

September 4, 2012

Ketchum Youth Invited to Meet Obamas after Winning Healthy Recipe Contest

By Karen Bossick



KETCHUM • Twelve-year-old Elena Guylay had to pass the scrutiny of Secret Service men stationed in trees outside the White House and multiple security checkpoints once inside. But the Ketchum girl said it was worth it as she got a hug from Michelle Obama and a hearty handshake from President Barack Obama.

“He said, ‘You look just like your Mom, and that’s a good thing,’” she said.

The sixth-grader at Sun Valley’s Community School won an invite to a Kids State Dinner at the White House last week by submitting a winning recipe for a Healthy Lunchtime Challenge calling for healthy, tasty recipes that could be adapted for school lunches.

The contest attracted 1,200 recipes, including a 9-year-old Texas boy’s recipe for Bunny Bisque and Secret Service Super Salad and an 8-year-old Nebraskans’ Apple Alien recipe.

Guylay submitted a recipe for Fiesta Casserole that she helped her mother — a nutritionist — create a few years ago. The recipe, which can be made in a slow cooker, is inexpensive and includes quinoa, brown rice, three types of beans, cottage cheese, cheese, salsa, chili powder, cumin and cilantro.

Guylay’s 9-year-old brother Alexander was runner-up for the State of Idaho with his Enchilada Pie using butternut squash, broccoli and Swiss chard.

“It’s really good for making you feel better and giving you lot of energy,” he said.

The winners, who represented 50 states, the District of Columbia and a few territories, were treated to a tour of Washington, D.C., and a meet-and-greet pizza party featuring a pizza loaded with veggies on a whole wheat crust and whole wheat cookies.

At the White House, they were entertained by a U.S. Marine Corps band playing “The Flintstones,” a mini-concert from Big Time Rush and iCarly’s Reed Alexander and a tour of the White House garden led by White House Assistant Chef Sam Kass.

“I usually get invited to state dinners but I had to crash this one,” President Obama joked with the group.

Lunch, served up on White House china, featured several of the winners’ recipes, including a quinoa black bean corn salad, kale chips, baked zucchini fries, cabbage Sloppy Joes, fruit kabobs and strawberry banana smoothies.

“You came up with dishes ... that are good for you. But, more importantly, they taste good, too,” Michelle Obama told the pint-sized chefs. “It can happen — healthy and tasty at the same time.”

At least 100 news photographers covered the event, ringing the wall around the room. Elena got a few extra flashbulbs aimed her way, thanks to a cowboy hat she bought at the Sun Valley Arts and Crafts Festival earlier this month.

“The girl winner from Idaho rocked with her cowboy hat and boots,” mentioned one food blogger.

“The whole thing was over the top; They treated us like royalty,” said Elena’s mother, Kathryn Guylay. “Michelle spent so much time with us. She hugged every child and was so gracious. And the fact she got her husband to show up was amazing. The whole thing was mind boggling.”

Elena is already moving ahead with the First Lady’s challenge to be an ambassador in spreading the healthy lunch concept. She plans to give a presentation to her school and put together a video for other schools. She also will cook up some of the 54 winning recipes for her school’s eight-week food study.

And she plans to work with her brother on fine tuning his recipe.

“Being there, I felt like a celebrity,” she said. “Now I want to work with my brother to give him a better chance to go next year.”

Elena Guylay’s Winning Recipe

Elena Guylay uses all different types of beans, including kidney, pinto and black beans, to color this dish. She serves it with crunchy raw carrots, celery, jicama, and avocado slices, with apple slices for dessert. The recipe can easily be halved to serve a small crowd. *Makes 16 servings*

1 cup brown rice
1 1/2 cups quinoa, rinsed
2 (16-ounce) jars your favorite salsa
4 (15-ounce) cans assorted beans, rinsed and drained
2 (16-ounce) containers cottage cheese
Juice of 2 limes
2 teaspoons chili powder
2 teaspoons ground cumin
1 bunch fresh cilantro, coarsely chopped
8 ounces shredded cheese of your choice (Elena likes the Mexican blend)
Salt

For serving:

Sliced carrots, celery, jicama, and avocado

Special equipment: 2 (9- by 12-inch) baking dishes

Preheat the oven to 350°F. In two saucepans, cook the rice and quinoa according to the package directions. In a large bowl, combine the rice, quinoa, salsa, beans, cottage cheese, lime juice, chili powder, cumin, and cilantro. Spread the mixture in two (9- by 12-inch) baking dishes, cover with foil, and bake until the rice and quinoa are light brown, about 40 minutes. Carefully remove the foil from both pans and sprinkle the cheese on top of each casserole. Return to oven and bake until the cheese is melted and bubbling, about 5 minutes. Season to taste with salt, and serve with sliced veggies.