

# OBAMA FOODORAMA

THE BLOG OF RECORD ABOUT WHITE HOUSE FOOD INITIATIVES, FROM  
POLICY TO PIE

MONDAY, AUGUST 20, 2012

## Pool Report, Kids' State Dinner: Booksellers Arrivals, Pre-Luncheon Action



### *The adjective of the day: "Amazing"...*

Yours truly was the pooler on duty this morning at the White House as **First Lady Michelle Obama** hosted the first-ever Kids' State Dinner, her most glamorous Let's Move! event to date. **President Obama** "crashed" the luncheon after the salad course, much to the delight of the child chefs who were the guests of honor. The full pool report, below. *(Quotes from Texas winner Michael Lakind, above, are included in the pool report)*

### *The pool report:*

Pool was escorted into the Booksellers area of the White House on Monday morning at 9:32 AM to await the arrival of First Lady Michelle Obama's 54 child guests and their parents/guardians for the historic, first-ever Kids' State Dinner. The kids, ages 8-12, were the winners of the Healthy Lunchtime Challenge, a recipe contest created to support FLOTUS's Let's Move! campaign, which marked its second anniversary last February.

The luncheon was a heady celebration of delicious and affordable home cooking and healthy eating, and the role children can play in literally changing the health status of an entire generation, set against the heady backdrop of full White House formality. The recipe contest was perfectly timed for the start of the 2012 school year, too.

The pint-sized chefs, who came from all 50 states, the District and 3 US territories (winners list is below), have already been the subject of local/regional media attention, as well as praise from Mrs. Obama and contest

sponsor Epicurious.com. Editor in chief Tanya Steel, who thought up the contest--two years ago, she told pool--was among the 140 guests (headcount provided by WH).

Guests included the kid winners and their parent/guardians, reps from Epicurious, as well as Marshall Reid, age 12, and his mother, Alexandra Reid, co-authors of the book "Portion Size Me," who also served as recipe contest judges. Marshall introduced Mrs. Obama at the luncheon.

Reed Alexander, one of the co-stars of TV show iCarly (he plays character Nevel Papperman) was also a guest; the 17 year old is a longtime supporter of Let's Move!. FLOTUS, as everyone knows, had a cameo on iCarly.

About 1,200 recipes were entered during the contest period, which ran May 21-June 17. Judging took place on June 20, and selections from the winning recipes were served for lunch (menu below). Recipes had to be healthy, affordable, and tasty, and meet the guidelines of USDA's MyPlate icon: Whole grains, lean protein, low-fat dairy, and plenty of fruit and vegetables. Some winners were entirely vegetarian.

In keeping with their newly anointed position as young ambassadors for the First lady's child health campaign, the kids were treated to the kind of protocol afforded to world leaders, Nobel laureates and celebrities who attend State Dinners: They were announced individually by loudspeaker as they entered Booksellers, and walked across the tan and white marble floor to face a scrum of media behind a velvet rope line, snapping photos and asking questions (though no one asked the standard "who are you wearing?").

Each child's name, state, and the name of their winning recipe was announced as they entered, as were the names of adult companions. It was primarily moms as escorts, though there were dads in the crowd and a few grandparents, too.



The weather was grey and drizzly, but the kids were clad in summer finery, decked out for the luncheon. The young ladies wore summery dresses, mostly sleeveless, in imitation of their hostess, as well as hair bows and sparkly jewelry. Pool noted some very special dresses, with \*lots\* of sparkles. The girl winner from Idaho rocked a cowboy hat and boots. The young men were split between shirts and ties with trousers, and the same with jackets. *(Above: Idaho winner Elena Guylay and her mother, Kathryn Kemp-Guylay)*

Epicurious editor Steel was first to enter Booksellers, clad in a green sleeveless dress, her blond hair down. She sat at the First Lady's table, #8, during the luncheon, which was center in the East Room.

"I am so inspired," Steel told pool. "It's been a two-year process. I can't believe it's actually happening. It's a thrilling moment for all of us today."

She hailed the child chefs as "amazing," and "very creative," and said she hoped they'll continue spreading the First Lady's message.

"That's the ultimate prize," Steel said. "Healthy kids."

Aaron Blust, age 9, of Alaska won for his Teriyaki Salmon Wrap recipe. He was seated at Mrs. Obama's table during the lunch, a fact he didn't know when entering Booksellers.

"I'm really, really excited," Blust said about the prospect of meeting FLOTUS.

His recipe was a no-brainer, he said: "I really like fish. We're from Alaska," he told pool.

Asked if he'll be a chef when he grows up, Blust hedged: "I might!" he said. He's been cooking with his mom for as long as he can remember, he said.

Arizona winner Haile Thomas, age 11 from Tucson, was visiting the White House for her second time; she toured it with Sr. Policy Advisor for Healthy Food Initiatives Sam Kass after speaking at a conference for Partnership for a Healthier America, the foundation that supports Let's Move! Her recipe for a Quinoa, black bean, and corn salad was served as the luncheon appetizer.

"It's an honor to be here," Thomas said, clad in a summery yellow dress, her hair in curls.

She's been cooking since age 5 with her mother, who runs a catering business when not managing Thomas' budding career as a junior chef and child health spokesperson. Thomas just started 6th grade, and is now the paid child ambassador for Hyatt Hotels and Resorts, which has partnered with the Let's Move! campaign to create a healthy kids menu. Legendary chef Alice Waters is the adult spokesperson for the effort, called For Kids By Kids. Thomas is also on the kids advisory board for ChopChop magazine, and a junior advisor for Alliance for a Healthier America, former President Bill Clinton's foundation.

Asked how she feels about having her recipe served, Thomas replied: "It is a true honor. It's amazing."

Florida winner Deborah Goncalves, age 12, from Tampa, was clad in a brown silk dress, and won for her recipe "Triple F: Fake Fast Food."

Asked how she feels about lunching with FLOTUS, Goncalves, who is in 7th grade, did not hold back:

"The First lady is like OH MY GOD!" she said. "I can't believe it!!"

Goncalves said she thought up her recipe because "kids love fast food."

"But mine is good for you. It uses quinoa, so it can be as fun as fast food, but much healthier!"

North Carolina winner Sydney Brown, age 11 (female) won for Sydney's Homerun Meatloaf Burger. She wore a pink bolero sweater and a flowered dress, and said she was thrilled to be a winner--and to meet FLOTUS.

"I want to thank her for all she's done for kids," Brown said--with no prompting from her mother, BTW.

"It's overwhelming," Brown said about winning. "It's amazing."

Brown is a burger lover, and said she originally created her recipe for a burger contest for chain eatery Red Robin, but then realized it could be much healthier, in keeping with the Let's Move! campaign.

"So I took all kinds of vegetables, and mixed it all together--carrots, zucchini, peppers." She still can't believe she won, she told pool.

The winner from Mrs. Obama's home state, Illinois, Jonah Schaik, age 12 of Hinsdale, won for Jonah's Pesto Pasta.

He was on a special mission when creating his recipe, Schaik said: His brother is allergic to dairy, and he wanted to "make something we could both eat."

His pesto recipe uses no cheese, but "lots of garlic." Schaik has been cooking with mom Madelyn, who accompanied him, since age three, and said he was very excited ("very!") to meet Mrs. Obama. He might be a chef when he grows up, Schaik said.

"It's mind blowing how long I've been waiting to come here!" said Texas winner Michael Lakind, age 9, who won for "Bunny Bisque and Secret Service Super Salad." Clad in a blue shirt and a tie, with dress trousers, the mini chef was almost levitating with excitement, and also dubbed his visit to the White House "amazing."

Lakind very seriously told pool that his recipe was "in honor of the hard work of the Secret Service, who have a very big role in the life of the President and First Lady."

His mother is a caterer, he said, and he, too, has been cooking since he was knee-high to a cornstalk.

iCarly co-star Reed Alexander, clad in a grey summer weight suit, with no tie, gushed about FLOTUS and the Let's Move! campaign as he entered Booksellers. He lost 15 pounds about two years ago after changing his eating habits, Alexander said, and his second career is now being Mrs. Obama's foremost teen spokesman.

"I am 100% an ambassador for Let's Move!," Alexander said. "It's a thrill."

"This is such a spectacular event," Alexander added, meaning both the luncheon and the recipe contest. "What an incredible celebration!"

Per the East Wing, FLOTUS's other signature campaign, Joining Forces, was also spotlighted: The Reids and the Wisconsin winner, Finwe Wiedenhoeft, age 9, who came with her mother Kristin Wiedenhoeft, are both military families. The Wiedenhoefts sat with Mrs. Obama. Mom has five kids, and the eldest son, 19, is in the Navy.

The kids were done arriving by 10:47 AM, and then they partied on the State Floor as they awaited the start of the lunch. They were entertained by a Marine Corps quintet, clad in red formal uniforms, playing jazzy renditions of kid-friendly tunes, including the theme from "The Flintstones."

A balloon artist created shaped animals and funny hats to wow the kids--which included a very large green alien riding on a black motorcycle. Rather than floral arrangements, vases carried arrangements made of fruit, shaped like little trees: Blueberries, strawberries, melon.

Before the lunch, Kass, wearing his formal chef's whites with the White House seal on the breast, taped interviews with the kids and adults, standing before a video camera in the Cross Hall and discussing healthy eating, gardening, and fitness. After the lunch, he led the kids on a closed-press tour of Mrs. Obama's Kitchen Garden.

The kids were also treated to a command performance by Nickelodeon band Big Time Rush, who played three songs.

FLOTUS, clad in a green and white print short-sleeved dress with a scalloped neckline and fullish skirt, wore her hair down, with a string of pearls around her neck, and blue closed-toe pumps. She arrived at the luncheon shortly before 11:30 AM after the guests had been escorted into the East Room; they rose as she arrived and applauded. Mrs. Obama has worn her dress before, according to an East Wing aide, who could not identify the designer.

Guests sat at a combination of round tables for 10 and rectangular tables for 12. Mrs. Obama's Head Table was round, and she was seated with Louisiana winner Michael Prados and his Grandfather Michael Prados; Alaska winner Aaron Blust and his mom Jeanne Monk; Tanya Steel; Wisconsin Winner Finwe Wiedenhoeft, and her mother Kristina Wiedenhoeft; and the District of Columbia winner, Ilianna Gonzalez-Evans and her mother Anita Gonzalez-Evans.

Mrs. Obama's remarks were open press; please check transcript. She has dined on healthy foods with children throughout her campaign, but never with such formal trappings, and never with the traditional high-beams of full White House pomp and circumstance. Past meals with kids were garden side picnics.

The President made a surprise visit to the luncheon after the salad had been served, and was greeted with a standing ovation. He made brief remarks, congratulating the winners (it was open press; check transcript), and then went around the room and shook hands with, it seemed like, absolutely everyone. He lingered in the Cross Hall after exiting the East Room to more applause.

Per the East Wing, Mrs. Obama is serving as guest-editor of iVillage this week, and she was taping an interview with editor Kelly Wallace after the luncheon. Wallace was among the press on hand.

The winning recipes have been collected in a downloadable cookbook, which should now be available on the LetsMove.gov and Epicurious.com websites.

The luncheon menu was created by Executive Chef Cris Comerford and Executive Pastry Chef Bill Yosses from the winners' recipes, which were each full meals that included side dishes or notes for side dishes. The two chefs, standing in the back of the East Room during the luncheon, got a shout-out from FLOTUS.

The menu: Kale Chips from the New York winner were placed on each table ahead of the appetizer, which was Quinoa Black Bean and Corn Salad from the Arizona winner. The entree was "Yummy Cabbage Sloppy Joes" from the Kansas winner, accompanied by Baked Zucchini Fries from the North Carolina winner. Dessert was two recipes: A Strawberryana Smoothie from the Hawaii winner; and a "Summer Fruit Garland" from the South Dakota winner, which was chunks of fruit on a wooden skewer.

"All the kids are winners," stressed Semonti Stephens, when noting that all the recipes were terrific.

Per the White House, winning recipes "were selected from over 1,200 delicious entries, which were evaluated at D.C. Central Kitchen by a panel of judges that included White House Assistant Chef Sam Kass; Chef José Andrés; Marshall and Alex Reid, authors of Portion Size Me; Epicurious Editor-in-Chief Tanya Steel; and representatives from the USDA and the Department of Education," contest co-sponsors. The WH released a video of the judging process, available on LetsMove.gov.

As part of the prize package, the kids and their adult companions were flown by Delta Airlines to the District, and the Westin Georgetown provided a one-night hotel stay.

***Per Let's Move!/Epicurious, the winners' list:***

Healthy Lunchtime Challenge Winners

Alabama: Falcon Wiles, age 9, Alabama's Yummy Summer Soup

Alaska: Aaron Blust, age 9, Alaska Teriyaki Salmon Wrap

Arizona: Haile Thomas, age 11, Quinoa, Black Bean, and Corn Salad

Arkansas: Trey Sims, age 12, Kickin' Chicken Salad

California: Sean Reichbach, age 9, Sean's 3-Pepper Soup

Colorado: Aidan Gould, age 12, Rainbow Salad with Black Beans, Homegrown Mint, and Lemon

Connecticut: Betsy DaSilva, age 10, Heavenly Lunch

Delaware: Jourdanne Latney, age 12, Stuffed Tomatoes

District of Columbia: Ilianna Gonzales-Evans, age 11, Mexican Delight

Florida: Deborah Goncalves, age 12, "Triple F:" Fake Fast Food

Georgia: Haley Matthews, age 12, Stuffed Zucchini Boat

Hawaii: Stefani Shimomura-Sakamoto, age 11, Scrumptious Salmon Salad Lunch

Idaho: Elena Guylay, age 11, Fiesta Casserole

Illinois: Jonah Schaik, age 12, Jonah's Pesto Pasta

Indiana: Alexander Aylward, age 8, Vegetable Quinoa Salad with Chicken

Iowa: Ajani Patton-Imani, age 8, Yummy Corn Wraps

Kansas: Rori Coyne, age 12, Yummy Cabbage Sloppy Joes

Kentucky: Myka Smith-Jackson, age 8, Myka's Perfect Curry Chicken Wraps

Louisiana: Michael Prados, age 12, Fish Tacos

Maine: Annalee Carroll, age 12, Dumplings and Veggie Sushi

Maryland: Samuel Hightower, age 10, Sizzling Tofu with Green Onions and Sugar Snap Peas

Massachusetts: Rachel Goldsmith-Levitt, age 11, Tapenade and Goat Cheese Sandwich

Michigan: Avery McNew, age 8, Apple Oat Balls!

Minnesota: Riley Sorensen, age 12, Stuffed Red Peppers and Banana Oat Stacks

Mississippi: Linda Martinez, age 12, Mississippi Tacos

Missouri: Kyle Moore, age 12, Chicken Spinach Pasta

Montana: Kayla Wayman, age 9, Kayla's Garden Chicken Pizza

Nebraska: Aaron Beckman, age 8, Apple Alien

Nevada: Alexea Wagner, age 9, Vegan Sloppy Joes and Kale Salad



New Hampshire: Ella Barrett, age 8, Black Bean and Avocado Burrito with Pineapple Salsa  
New Jersey: Tarteel Idais, age 9, The Golden Plate  
New Mexico: Emma Kenney, age 9, Baked Chicken Wrap with Nectarine Avocado Salsa  
New York: Samuel Wohabe, age 9, Fish Fueled Pepper Rocket with Kale Chips and Quinoa  
North Carolina: Sydney Brown, age 11, Sydney's Homerun Meatloaf Burger  
North Dakota: Logan Rosene, age 8, Logan's Favorite Turkey Vegetable Soup  
Northern Mariana Islands: Esther Huh, age 11, Pitaya Healthy Salad  
Ohio: Logan Kendall, age 11, Shredded Veggie Wrap  
Oklahoma: Harrison Booker, age 9, Power Pesto Pasta  
Oregon: Robert Robinson, age 9, Veggie Pizza  
Pennsylvania: Evan Clark, age 9, Falafel Wrap with Apple, Carrot, and Cranberry Slaw  
Puerto Rico: Ariana Lugo, age 9, Sushi for Kids  
Rhode Island: Caroline Cowart, age 12, Broccoli and Cheese Egg White Omelet  
South Carolina: Lauren Kuperman, age 12, Fun with Lunch  
South Dakota: Eva Farley, age 8, Miss Kitty's Egg Salad Sensation  
Tennessee: Logan Guleff, age 9, Tuna Schooners  
Texas: Michael Lakind, age 9, Bunny Bisque and Secret Service Super Salad  
Utah: Lahav Ardi, age 9, Lahav's Lentil Veggie Soup  
Vermont: Laura Printon, age 9, Backyard Garden Salsa Tortillas  
Virgin Islands: Gabriel Reed, age 11, Vegetarian Lasagna  
Virginia: Madeleine Steppel, age 9, Fish Chowder with Fruity Salad  
Washington: Arla Sutton, age 9, Salad Noodle Wraps  
West Virginia: Alexis Nelson, age 10, Golden Moroccan Butternut Stew  
Wisconsin: Finwe Wiedenhoef, age 9, Barbecue Cheddar Chickpea Burgers  
Wyoming: Grace Ratchford, age 12, Macaroni Casserole

*\*Photos by Alan Ogren, NGH*