

We launched **Project Salad** — to serve fresh, local, organic, seasonal salads for school lunch! 27,400 students are eating salads as the centerpiece of their lunch, through our partnership with West Contra Costa Unified School District. Why salads? The flavors, textures and colors celebrate the bounties of the land, while chef-inspired recipes honor diverse culinary traditions, healthy soils, and thriving community ecosystems — where organic farmers, local farm-to-table chefs, food service teams, and food purveyors play integral roles. We're proud to spotlight salads, as work together to transform the health of our kids and our planet. We honor WCCUSD Food Service Director Barbara Jellison and her mighty team for their unwavering support in serving fresh, local, organic school meals.

Here's a glimpse of our Project Salad launch event at Betty Reid Soskin Middle School that took place this month. [Join Conscious Kitchen](#) and our partners in bringing Project Salad and organic, nutritious meals to students across the state!



HONORING FARMERS & CHEFS

Salad recipes were inspired by Bay Area Chefs Josh Copeland (*Camino Alto, San Francisco*), Omar Huerta (*Calavera, Oakland*), Tanya Holland (*Cookbook, California Soul*), Becky Herbert (*Farmhouse Cafe, Hollister*) and Conscious Kitchen's Caralee Ellis, with ingredients grown by local Farmers Andy Griffin (*Mariquita Farm, Watsonville*), Javier Zamora (*JSM Organics, Watsonville*), Maria Catalán (*Catalán Farm, Hollister*), Matthew Lin (*Soskin Farm, El Sobrante*) and Paul Kolling (*Nana Mae's Organics, Sebastopol*). WCCUSD Head Chef Randal Lane adjusted the recipes to serve to the students across the district, with multiple protein options that could be added to the salads.



ON THE FARM

Betty Reid Soskin Middle School has an organic production farm built by our partner [Growing Together](#), run by Farm Manager Matt Lin and students. Upon arrival, guests joined a guided farm tour to learn about the intentionality that goes into growing nutritious food and preserving soil health. We saw crop beds full of winter squash, the last batches of tomatoes this season and lettuces that were harvested for lunch that very same day!



IN THE DINING HALL

We hosted the celebration for National School Lunch Week. Students and guests enjoyed tasting platters of four seasonal salads: Autumn Apple Pomegranate (*Tanya Holland*), Fall Roasted Cauliflower & Persimmon (*Josh Copeland*), Mexican Taco (*Omar Huerta*) and Asian Citrus Cabbage (*Caralee Ellis*), with pizza made from Acme Bread Company's organic focaccia, Chef Alice Waters's recipe for fresh tomato sauce, topped with Marin Cheese's organic mozzarella — delish!



AT THE PODIUM

We heard from passionate leaders who support organic school meals, and childhood nutrition, emphasizing the power of community and commitment to shared goals. Speakers included Principal Jay Einvin, Superintendent Dr. Chris Hurst, Conscious Kitchen Founder Judi Shils, Chez Panisse and Edible School Yard Founder Alice Waters, California Department of Education Director of Child Nutrition Services Kim Frinzell, and WCCUSD Food Service Director Barbara Jellison.



EMPOWERING STUDENTS

We trained a group of Conscious Kitchen Ambassadors over the past few weeks who learned about organics, scratch-cooking and nutrition, as well as taking leadership roles to welcome dignitaries and serve lunch to all those who attended. Project Salad would not exist were it not for the positive engagement and support of students — we all felt honored to have them play such a special role on the big day. "It felt good to serve distinguished guests. I liked seeing the smiles on people's faces when they got their food," said CK Ambassador, Joaquin.



ZERO WASTE

With the launch of Project Salad we piloted the district's composting initiative to comply with California's Senate Bill 1383. For the first time, the entire lunch service was zero waste; served with 100% compostable World Centric plates, sporks, and cups. We also introduced Maya and Mateo, mascots of the Compost Crew, to help educate students as they embark on their composting journeys. We look forward to having composting at all 54 schools in the district!



Project Salad is an initiative spearheaded by Conscious Kitchen and WCCUSD to offer fresh, local, organic, seasonal salads for school lunch. Flavors, textures, and colors celebrate the bounties of the land, while recipes honor diverse culinary traditions, healthy soils, and thriving community ecosystems — where organic farmers, food service teams, and food purveyors play integral roles.

By investing in farm-to-school pipelines and transforming supply chains, we cultivate community resilience, expand climate-smart agriculture, and elevate culinary pathways that represent the diverse student populations we nourish and the growers we support. In partnership with WCCUSD and Conscious Kitchen, we are propelling California's school food movement with a lens on food equity, access, and education as imperatives that we are proving possible.

[Donate to Conscious Kitchen!](#)

Conscious Kitchen addresses food equity, education, and access by shifting the paradigm around school food service, while cultivating a local, ecological food system, and building nutrition literacy into meals. Through a collaborative, replicable approach, CK partners with schools and communities to break the cycle of conventional, packaged, overly processed food, transitioning to meals based on five foundational attributes: fresh, local, organic, seasonal and nutritious. CK activates school kitchens as hubs for community resilience, while nourishing the minds and bodies of the next generation.



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