

MARYSVILLE IS KICKIN' UP THE SPICE IN SCHOOL FOOD

ABOUT THE DISTRICT

Marysville Joint Unified School District (MJUSD) is located in Northern California in Yuba County. The district operates twenty transitional kindergarten-through-twelfth-grade schools serving 11,500 students, of which 54.2 percent were eligible for free and reduced-price meals during the 2022–2023 school year.

MJUSD is an integral part of their community. Living in an area with a relatively small population, families have a stake in the success of the district. The task of developing standardized recipes in partnership with their students offered MJUSD an opportunity to engage their community in the child nutrition component of their district's academic program.

ACTIVITIES

- Partnered with Wild River Farms to source local kiwi for two new standardized recipes
- Sourced local tomatoes for a third new standardized recipe
- Conducted taste-testing with students
- Provided supporting nutrition education and a farm field trip for students
- Provided professional development activities including trainings and participation in the California Department of Education's Standardized Recipe Workshop series

LOCAL INGREDIENT

When MJUSD was reviewing a list of new recipe proposals, several factors contributed to their decision to select one with a southwestern influence. Staff were familiar with southwestern flavors and cooking methods, and the ingredients would also appeal to the diverse student population. Knowing that, and the fact that MJUSD also wanted to highlight local kiwi fruit, the Kickin' Kiwi Chicken Chile Verde with Kiwi Salsa recipes were born.

Yuba County, home to Marysville, is located near Yolo County, one of the state's top producers of tomatoes. To celebrate these local ruby-red gems, MJUSD developed a third recipe, a marinated spinach and tomato salad side dish. With this recipe, they used Mediterranean herbs and seasonings to create a dish that required no cooking and could be easily and quickly replicated.



Plated Kickin' Kiwi Chicken Chile Verde

RECIPE DEVELOPMENT

Before beginning this work, MJUSD had an established, ongoing partnership with multiple local farms, including Wild River. Wild River Farm's food philosophy and passion for feeding children local, sustainable, healthy foods mirrored that of MJUSD. When MJUSD's recipe team selected a recipe that highlighted the kiwi fruit, they knew exactly where to procure it. After all, the kiwi fruit is Wild River Farm's crowning jewel.

After the initial recipe creation, the team spent time developing the required culinary techniques and determining the quantities of ingredients needed. Once completed, they began offering samples of the recipes at the school sites. MJUSD conducted two sampling events in late Spring 2022 for the kiwi-inspired recipes, one at Cedar Lane Elementary School and a second at Yuba Gardens Middle School. At the tasting events, Nutrition Services staff distributed samples and collected student feedback in small groups, which allowed each student to provide honest and personal feedback while minimizing influence from others. In total, 180 students out of 200 rated the recipes as acceptable, for a 90 percent acceptability rate. After the successful tastings at the two schools, MJUSD featured the Kickin' Kiwi dish and accompanying salsa on the menu at all school sites and nearly five thousand portions have been served!

MJUSD hosted another sampling event during May 2022 at Lindhurst High School featuring the Marinated Tomato and Spinach Salad. Samples were distributed to students who provided their input digitally using a Quick Response or QR code that linked to an online survey. Of the 100 students that completed the survey, 85 rated the recipe acceptable, for an 85 percent acceptability rating.

Marysville Joint Unified School District

www.youtube.com/@MJUSDMedia

www.facebook.com/MarysvilleJUSD

The tools and experiences gained were invaluable to MJUSD. MJUSD has since used this process for other scratch-made recipes including Taco Hummus, Breakfast Pizza, Ceviche, Blackened Fish Tacos, and French Toast Casserole.

NUTRITION EDUCATION

MJUSD offered a field trip to Wild River Farm for students in May 2022 to provide nutrition education.



Marinated Spinach and Tomato Salad Cups

“These new recipes set the stage for continuing to develop fun, flavorful standardized recipes in partnership with our student community”

Nick Dramis,
MJUSD Supervisor of Culinary Operations

Recipes: Marinated Spinach and Tomato Salad, Kickin' Kiwi Chile Chicken Verde, and Kickin' Kiwi Salsa.

