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Workshop offers new recipes, way to improve existing dishes

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This picture shows the Ninja Power Smoothie, one of 16 recipes cooking staff and other food professionals helped create during a day-and-a-half workshop to improve skills and inspire ideas hosted by the Oregon Department of Education's Child Nutrition Services and the Oregon Dairy and Nutrition Council.

ONTARIO — Getting kids interested in eating healthy often includes trying new ideas and coming up with creative names, such as Ninja Power Smoothie.

Food service professionals from Harper, Annex, Nyssa, Adrian, Ontario and Vale all got the opportunity to workshop with a registered dietitian, nutritionist and chef on Thursday and Friday.

on new recipes and ways to improve existing dishes.

The event featured professional chef Garrett Berdan, RDN, who is traveling the state of Oregon this spring to offer culinary workshops for food service professionals. Ontario was the second of five stops for Berdan, who will travel to Lincoln City, Central Point, and Aurora by June 20.

The workshop was designed to inspire cooks working either in school districts or other childcare organizations with new ideas as well as offer training in specific areas, such as knife skills, fruit preparation, roasting and baking meats, roasting and steaming vegetables and enhancing flavor.

The day-and-a-half workshop had the cooks and other food service officials split into five teams, with each handling the preparation and/or cooking of specific food items that culminated in a tasting on Friday afternoon.

“You all did an amazing job,” Berdan told the cooks and other food service officials after the recipe testing portion of the workshop. “The food quality was pretty incredible.”

To make things a little more fun, teams were given rein to name their creations. Examples include the Ninja Power Smoothie, OHS Tiger Grilled Cheese Sandwich, Blueberry Bling, and Buckaroo Baked Beans.

According to Berdan, there were 16 recipes made from scratch. Of those, 10 were recipes from the Oregon State University Extension Office’s Food Hero Program, which offers families recipe ideas along with tips and tools to create healthy and tasty foods.

Barbara Brody, extension agent, said that this was the first time the office had collaborated to this level with both the Oregon Dairy and Nutrition Council and Child Nutrition Services with the Oregon Department of Education.

“I haven’t had the chance to see so many food service people collaborate,” Brody said.

Crista Hawkins, RDN, director of school programs said that this year was special because the workshops focused on the Food Hero program.

“We wanted to expand that partnership,” she said.

This is because of the resources and reach of the Food Hero program, with its accessible and helpful website, and the reach the program has within local communities across the state of Oregon.

While there is no timeline for when some of the recipes will make their way into meals in cafeterias across the Ontario School District, the school district director of nutrition services, Pan Suyematsu, did say that its up to the cooking staff if they want utilize in the future.

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