

Obama Crashes Wife's State Dinner for Children's Recipes

By Stephanie Green - Aug 20, 2012 5:00 PM MT



"I had to crash the party because I did not want to miss out on all the fun," said President [Barack Obama](#) in front of dozens of aspiring chefs in the White House yesterday.

He made a surprise visit to Michelle Obama's first "Kids' State Dinner" for winners of a nationwide recipe contest, the Healthy Lunchtime Challenge. The event was sponsored by [Epicurious.com](#) and [Let's Move](#), the first lady's campaign against child obesity. "I'm an OK cook," the president said, adding that his specialties included omelets and toast. *Left: President Obama greets attendees at the first state dinner for children, held over lunchtime.*



More than 1,200 children 12 and younger submitted recipes, of which 54 were selected -- for the states, D.C. and territories. Their mothers came along. *Left: Kathryn Guylay and her daughter Elena Guylay, 11, of Idaho at the White House. Elena Guylay's "Fiesta Casserole" recipe won a nationwide contest for healthy fare.*



"Is this not cool?" asked Mrs. Obama, in a green Barbara Tfank dress and pearls. "This is one of the best events we've ever done." *Left: First lady Michelle Obama at the first "Kids' State Dinner," for 54 children representing all U.S. states, three territories and the District of Columbia.*



She pointed out some of the more creative recipes, such as the "Secret Service Super Salad" submitted by 9-year-old Michael Lakind of [Texas](#), who said he wants to be an agent someday. *Left: Band members of Big Time Rush, the boy band whose adventures are chronicled on a show on Nickelodeon, greet guests.*



Ellen Goldsmith-Levitt of [Massachusetts](#) attended with her daughter, Rachel, who won for her goat-cheese sandwich. They said they enjoy making pastas and soups together. “She just came out a foodie,” the mother said. *Left: Appetizer--Quinoa, black bean, and corn salads are served on White House china.*



‘**Really Tall**’ Haile Thomas, an 11-year-old from [Arizona](#), whose corn salad was featured on the menu, said the first lady “is really tall. She told me to keep up the good work, and she gave me a hug. She’s so inspiring.” *Left: Main course--A sloppy joe sandwich made from cabbage and baked zucchini fries.*



Elena Guylay, 11, won for her “Fiesta Casserole,” a rice and bean dish. She wore a cowboy hat to the event in honor of her home state of [Idaho](#). *Left: Dessert: a strawberry banana smoothie and fruit salad.*



After the children were greeted in the Grand Foyer, which was decorated in balloons and filled with tunes from the U.S. Marine Band, they were escorted into the East Room where portraits of George and Martha [Washington](#) hang. There were sunflowers, bright red tomato centerpieces. Napkin holders were “Let’s Move” bracelets. *Left: Ellen Goldsmith and her daughter Rachel Goldsmith-Levitt, a winner of a nationwide contest for her goat cheese sandwich recipe.*



The contest judges included Marshall Reid, 12, who co-wrote “Portion Size Me: A Kid-Driven Plan to a Healthier Family” with his mother, Alexandra, also a contest judge. “I was overweight. I was unhappy and was bullied,” he said onstage as [Michelle Obama](#) looked on. *Left: Marshall Reid, co-author of “Portion Size Me,” and his mother, Alexandra Reid.*



Appetizers were kale chips and quinoa, black bean and corn salad. The main course was cabbage sloppy joes with baked zucchini fries. The dessert was a strawberry-banana smoothie and summer fruit salad. *Left: Haile Thomas, 11, won for her corn salad recipe. She said she got a hug from first lady Michelle Obama.*

Three Chefs

Mrs. Obama introduced the White House chefs who put the event together, Cris Comerford and Bill Yosses. She joked that she would have helped them, but couldn't as she was having her makeup done.

The event concluded with a mini-concert by Big Time Rush, a boy band that appears on Nickelodeon, after which White House assistant chef Sam Kass took the children on a tour of the garden. He promised he would help them get a sighting of the Obamas' dog, Bo.



Above: The scene in the East Room of the White House at the first "Kids' State Dinner."

([Stephanie Green](#) is a writer and photographer for Muse, the arts and leisure section of Bloomberg News. Any opinions expressed are her own.)

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