

Ventura Unified School District Child Nutrition Services

Serving produce grown in the school garden in the cafeteria.

Program Summary

School gardens give our children the opportunity to grow their own fruits and vegetables. Students that grow their own produce have a greater appreciation and are more excited about eating the produce they have harvested themselves. Gardening is a skill children can use for the rest of their lives that promotes better health and wellness.

Ventura Unified School District has a garden in all 17 elementary schools. As a district, we promote the farm to school program through which we purchase and feature locally grown fresh produce in all of our cafeterias. To promote our school gardens, we needed to develop a procedure on how our students could harvest the produce grown in the school gardens and then serve it in the cafeteria.

At all of our school sites, we feature a farm fresh salad bar every day. A procedure was developed to incorporate the produce harvested in the school gardens by the students and then served on the salad bars and in the cafeterias.

Procedure

1. The garden coordinator meets with the salad bar coordinator and the cafeteria manager to discuss and coordinate the produce ready to be harvested in their school gardens.
2. The salad bar coordinator then advertises and promote the school's harvest in the cafeteria and the classroom. When possible, posters are made to display in the cafeteria of what the item will be. E-mails are sent to the teachers asking them to tell their students what was harvested in the garden, and when it will be served in the cafeteria. This helps generate enthusiasm amongst the students.
3. The teacher, garden coordinator and students harvest the produce.
4. They then pre-rinse the produce before it is sent to the cafeteria.
5. The produce is sent to the cafeteria where the staff will wash and prepare the fruits and vegetables harvested for the salad bars.
6. The produce is served on the salad bar or on the cafeteria line depending on the item and the quantity that was harvested from the garden.
7. The salad bar coordinator, the cafeteria staff, and the faculty encourage the students to sample the produce.
8. The excess will be used in the school compost.