



Fall frittata

Use seasonal vegetables and pasta for a brunch, lunch or supper dish. PG 6

Four cocktails

Master four basics, and make anything. PG 2



KENNETH K. LAM/BALTIMORE SUN PHOTOS

North County High School students pick hot peppers they've grown in the school's vegetable garden to learn about food science.

APPETITE FOR LEARNING

A Hopkins-created curriculum brings lessons on food systems to schools across the country

BY SARAH MEEHAN
The Baltimore Sun

In Mike Wierzbicki's environmental science and botany classes, the Carolina Reaper pepper captivates students with the same properties that strike fear into the spice-averse. The world's hottest peppers are grown by North County High School students in a garden nestled behind the school's track in Glen Burnie, where Wierzbicki teaches them about the Scoville scale, the unit of measure for the peppers' heat.

"It gets the kids' attention that a plant could have those types of properties," he said.

Wierzbicki is among teachers across the country using food to teach science, health, social justice and other subjects through coursework developed by the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future. Known as FoodSpan, the curriculum details each piece of the food system and outlines the steps it takes for food to go from "farm to fork," including lessons on how food is grown, processed and distributed; how it is marketed and labeled based on government policy; and the impact it has on human health and the environment.

Teachers say food system education is not a priority for most schools and the resources for teaching it are sparse. But many see a connection between students' diets and their ability to learn, or See **FOODSPAN**, page 6



Mike Wierzbicki, above, environmental science and botany teacher at North County High School, takes pictures of a beehive used to cross-pollinate vegetables grown at the school's garden.



Several varieties of hot peppers grown by North County High students in the school's vegetable garden. Also pictured is a jar of dehydrated hot peppers they made to sell under their own "Cohort Brands."

BALTIMORE DINER

Chaps Pit Beef branches out with franchises



BARBARA HADDOCK TAYLOR/BALTIMORE SUN

Left to right starting at lower left: the Turkey Rachel sandwich, the one-pound pork ribs and the Triple D sandwich at the new Chaps location in Aberdeen.

Owner has plans to open four to five shops a year through franchising

BY SARAH MEEHAN
The Baltimore Sun

Chaps Pit Beef is on track to open its first franchise location early next year in Frederick, and more are on the way.

The Baltimore pit beef restaurant will add a third location to its two company-owned stores with a franchise restaurant at the Westview South development in Frederick.

Chaps owner Bob Creager said he hopes to open four or five shops each year through franchisees following the Frederick opening.

The 30-year-old eatery branched out for

the first time last year with a location in Aberdeen, which will serve as a model for franchises. "We started working on this about two years ago, and the plan is to open up as many Chaps franchises as we can," Creager said.

In addition to the Frederick location, another in Rockville is in the works and on track to open next spring, Creager said.

Although pit beef is a Maryland culinary tradition, Chaps' appearance on the Food Network has provided exposure for the restaurant across the country.

"People see it on TV and then they go check out the website," Creager said.

While Creager has received some inquiries from prospective franchisees in Maryland, he said most of the interest has come from out of state: He's heard from folks in the Carolinas, Florida, Jersey, California, Texas, Michigan and even Canada.

See **DINER**, page 2



ABEL URIBE/CHICAGO TRIBUNE; JOAN MORAVEK/FOOD STYLING

Fresh cantaloupe stars in a refreshing drink sweetened with honey-lemon syrup and lightened with sparkling water. The cantaloupe should be very ripe.

Singing with wolves



LEAH ESKIN
Home on the Range

Cantaloupe means singing wolf. Not the scene that jumps to mind when slicing open the dazzling melon. And yet, no secret. Slice open the word to find *canta*, “sing” in many a language, and *loupe*, “wolf.”

Apparently the melon is named after a town, which is named after the wolves who once serenaded its hills.

Perhaps they were howling to that other orange orb, the moon. Perhaps they were singing of lost love, of melancholy. Perhaps they were praising the tasty fruit balls that littered the ground.

Lovely, they must have sung, and sweet.

Cantaloupe is too bright, too fragrant, too cheerful to induce melancholy. Still, it’s good to know the melon has a poetic past. And — even in fall — a few more weeks of delicious future.

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Melon sparkler

Prep: 10 minutes **Cook:** 2 minutes

Makes: 3 drinks

- 1/2 cup water
- 1/4 cup honey
- 4 teaspoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1 very ripe cantaloupe, about 2 pounds
- Sparkling water
- 1 tablespoon heavy cream, optional

1 Dissolve: Measure water and honey into a small saucepan or microwave-safe cup. Heat over medium until honey has dissolved, about 2 minutes, or microwave until honey has dissolved, about 1 minute. Stir in lemon juice. Let cool.

2 Peel: Wash and dry cantaloupe. Using a sharp knife, halve cantaloupe along its equator. Scoop out seeds. Set melon halves, flat-side down, on a cutting board. Working from top to bottom, slice away the rind, exposing the bright orange melon.

3 Juice: Cut melon into chunks, and drop them in the blender. Pour in honey mixture. Blend on low speed. (High speed yields more froth than juice.) Press through a fine mesh sieve; discard pulp. You should have about 2 cups juice. Chill.

4 Mix: For each drink, fill a glass with crushed ice. Fill two-thirds with melon juice and one-third with sparkling water. If you like, add about 1 teaspoon heavy cream. Stir. Slurp.

SERIOUSLY SIMPLE

Think seasonal with this frittata

By DIANE ROSSEN WORTHINGTON
Tribune Content Agency

The first time I ever tasted pasta in a frittata was in a breakfast spot that featured all sorts of unusual egg combinations. I thought it was a great way to use up extra pasta, with more than leftover results. If you don’t have any cooked spaghetti, it just takes a few minutes to cook it up. I use about 1/3 pound broken in half to equal 2 1/2 cups cooked pasta.

A frittata is nothing more than an egg pizza. This vegetable pasta frittata is easy to prepare, intensely flavored and made with the freshest ingredients. You can actually make this a few hours ahead and serve it warm or at room temperature. This truly is my standby for



NOEL BARNHURST PHOTO

Frittatas allow invention, such as adding seasonal vegetables, and can be served for brunch, lunch or supper.

last-minute meals.

The classic Italian frittata is a flat, open-faced, round omelet that is cooked over low heat until firm on the bottom and then finished in the oven. This version, which has zucchini and pasta, can be decorated with sun-dried tomatoes and a dollop of fresh ricotta cheese. You can be as inventive as you wish. Think seasonal and consider yellow squash, asparagus, mushrooms and tiny golden tomatoes to

change up this recipe.

Frittatas can be served for brunch, lunch or supper. I have even cut them into small pieces and offered them warm as bite-size appetizers. Serve this dish with a favorite coffee cake or assorted muffins. A platter of grilled chicken-apple sausages or crispy bacon rounds out the menu for meat lovers. Offer flutes of sparkling wine with a hint of peach nectar to celebrate the day.

Pasta frittata

Prep: 25 minutes **Cook:** 27 minutes **Makes:** 6 servings

- 8 eggs
- 3/4 cup grated sharp cheddar, Comte or Jack cheese
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 medium zucchini, thinly sliced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 1/2 cups cooked thin spaghetti
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced sun-dried tomatoes packed in oil, well drained
- 1/2 cup ricotta cheese

1 Heat the oven to 350 degrees. In a medium bowl combine the eggs, cheese, 1/4 teaspoon salt and pepper to taste; whisk until the eggs are frothy. Reserve.

2 In a skillet large enough to hold the zucchini in one layer, heat the oil on medium-high heat. Sauté the zucchini until golden on both sides, turning with tongs, 5 to 6 minutes. Add the garlic, pasta and tomatoes and remaining salt; cook, until the garlic is fragrant and the pasta is well mixed, 2 minutes.

3 Add the egg mixture and move around to evenly distribute the vegetables with the pasta. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until bottom is lightly set and cooked, about 7 minutes.

4 Arrange the ricotta in spoonfuls evenly around the top. Transfer skillet to oven and bake until frittata is puffed and brown, 10 to 15 minutes. Remove from oven; let cool slightly. Serve hot, sliced into wedges, or at room temperature.

Nutrition information per serving: 321 calories, 19 g fat, 7 g saturated fat, 271 mg cholesterol, 20 g carbohydrates, 1 g sugar, 18 g protein, 404 mg sodium, 1 g fiber

A curriculum based on food

FOODSPAN, *From page 1* like Wierzbicki, they see food as the “high-voltage” material that will spark their students’ interest.

“The food systems stuff is great, but the ultimate mission for me is to teach science, basic skills for biology, physics, chemistry,” Wierzbicki said.

FoodSpan lessons on the ways pesticides affect pollinators and the industrialization of agriculture come full circle when his students eat the food they grow in the garden.

“We are really into what we’d call food deserts and why people eat what they eat, why we make certain food choices,” he said. “It’s pretty interesting to try to get some of our students to move outside the box that they’re in. ... We’ll make a kale and beet salad and bring it in for the kids. For a lot of them, it’s the first time they’ve ever had beets in their entire lives, or kale for that matter.”

The Center for a Livable Future released FoodSpan last year, an update to a previous food-systems curriculum with fewer interactive lessons. Downloaded more than 23,000 times, the course material is broken up into 17 lessons, from which most teachers pick and choose, according to Leo Horrigan, food system correspondent for the center.

Though it’s most often accessed by teachers in California, Pennsylvania and Maryland, FoodSpan is “very much a curriculum that works anywhere in the country,” Horrigan said. “It’s very U.S.-based.”

Elliot Dickson said the material strikes a chord with students at Greenspring Montessori School, where he leads 12- to 15-year-olds in intense studies of food systems every other year. Dickson said it can be hard to find strong course material on food systems that connects to the modern world, but the FoodSpan lessons allow his students to break down real-world challenges.

His students have been especially interested in lessons on industrial agriculture and the treatment of animals.

“They have such a strong sense of justice — anything that we can find or talk about that lets them discuss ... what’s fair, what’s right,”



KENNETH K. LAM/BALTIMORE SUN PHOTOS

Mike Wierzbick works with students to maintain a vegetable garden that produces peppers that are dried, jarred and sold.

he said. “We also try to do a lot of taking action. Knowledge is one thing, but what are you going to do with it?”

Dickson has taken his students to the Food System Lab teaching farm, another Center for a Livable Future project at Cylburn Arboretum that teaches aquaponics, growing fish and plants in a closed system using recycled water.

In Washington, the advocacy group DC Greens has been training teachers in FoodSpan coursework as part of its mission to create a healthy food system and advance food justice. The group’s founder, Sarah Holway, said the curriculum is one of only a few resources on the subject, and that the pressure schools face to achieve high test scores in reading and math often takes precedence over food systems education, even if teachers see a connection between healthy diets and learning.

“It’s seen as separate from the core subjects; it’s not woven into the curriculum,” she said.

Since DC Greens was founded in 2009, the city’s school gardens have grown from 30 to 120, Holway said. About 350 teachers have joined the nonprofit’s list-

serv, some of whom have taken the FoodSpan training and adopted lessons. (The group doesn’t track the number of teachers who implement those lessons.)

“I’m hoping that this curriculum is the beginning of a deeper adoption of this kind of work in schools and a higher level of acceptance by administrators,” Holway said.

Another nonprofit, Maryland Hunger Solutions, has adopted and localized FoodSpan’s lesson on hunger for its annual “Hear the Crunch” event, during which students across the state bite into apples simultaneously to raise awareness about access to healthy breakfast. The event began in elementary schools, and the organization brought in FoodSpan lessons to provide a more meaningful experience for high schoolers.

“At the high school level, crunching into an apple doesn’t have quite the same appeal,” said Tam Lynne Kelley, senior program associate for Maryland Hunger Solutions. “We really wanted to be able to provide high schoolers with information about what food insecurity is, how it’s different



North County High School freshman Marque Smith tastes a chili pepper from the school garden.

than hunger, why it exists and what can be done about it.”

FoodSpan lessons have been implemented far outside the Baltimore-D.C. region, too. Arla Casselman teaches life sciences at Medomak Valley High School in Waldoboro, Maine, where she created an elective class on food systems after she discovered food and nutrition courses there had been canceled.

“There are food and nutrition [curricula] out there, but they’re like super dated and not up to speed. This one is very current,” Casselman said of FoodSpan.

She said lessons on seafood harvesting were particularly relevant. The school sits about 25 minutes from Maine’s coast, and many of the students’ families work in the fishing industry, she said. “Students really relate to this kind of work, but it kind of brought in new perspective to that industry,” she said.

Enrollment has tripled in the three years the food systems class has been taught at Medomak Valley, she said, and students were especially excited about the “food citizen action project” outlined in the FoodSpan curriculum. One year, they held a donation-based dinner where they collected canned food and cash, which they used to create a food bank for students in need.

“We wanted to target an area where we could do something for our community,” she said.

At North County High School, students in Wierzbicki’s classes and the school’s agriculture club

are doing their own work to give back to their community and grow the school’s garden and greenhouse programs. Jessica Schneck and Lilia Yousefian, both 17, were awarded a \$5,000 grant from Lowe’s to add green technology to the garden. The seniors plan to build a cistern that will capture rainwater and use solar and wind power to irrigate the garden.

“Teenagers aren’t always excited about a lot of things, so it’s kind of different for us to show them that you don’t always need a textbook to learn something, and that they can actually get out here and get some hands-on activity,” Yousefian said. “And although they might not realize that they’re learning, they really are, whether it’s how a solar panel works, or it’s how plants grow.”

Wierzbicki plans to expand the garden to include an orchard, and he hopes it becomes a model for other schools.

A number of students have taken the lessons home with them. Twins Noah and Nathan Bennett, 16, are in the school’s agriculture club. Now Nathan grows kale in his backyard. “I actually have something like this,” he said, gesturing toward the garden. “It’s not as big, but I used the same stuff that we used here, like cow manure, calcium and all that stuff you can put in it.”

A walk down the 100-foot-long bed reveals more plants past the peppers: okra, kale, beets, lettuce. The garden is lined with native pollinator plants.

“This was just a patch of dirt when we started,” Noah said, pointing to the garden.

The produce from the garden will be transferred to the school’s greenhouse later this month. The school purchased a dehydrator to dry peppers, which are jarred and sold to faculty. Wierzbicki hopes the students will soon begin selling their produce at local farmers markets and reinvesting the proceeds in the school’s garden and science programs.

“When it started out, it was small,” Wierzbicki said. “It grew itself because these kids kept coming to me like, all right, let’s go out there, let’s do it.”

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