

Growing Healthy Schools Week Begins in D.C.

D.C. Pushes for Farm-to-Table Options and School Gardens

By Sam Nassau | Monday, Oct 21, 2013



Chef Lauren Williams of Chartwells and Thurgood Marshall Academy 9th grader/sous-chef Jhayda Johnson pick fresh ingredients from Thurgood Marshall Academy's garden to use in the top-chef style competition. The duo won the competition with their recipe for Savory Pulled Chicken-chard Tacos with Chile Queso Fresco and Cilantro-Lime Sauce.

Area chefs flashed their cutlery at Thurgood Marshall Academy in southeast Washington to kick off Growing Healthy Schools Week, which promotes healthy eating at D.C. public and charter schools.

The week promotes both school gardens and farm-to-school programs. District councilmember Mary Cheh, who chairs the District's committee on transportation and the environment, says the program was designed to improve the health of students and staff.

Cheh judged the city's best school garden at Monday morning's event. Several professional chefs and their student apprentices entered the competition, but the prize was ultimately snagged by Chef Lauren Williams and sous-chef Jhayda Johnson.

Chef Williams of Chartwells, a British food service group that specializes in school dining, and sous-chef Johnson, a 9th grader at Thurgood Marshall Academy wowed judges with their "Savory Pulled Chicken-chard tacos with Chile Queso Fresco & Cilantro Lime sauce" recipe.

No word yet on whether the winning recipe will appear on school menus any time soon, but with the continued healthy-eating initiative, the alternatives seem just as promising.

Throughout the week, local food suppliers teamed up with non-profits and federal administrators to bring local foods into D.C. schools. They also encourage schools to start their own farms and bring healthy eating options to students.

Thurgood Marshall, for example, has a school garden called the "Great Garden of Anacostia."

The week began in response to the D.C. Healthy Schools Act, which was passed in 2010 and requires schools to provide locally-grown, unprocessed food whenever possible. The law also requires physical education and free breakfast, among other things, in all District public and charter schools.

A few months before the law passed, First Lady Michelle Obama launched her "Lets Move!" campaign to end childhood obesity.

Growing Healthy Schools Week is now in its second year.