

NATOMAS ACTIVATES FARM TO FORK PARTNERSHIPS

ABOUT THE DISTRICT

The Natomas Unified School District (NUSD) is located in Sacramento, the epicenter of Northern California's Farm to Fork efforts. NUSD has 18 transitional kindergarten-through-twelfth grade schools serving 16,421 students, of which 63.5 percent were eligible for free and reduced-price school meals during the 2022–2023 school year. The district serves a culturally diverse student population through their breakfast, lunch, afterschool, and summer meal programs.

ACTIVITIES

- Developed a standardized school lunch recipe using hyperlocal lettuce
- Enhanced their farm to fork partnerships with Spork Food Hub
- Developed and taste tested the recipe in partnership with culinary students
- Featured the recipe and provided nutrition education at promotional events such as farmers markets and food truck pop-up events
- Provided professional development through the California Department of Education's (CDE's) recipe standardization workshops

“Locally-sourced meals resonate with students.”

Vince Caguin, Executive Director of Nutrition Services & Warehousing (NSW) at NUSD

LOCAL INGREDIENTS

NUSD foodservice operations are driven by a longstanding collaboration between local growers, producers, and manufacturers, who supply top-notch ingredients. Spork Food Hub serves as an aggregator of agricultural delicacies for numerous small urban farms in their region, including Fiery Ginger Farms. Fiery Ginger Farms has cultivated 8,000 heads of lettuce dedicated solely to NUSD's Nutrition Services, accounting for 70 percent of their crop. In fact, through these partnerships with local farmers and vendors, NUSD is able to ensure that at least 90 percent of their sourced products come from within a 150-mile radius of the district.

NUSD developed a Black Bean & Corn Taco Salad Bowl recipe featuring local salanova lettuce and local cherry and grape tomatoes.



Black Bean and Corn Taco Salad Bowl

RECIPE DEVELOPMENT

After closely observing students at the salad bar, NUSD noticed a popular combination of lettuce, corn, beans, and tomatoes emerging. Some students would even enhance this recipe further by adding chips for more texture or hot sauce on the side for more heat.

To put this theory to the test, NUSD began working with culinary club students to assist with the initial recipe development. With valuable feedback from students and continued recipe refinement, NUSD developed the Black Bean & Corn Taco Salad Bowl. NUSD then featured the combination on their cafeteria menu, showcased it on the district's Food Truck, and tested it at several schools; wherever and whenever served, the recipe was met with great success. The Black Bean and Corn Taco Salad Bowl recipe was indeed “for the students and by the students.”



NUSD student participating in taste testing

NUTRITION EDUCATION

NUSD conducted several nutrition education activities, including two farmers markets, reaching over 200 students and one taste testing reaching 150 students. Fiery Ginger Farms helped deliver nutrition education in the afterschool and summer programs at the district.



Natomas Unified School District

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Recipe: Black Bean and Corn Taco Salad



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