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Students ask adults to look at food in a different way



STORY AND PHOTOS
 BY KAREN BOSSICK

Madison Ferris gestured toward a plate of York Peppermint Patties. Or, at least, what looked like York Peppermint Patties.

She and her classmates at The Community School had cooked up their own version using just four ingredients: organic sweetened condensed milk, peppermint extract, powdered sugar and chocolate chips.

Simple and sweet, compared with the commercial version which contains a long list of

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additives and preservatives, she noted. And they tasted the same.

Community School eighth-graders recently capped a 12-week trimester of studying food and sustainability by staging an Appreciation Dinner for parents and members of the community at Jeff and Kathryn Guylay's new home in Ketchum.

The Guylays carted their dining room table and other furniture off into other corners of the house, and dozens of people crowded into their spacious kitchen to sample food prepared by the kids and helpers like Kristin Bigelow and Tracy Caraluzzi.

Capping the evening was a short presentation by Jeanne Nolan, a leader in the slow food movement and founder of The Organic Gardener, which teaches parents and children to grow organic gardens throughout Chicago.

The students, under the direction of teachers Scott Runkel and Naomi Goldberg, did more than ply their guests with food.

Kate Connelly served up blind test samples of corn-fed versus grass-fed beef, asking guests which tasted better as she explained the merits of the grass-fed beef.

Ferris offered samples of the students' homemade versions of cinnamon pop tarts, snickerdoodle cookies, caramel candy and Almond Joy Mounds, inviting guests to compare them to the commercial brands.

The students' Mounds contained five ingredients—some, organic--compared with 15 in the commercial brand, she noted.

"This was one of our favorite projects—replicating food," she added.

Jake Blackburn offered guests sliders made of grass-fed beef and veggie burgers that the kids had made from garbanzo beans, Swiss chard, tomatoes, onion and garlic.

Leyla Ba, Christine DuFur and Blake Letourneau served cheese curds that, they pointed out, were made just 75 miles away on the Ballard Family Dairy and Cheese Farm in Gooding.

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Drinks included cucumber-, pomegranate- and citrus-infused water.

Students also led guests on a tour of the Guylay's greenhouse and the enclosed circular chicken corral where the students take turns caring for chickens every morning and evening.

Kennedy Watts explained how they use a light to simulate the sun so the chickens think it's spring or summer, prompting them to continue to lay eggs during winter.

"We have to replace the eggs with golf balls so they won't peck them," she said.

The students decided they wanted to learn where food comes from, how it's processed and its impact upon health and the environment after reading Anna Lappe's "Diet for a Hot Planet," said Mayanna Llewelyn. The book claims that the climate crisis is at the end of our fork, with the way we produce and distribute food contributing to a third of our greenhouse gas emissions.

Students pooled money they'd been given from the county-wide wow-students project to help pay for the project. The project gives each student \$25 to donate to non-profits and projects that help them understand how they can make a difference. Nurture Idaho covered the remaining costs.

Students also visited Glacier National Park to see receding glaciers and visited local farms.

Colton Davis said he knew nothing about cows and their impact on the environment before the study.

"But I learned that there's one place that has been saving up their poop for a really long time to use to burn for energy," he added. "I think that's pretty exciting."

PHOTOS: Leyla Ba, Christine DuFur and Blake Letourneau passed out samples from Ballard Family Dairy & Cheese Farm in Gooding.

Community School student Kennedy Watts tends to chickens that eighth-graders raised as part of a 12-week food study.



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Kristin Bigelow trots out some sliders made of grass-fed beef, which she said, are packed with omega 3 fatty acids, which are important for normal metabolism.



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