

Kidding Around the Kitchen

With Congress' passing of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, the bill reauthorizing the Child Nutrition Act, we thought you'd enjoy reading about this innovative program that takes cooking to the classroom.

Learning to cook healthy meals with fruits and vegetables from the school garden or local farmer's market is nothing new to students at Glenfeliz and Atwater elementary schools in Los Angeles: It's part of their regular studies!



The free, hands-on cooking lessons supplement the Network for a Healthy California Harvest of the Month program and are provided by Kidding Around the Kitchen (KATC), thanks to a grant from the Atwater Village Neighborhood Council.

Children cut, measure, cook and then eat their creations, explained KATC Founder Lisa Fontanesi. They "see, touch, smell and taste" ingredients they may never have previously seen in their raw form.

Lessons reinforce math, science, reading and vocabulary. "Solids become liquids, bread rises, pancakes expand, and science is suddenly edible," she said. Studying food labels promotes awareness of natural and 'not so natural' ingredients used in everyday items.

Children often drive the eating habits of the whole family, Fontanesi reminded. "By actively involving the kids in the process of preparing a meal, their choices instinctively move to more natural and less processed ingredients." At home, armed with recipes from each session, the kids can recreate what they've learned in class.

KATK classes cover a variety of ethnic foods and traditions, nutrition information, food history and fun food facts, as well as kitchen safety. It has created its own line of kid-friendly utensils and knife sets which it uses in class, and Fontanesi has written and self-published a Kidding around the Kitchen family cookbook of recipes.





Fontanesi's Citrus Sunshine Salad recipe is featured in the soon-to-be-released children's book, *Our Super Garden* by Anne Nagro. The book follows children who plant a garden and have a tasting party, promoting healthy eating by eating what we grow.

KATC currently is raising funds to offer free cooking lessons to Los Angeles schools. To support its efforts, visit here:

<http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1869906332/katk-free-hands-on-cooking-classes-for-los-angeles-0>

