

Guylay Returns From State Dinner



Elena Guylay visited Sam Kass, the White House assistant chef and senior policy advisor for Health Food initiatives. He also works with the first Lady on her Let's Move! Initiative to reverse childhood obesity.

COURTESY PHOTOS

BY KAREN BOSSICK

Elena Guylay can't remember how big President Obama's hands were—she was too awestruck when she got the unexpected opportunity to shake the President's hands.

But she does remember what he said.

He said, "You look just like your Mom, and that's a good thing," she recalled.

Guylay, a 12-year-old sixth-grader at Community School, just returned from a Kids State Dinner with First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House.

She was one of 54 winners in a contest that featured winning recipes that could be adapted for healthy, tasty school lunches. The contest was part of the first Lady's "Let's Move" initiative designed to curtail childhood obesity.

More than 1,200 children ages 8 through 12 entered recipes for the contest, including a Secret Service Super Salad, submitted by a 9-year-old Texas boy who said he wants to be an agent. Elena was chosen to represent Idaho based on her Fiesta Casserole. Her 9-year-old brother Alex was runner-up for the state of Idaho with his Enchilada Pie using butternut squash, broccoli and Swiss chard.

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

The kids, already on overdrive by the time they'd gone on a tour of Washington monuments and entered the White House past Secret Service men stationed in trees, shifted into even higher gear as President Obama made a surprise visit.

"Usually, I get invited to state dinners," he said. "This time I had to crash."

It took 45 minutes to get the kids past multiple security checkpoints, which included standing in footprints while their pictures were taken. The children were told to refer to the First Lady only as Mrs. Obama and were stripped of everything but a card announcing their state and name when they were ushered in for a hug with the President's wife.

White House Assistant Chef Sam Kass took the youngsters on a tour of the White House garden with its jumbo-sized watermelon, papaya trees and diverse varieties of tomatoes,



Elena Guylay and her mom, Kathryn visit the Press Room.



Elena's dinner plate setting.

squash and herbs.

As a Marine Corps quintet played "The Flintstones," the children were served appetizers. Nickelodeon's Reed Alexander of iCarly mingled with the youngsters and Big Time Rush put on a mini-concert.

Lunch served up on White House china consisted of quinoa black bean avocado and corn salad, kale chips, baked zucchini fries, cabbage sloppy joes, fruit kabobs and strawberryana smoothies—all taken from recipes the kids had submitted.

About a hundred news cameras were lined up along the wall, all snapping pictures at once. One photographer was immediately reprimanded when he crossed the line they were made to stand behind.

And Elena got a few extra flashbulbs aimed her way, thanks to the cowboy hat she bought at the Sun Valley Arts and Crafts Festival to represent Idaho.

"The girl winner from Idaho rocked a cowboy hat and boots," mentioned one food blogger.

"It was so incredible—I felt like a celebrity," said Elena. "Mrs. Obama gave us a speech—she said 'Congratulations. I expect you to be an ambassador and spread this program further.'"

That won't be hard. Elena's Community School has already asked her to put together a presentation for a school assembly, and she plans to put together a video for other schools, as well. She also will cook up some of the 54 recipes for the middle school's eight-week food study.

Elena's mother, Kathryn Guylay, says she was particularly impressed by Marshall Reid, a 12-year-old who co-wrote

SIDEBAR FOR TOP

Download a free copy of the 54 recipes submitted by the pint-size chefs at <http://www.recipechallenge.epicurious.com/>

"Portion Size Me: A Kid-Driven Plan to a Healthier Family."

Reid told the youngsters how he was unhappy and bullied while overweight. He lost 15 pounds after his mother suggested they do portion sizing—"the opposite of super sizing."

"He said: I had my mother to turn to. Now we have a mother of our nation we can all turn to," Kathryn Guylay recalled.

Elena will be 13—too old to enter the contest if it's held again next year.

"But I want to work with my brother to give him a better chance to go next year," she said.

AND WHAT OF THE REST?

Elena Guylay got her wish to see the Declaration of Independence while in Washington, D.C.

"It's really faded," she said. "And the Pentagon was kind of scary because of the guns."

Her brother Alexander got to see the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum but was most impressed by the International spy Museum with its James Bond exhibit.

And Mom? She was wowed by the Smithsonian's new exhibit featuring Julia Child's kitchen.

"Man, she was organized," she said. "She had peg boards for everything. And she outlined them so that if someone used one of the implements, like the garlic press, they'd know exactly where to put it back."