary Ann has a child at Topa Topa and came on as an enthusiastic volunteer. When I realized I needed a little more help I was happy to be able to have her join me as a temporary assistant. She will be focusing on piloting the Garden Club idea at Topa Topa Elementary along with helping me with whatever we need. Thanks Mary Ann!

It is so rewarding to see the gardens growing. Please stop by the garden at your child's school to see what is happening.

The Garden Based Learning Project Thanks the Community

We have so many great people and companies to thank for all their hard work and donations. To start, I want to thank all the parent volunteers who have worked in the gardens and taught the lessons. Without you this would not be happening!

Donations have been plentiful and very appreciated. *Peach Hills Soils* of Moorpark donated the beautiful compost/soil mix and granite which we will be putting on the garden walkways. *Island Seed and Feed* of Goleta donated the organic nutrients, some seeds and broccoli plants. *Ojai Valley Nursery* donated many seeds and gives us a great discount on the many things we purchase there. *Aqua-Flo* made a generous donation of supplies for repairing our irrigation systems. *Alisdair Coyne* (irrigation specialist and Summit parent) gave us a generous donation of his time and expertise repairing our irrigation systems.

Sara MacCracken, Garden Coordinator

WELCOME SUZANNE

Welcome to our new OUSD Food Service Director, Suzanne Lugotoff. She comes to us with over 15 years of experience in hospital and school food service and most recently was the associate director of the Pomona Unified Food Service. Suzanne has been a resident of Whittier, California all her life and is looking forward to relocating to the Ojai Valley with her husband and two children.

Suzanne is reorganizing OUSD food service, so look for improvements in the menu, in the nutritional values of the school lunch and in the variety of themes for the weekly salad bar. We look forward to working with Suzanne to bring as many locally grown, seasonal, farm fresh fruits and vegetables as possible to the weekly salad bar and hot school lunch program.

food for thought

FOOD FOR THOUGHT OAHU

Some of the lessons learned in developing the *Food For Thought* program for OUSD are being exported! A new farm-to-school program, borrowing some elements from Ojai's, is being designed for public schools in Hawaii. Although apples and persimmons might be replaced by mangoes and papayas, this new sister program will share the same objectives and goals to improve childhood and environmental health as *Food For Thought Ojai*.

WE ARE FAMOUS

Food For Thought's program and many of our students were featured in a recent article in the Nov./Dec. issue of *Mothering Magazine*, entitled "Slow Food in Schools". Check it out!

THANK YOU

We would also like to thank the *Marisla Foundation*, the *Crown Family* and *UC Hansen Trust* for their ongoing grant support and confidence in *Food for Thought Ojai*.

HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR INCREASING THE AMOUNT OF WHOLE GRAINS IN YOUR DIET:

- Try whole grain breads. Kids especially like whole-wheat pita bread.
- Buy whole grain pasta, or one of the part white, part whole grain pastas.
- Choose whole grain, low sugar cereals. Choose old-fashioned oatmeal rather than instant.
- Add cooked barley, brown rice or other whole grains to soup.
- Make rice-like side dishes with alternative grains: barley, quinoa, bulgur (kasha), wheat berries.
- Substitute half the white flour with whole-wheat flour in your baking.