

Culinary Training for New School Meals on the Menu for Oregon Students



The words “school cafeteria food” are taking on new meaning as Chef Garrett Berdan is training a growing number of child nutrition program professionals to prepare delicious and nutritious food for Oregon students. In fact, a training is underway as you read this in Nyssa, Oregon, on the Idaho border.

A series of six culinary training events is underway to help improve school cafeteria menus statewide. With support from the Oregon Dairy and Nutrition Council and the Oregon Department of Education, Child Nutrition Programs, this popular program is now in its eighth year. Chef Garrett Berdan, RDN, coaches child nutrition program professionals on cooking-from-scratch culinary skills, while preparing 15 different recipes. It is offered at no cost to school nutrition professionals, who are able to practice menu planning, weights and measures, knife skills and other culinary techniques.

The preparation of healthy meals for students emphasizes nutrient-rich foods, because studies show that well-nourished kids perform better in school. The trainings use Oregon State University Extension Food Hero recipes that meet USDA school nutrition requirements and emphasize using locally produced foods and ingredients.

“Oregon farmers are helping provide creative solutions to old challenges that will benefit students now and into the future,” said Erin Hirte, Manager of Youth Wellness for the Oregon Dairy and Nutrition Council.

Oregon’s dairy farm families and processors invest in youth wellness and education. They are involved with schools across the state, supporting programs such as this training.

The 2018 series began in Central Point and continues in Nyssa on April 5 and 6. Other stops will include Bend, Salem, Umatilla and Hood River. Media is invited to attend the second day of the events to interview Chef Berdan, participants, observe food prep and taste the

prospective menu items. As background, this video provides an overview of the trainings: <https://youtu.be/94u1NZQBD6s>.