

PRESS RELEASE

COOKING UP CHANGE®
Students Transforming the Future of School Food



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Washington High School Wins Cooking up Change Chicago

CHICAGO – The 2015 Cooking up Change Chicago competition featured 700 hundred attendees, a photo booth, silent auction and amazing food including Moroccan chicken, sweet potato hash and Vietnamese Bahn Mi.

But these dishes weren't created by professional chefs, they were created by students in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) culinary program. These talented students chefs designed their dazzling menus while working within the constraints of the district's school meal program, presenting their meals as entries in the Cooking up Change healthy cooking contest. At the end of the night, Washington High School's Cajun Chicken Lettuce Wrap, Roasted Corn Relish, and Peach and Yogurt Pizza came out on top.

"Cooking up Change has been a great experience," said student chef Marshawn Gibson. "I never knew how much fun cooking could be. Everyone was working hard and working together to make it here."

Cooking up Change puts student voices front and center in the conversation about school food, challenging them to create healthy school lunches that their peers will enjoy, while adhering to strict nutrition guidelines, ingredient lists and budget constraints.

"It took a lot of thinking and a lot of going over, because we couldn't use salt or add sugar," said Marshawn. "We had to go back to our basic culinary training. We had to figure out where you can get natural sugars and salt to get the right flavoring."

The recipe is a healthier spin on a popular chain. "Two people on our team worked at Chipotle, which is where our original idea for a Cajun chicken bowl came from," said Marshawn. "We figured we could make it even healthier if we switched out the bowl idea with the lettuce wraps."

Washington was one of 16 teams competing in yesterday's competition, and each and every one of the nearly 100 students chefs put out delicious food. Although we can only give out a few awards, we are so proud of all of these student chefs.

The Washington team bested a competitive field that included a variety of creative dishes, including second place Marshall Metropolitan High School's Bombay Chicken Burrito, Curry Cucumber Salad and Indian Apple Crunch; and third place Dunbar's Chicken Shawarma, Sweet Potato Hash and Autumn Crumb Parfait. We also gave away the Best Presentation and Fan Favorite award to Corliss High School's Pollo ala Pina, Sweet Collards and Pineapple Fruit Tangi Salsa.

Last night's win for Washington was just the start of what's going to be a busy several months for the team. Washington's meal will be incorporated into the CPS menu and served across the entire district. In June, the team will travel to Washington, D.C., to compete in the Cooking up Change national finals against other winning teams from around the country, and to serve their meal to members of Congress at a legislative briefing on Capitol Hill.

We couldn't put on such a great contest every year without the support of our generous sponsors: Presenting sponsor, Aramark; Patron sponsor, Aetna; Hero sponsor, Sammons Financial Group; Champion sponsors School Health Corporation and Whole Foods Market; Official Culinary Partner, James Beard Foundation; Official Travel Partner, Southwest; and National Silver Sponsor, American Federation of Teachers.

For more information about the Cooking up Change, visit cookingupchange.org.

About Healthy Schools Campaign

Healthy Schools Campaign (HSC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to making schools healthier places for all students. HSC believes that health and wellness should be incorporated into every aspect of the school experience. Founded in 2002, HSC advocates for children to have better access to nutritious school food, physical activity, school health resources and clean air to shape their lifelong learning and health. HSC facilitates collaboration among students, parents, teachers, administrators and policymakers to help prepare this diverse group of stakeholders to lead change for healthier schools at the school, district, state and national levels. For more information, go to healthyschoolscampaign.org, or follow HSC on social media at facebook.com/healthyschools and twitter.com/healthyschools.

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