“Whole Grain Goodness” by Brenda Borjas

This month was all about whole grains and breakfast. Student learned about the importance of eating whole grains to keep their digestive system clean and moving, regularly. Also noted was that three quarters of the new MyPlate is made up of high-fiber foods such as whole grains, fruits and vegetables which may help reduce the risk of some diseases (linked to high cholesterol, heart, excess weight, some cancers). Students were reminded that if their parents/or other immediate family members have a history of these diseases that they (kids) might also be at risk so need to start eating healthy now to reduce their chance of getting that disease when they are older. Participating students had the opportunity to taste various whole-grain cereals in a trail mix recipe. Students commented how easy it was to make and most never really tasted the variety of the grains featured in the recipe. Teachers were given a copy of the trail mix recipe to make more for students who wish to take it home and share it with their parents. Teachers all agree that their students benefit from the taste-tests (samples) we provide.

“I Spy a Vegetable in the School Cafeteria” by Linda Tesar

Visiting the school cafeteria after a nutrition class can be a real learning experience in itself, checking to see if the children are applying what they are learning about nutrition in the classroom. Teachers report that the children look forward to the FNP visits so it is fun to surprise them whenever possible in the cafeteria, too. When I spy on the kids to see what they are eating, I notice that students who had been taught earlier the same day were choosing more vegetables with their meal than the others who had not yet been visited. Most had taken the salad or vegetable that was offered and since they did not know I was coming in to observe them, they were not trying to impress me. It is obvious that the teaching we do is effective and needs to be reinforced on a regular basis. I was delighted to hear from a parent at one school that her son asked to go shopping with her so that he could pick out the whole wheat bread that he had tasted in the class. End-of-year teacher survey results are showing positive results from the FNP classes and will be compiled next month to show county-wide impacts. Looking forward to the new school year, one school is planning a club started for children with severe weight problems and will be seeking more parental involvement.

“Let Them Eat Fruit (instead of cake) for Healthy Celebrations” by Karen Faverty

“Healthy Celebrations” food preparation class featuring healthy desserts was presented to two Culinary Arts classes at Marchman Technical Education Center (MTEC) in New Port Richey. After learning about typical, as well as less obvious, substitutions that can take a dessert recipe from a caloric nightmare to healthier fare, fruits were highlighted as the sweet treat of choice. But do fruit desserts have to be boring? Not at all—It’s all in the presentation! The students learned from hands-on experience that with imagination, creativity, and a little effort, special celebration fruit desserts could wow their guests with a variety of colors, shapes and textures!

Two teams of students competed by preparing the same fruit salad, served in a watermelon bowl. One team created a “beach basket" while the other team worked with a “treasure chest" theme. Each team also prepared a low-fat fruit dip, served in a melon bowl. The afternoon class repeated the same lesson. Students successfully applied the new skills learned and were very proud of their accomplishments. As a reward, students enjoyed eating their creations down to the last piece of fruit, demonstrating that they agreed—“Healthy fruits can make tasty and delicious desserts!"

All this was properly timed as it followed the announcement that 23 of these students had completed University of Florida’s intensive 6-hour food safety training course presented by Betsy Crisp, Extension Family & Consumer Sciences Faculty. A total of 17 passed the ServSafe exam with a class average score that was higher than state average! These students worked really hard to learn their culinary skills and to achieve their food service manager certification (good for five years) that helps prove their competence in the area of food safety and shows readiness to work in the food service industry.

For more information, contact Betsy Crisp, MS, LD at UF/IFAS-Pasco County Extension 813-929-2725