



VITAHLS Healthy Cooking Challenge Cookbook

A Collection of Recipes from Ansonia, Derby,
Seymour & Shelton Middle School Students

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Introduction

Valley Initiative to Advance Health and Learning in Schools (VITAHLS)

As the warm summer weather returns to the Valley and the school year comes to a close, we at VITAHLS would like to take the opportunity to provide you and your family with this compilation of tasty, student-made recipes collected from the 1st and 2nd Annual VITAHLS Healthy Cooking Challenges. VITAHLS is deeply invested in the health and well-being of all community members residing in the Lower Naugatuck Valley Region of Connecticut, particularly those in grades Pre-K-12, the target group of focus for this initiative. The VITAHLS program brings together Griffin Hospital, the Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center, and the Valley school districts in order to develop, implement, evaluate, and sustain a comprehensive Valley-wide school-based program focusing on nutrition and physical activity for students in grades Pre-K-12 from the Ansonia, Derby, Seymour, and Shelton school districts.



For the past two years, our participating school districts have invited their middle school students to get involved in a healthy cooking challenge. During the challenge, students are given the opportunity to express their knowledge and creativity in the kitchen by submitting a themed recipe of their own creation to their classroom teachers. The students who submit these recipes are then narrowed down to six finalists who compete within their district. After one winner from each district is chosen through the local competitions, finalists advance to compete in the Valley-wide Healthy Cooking Challenge.

As part of this year's Valley-wide Healthy Cooking Challenge, students were given the opportunity to create and present their own healthy snack-themed recipes, which are featured in this cookbook. In addition, the four district finalists from the 2014 Healthy Cooking Challenge are featured towards the end of this cookbook. The 2014 theme was healthy salads.

Snacking Tips

Snacking in between meals is often necessary for proper child development, but should be done mindfully so that children are able to stay adequately fueled to succeed in school as well as any extracurricular activities in which they are involved. The following snack-themed recipes from the 2015 Healthy Cooking Challenge are intended as healthier snack alternatives to energize your child's day (and the rest of your family's as well). Though all of these student-made recipes embody creative ways to provide your child with the adequate fuel that they need to thrive, some of the following snack options may be incorporated weekly, while others should be saved for special occasions or days during which your child is particularly active.

The options in this book that can be snacked upon more frequently are denoted by an apple icon, so that you and your child will know that these are great healthy snack options to indulge in on a more regular basis:



= Great healthy choice for regular snacking

When providing your child with healthy snacks, always remember to consider portion size and to eat in moderation. It is not only important to monitor the types of foods your child is consuming regularly, but also the amount of food that they consume. A well-balanced diet is comprised of all of the adequate foods in healthy moderation.

Thank you for taking the time to consider your child's health and snacking preferences by reviewing this wonderful collection of recipes. We hope that you and your family enjoy these creative and delicious student-made snacks and that you will be inspired to join us in the fun next year during the 2016 Healthy Cooking Challenge.



2015 Healthy Cooking Challenge Finalists (from left to right): Vicky B., Emily V., Chef Neil Fuentes, George F., and Danny O.

Congratulations to our four finalists and to the 2015 Healthy Cooking Challenge Champion, Danny O. from Derby.

Smoothies



Fruit Smoothie

By: Matthew S., 6th grader, Seymour



1 package of frozen strawberries
1 package of frozen mango
1 package of frozen peaches
1 lime
1 lemon
½ banana
1 ½ cups water
2 cups ice

Directions: In a blender, add two-four pieces of both the frozen mango and peaches, blend well. Add fifteen to twenty frozen strawberries. Peel the lime and lemon, cut into pieces, and take out seeds. Add lemon, lime, and banana, blend well. Add 1 ½ cups of water and 2 cups of ice. Blend until smooth. Pour into glasses and serve.

Fruit and Oatmeal Smoothie

By: Javaughn D., 6th grader, Ansonia



1 ripe banana
1 cup reduced fat milk
6 strawberries
½ cup oatmeal
6 oz. yogurt
1 mango

Directions: In a blender, combine milk, oatmeal, banana, strawberries, mango, and yogurt. Blend until smooth. Pour in glass and serve.

Tropical Superfood Smoothie

By: Maddigan L., 5th grader, Shelton



½ cup vanilla yogurt
½ banana
¼ cup mango (frozen)
¼ cup pineapple (frozen)
1 teaspoon chia seeds
2 cups coconut milk
1 tablespoon frozen kale

Directions: Place all ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth. Pour, serve, and enjoy!

Strawberry Smoothie

By: Jailyn E., 6th grader, Derby



8 strawberries, hulled
½ cup skim milk
½ cup Greek yogurt (plain)
2 teaspoons of vanilla extract
6 ice cubes

Directions: Place all ingredients in blender, blend and enjoy. Use natural sugar/sugar replacement to sweeten to taste if needed.

Fruit Dishes



Summer Pizza

By: Victoria C., 6th grader, Seymour

- 1 watermelon
- 1 pint strawberries
- 1 bunch red grapes
- 1 kiwi
- 1 Macintosh apple
- ½ cup granola, crushed
- 1 block white chocolate
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 tub cool whip, thawed

Directions: Cut watermelon into 1 inch round slices (for your “pizza”) and set aside. Remove stems from strawberries and slice into thin circles for your “pepperoni”. Slice red grapes and hull out center for “olives”- Tip: You can use a regular plastic drinking straw to help you with this. Next peel kiwi and dice for your “green peppers” and slice apple into rings (without core) for your “red onions”- Tip: Brush apples slices with lemon juice to keep from browning. Crush granola for “pepper flakes”. When ready to assemble pizzas, spread cool whip on watermelon being sure to dry the watermelon with paper towel first which will help the cool whip stick better. Arrange all ingredients on top of cool whip as you would on a pizza. Finally, grate white chocolate on top for “parmesan cheese”. Cut watermelon into four “pizza” slices and serve.

Strawberry Boats

By: Kaya T., 6th grader, Derby



- Strawberries (as many as you would like to eat/make)
- Vanilla yogurt (greek)
- Blueberries or sliced almonds (or a topping of your choice)

Directions: Remove stem from strawberry. Cut off rounded tip of strawberry to allow strawberry to stand on its own (eat the tips). Hollow out strawberry from top to leave a space for yogurt. Take a small spoon and put yogurt into middle of strawberry. Place almonds/blueberries/topping on top of the yogurt



Fruit Ice Cream Cone (winning dish from Ansonia contest)

By: George F., 6th grader, Ansonia



Watermelon slices

Cheddar cheese- cut into thin strips

Banana slices

Strawberry slices

One grape

Directions: Cut watermelon into triangle wedge for “cone”. Place cheddar cheese strips on top to make cone design. Cut strawberries into slices and arrange at rounded side of watermelon to form the “ice cream”. Lay banana slices over strawberries. Top with one grape.

Vegetable Dishes



Parmesan Crusted Asparagus

By: Gypsy S., 5th grader, Shelton

1 pound fresh asparagus
1 ½ cup flour
1 teaspoon sea salt
½ cup grated parmesan cheese (plus extra for topping)
2 cups buttermilk
Oil for frying

Directions: In a bowl, mix flour, grated parmesan, and sea salt together. Pour buttermilk into a second mixing bowl. Cut ends off of asparagus and drop into flour mixture, then into buttermilk, and then back into flour. Repeat with all asparagus pieces. Next put asparagus into hot oil and cook each side for 30 seconds to a minute and let rest for 1-2 minutes. Then sprinkle extra parmesan cheese on top.

Spinach Dip

By: Andrew B., 6th grader, Ansonia

1-16oz. container of low fat sour cream
1 cup low fat Hellman's Mayonnaise
1 package of frozen chopped spinach-thawed
1 package of Knorr's dry vegetable mix
Fresh carrots, celery sticks (whatever you want to dip)
Tip- Use a hollowed out bread bowl to serve the dip

Directions: Defrost spinach overnight in refrigerator. Using a hand mixer, mix all ingredients together for 2 minutes. Put in a bowl in the fridge to chill for a few hours. Put in a hollowed out bread or bowl to serve and add fresh vegetables for dipping.



Salads



“Pick-A-Pepper” Bean Salad (winning dish from the 2015 Healthy Cooking Challenge)

By Danny O., 6th grader, Derby



12 oz. can of chick peas
12 oz. can of cannellini beans
12 oz. can of lima beans
12 oz. can of red and pink beans
1 medium red onion
1 small carrot
1 green, 1 red, and 1 yellow pepper – medium/large size
Black ground pepper
Parsley –chopped fine
Basil- chopped fine
Olive oil

Directions: Open all cans of beans and rinse thoroughly. Place beans into a mixing bowl. Finely chop carrot and $\frac{1}{4}$ of the red onion. Clean peppers and cut in half. Remove stems and seeds. Add chopped carrots, chopped onion, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon parsley, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon black pepper, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Italian dressing, and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon olive oil into the bowl with the beans. Mix all ingredients. Fill each pepper with the bean salad mixture. Put peppers onto plate and serve.

Shrimp and Avocado Salad

By: Kristin M., 6th grader, Derby



2 pounds boiled or steamed shrimp, peeled and deveined
2 avocados, cut into large pieces
2 tablespoons diced red onion

For the Dressing:

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup extra virgin olive oil
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup red wine vinegar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon parsley, chopped
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
salt and pepper, to taste

Directions: Add shrimp (peeled), avocado (peeled and cut), and onion (peeled and cut to size of your liking) to a large bowl. In a 2-cup measuring cup, mix together ingredients for the dressing. Whisk until mixed thoroughly. Add dressing to shrimp avocado salad to taste. Serve additional dressing on the side.

The Black Bean Salad

By: Sanya O., 5th grader, Shelton



1 can black beans
½ cup fresh pineapple, cut into cubes
½ cup canned corn, drained
½ cup green bell pepper, cut into small cubes
¼ cup sweet onion, cut into small cubes
Lemon juice (to taste)
Salt and black pepper (to taste)
1 teaspoon cumin powder
Cilantro, finely chopped

Directions: Drain and rinse black beans. Put beans in a large bowl. Add all other ingredients and mix well.



Sandwiches and Tortillas



Cucumber Sandwiches

By: Naydia D., 6th grader, Seymour

- 1 English cucumber
- 1 8oz. package of cream cheese
- 1 cup of mayonnaise
- 1 package of Hidden Valley Italian Seasoning
- 1 loaf of French bread
- Fresh dill

Directions: Peel cucumber and slice thinly. Mix together mayonnaise, cream cheese, and seasoning packet until smooth. Slice bread into ½ inch slices. Spread mixture onto bread and top with one-two pieces of cucumber. Finish with a few springs of dill.



Slawpy Joes

By: Dominick D., 5th grader, Shelton

- 1 mini potato roll
- Pinch of salt and pepper
- 1 Egg
- Broccoli slaw or cole slaw
- 1 tablespoon ranch dressing

Directions: Boil an egg in salted water for 8 minutes. Make a bowl of ice and water. When egg is done, place egg in the ice water to cool off the shell. Peel egg and dip in cold water again to cool egg. Slice egg into 4 pieces. Cut mini potato roll in half and hollow out each side- avoid getting hole in the bun. Put two slices of egg in one side of the roll. Add salt and pepper to taste. Put broccoli slaw or coleslaw on the other side of the roll. Add ranch dressing. Close roll and enjoy.



Vicky's Honey Apple Sandwiches (winning dish from Seymour district contest)

By: Viktoria B., 6th grader, Seymour



- 1 green apple
- 1 red apple
- ¼ cup of honey
- ½ cup of banana chips
- ¼ cup of mini chocolate chips
- ½ cup of chia seeds
- ¼ cup of sunflower seeds
- 1 pint raspberries
- 1 pint strawberries

Directions: Slice apples into thin slices, take out core. Spread ½ teaspoon of honey onto each slice. Place banana chips, chocolate chips, 1 teaspoon of chia seeds, and 1 teaspoon of sunflower seeds onto apple slices. Do not over sprinkle with the seeds. Place second apple slice on top to form a sandwich and garnish with raspberries and strawberries.

Cook's Creation

By: Jake C., 6th grader, Derby

- 1 banana
- 1 whole wheat tortilla (look for tortillas that are high in fiber)
- 1 tbsp of Hersey spread
- 1 tbsp Biscoff spread (peanut butter should be used if allowed)

Directions: Lay out wrap or tortilla on a plate. Spread Hershey and Biscoff or PB. Lay banana down. Roll wrap up and around banana. Enjoy





Mini Fruit Pizzas

By: Drew P., 6th grader, Ansonia

½ cup plain Greek yogurt
Large whole grain tortillas
2 teaspoons honey
Green grapes
Raspberries
½ teaspoon vanilla
Mandarin oranges
Strawberries
2 teaspoons freshly squeezed orange juice

Directions: Cut tortillas into smaller circles to the desired size of your mini pizza. Tip: Use a round cookie cutter to cut tortillas. Mix Greek yogurt, honey, vanilla, orange juice to make your frosting. Spread onto tortilla circles. Place fresh fruit on top.



Desserts



Granola Wheels

By: Kayla P., 6th grader, Seymour



- 1 ½ cups smooth unsalted almond butter
- ¾ cup of honey
- 2 cups rolled oats
- 1 cup sliced almonds
- ½ cup baked raw unsalted sunflower seeds
- ¾ cup baked apple chips, crumbled
- ½ cup coconut flakes
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg



Directions: Melt together almond butter and honey in a medium saucepan until smooth. Remove from heat. Add remaining ingredients and mix well. Take about 1 ½ tablespoons of the mixture, and with clean hands, roll into a ball smoothing and squishing until together. Flatten into little wheels about 1 inch in diameter. Continue with remaining mixture, chill and enjoy. Makes approximately 24 wheels. Store in refrigerator.

Babi's Banana Nutter Butters

By: Amber C., 6th grader, Seymour

- 1 cup flour
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ½ cup virgin coconut oil
- ¾ cup brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons flaxseed meal
- 1 egg
- 2-3 teaspoons of water
- 1 tablespoon vanilla
- 1-2 mashed bananas
- ¼ cup dried peanut butter
- 1 ½ cups rolled oats
- 1 cup dark chocolate chips



Directions: Mix flaxseed meal and water together, set aside. Cream together coconut oil and sugar, add egg and vanilla. Add flaxseed meal to the creamed mixture. Next add flour, baking powder, brown sugar, and dried peanut butter. Stir in oats and chocolate chips. Drop onto parchment lined cookie sheet using a rounded tablespoon. Bake at 350 degrees for 10-12 minutes until set. Let cool for 9-12 minutes.

The Best Dairy Free Oatmeal Chocolate Chip Cookies

By: Missy P., 6th grader, Derby

½ cup of Margarine
½ cup Earth Balance Coconut Flavored Spread
1¼ cup of brown sugar
½ cup of white sugar
2 eggs
1½ tsp vanilla extract
1¾ cup of white flour
1 tsp baking soda
2½ cups of large flake oats
1½ cups of Dairy Free chocolate chip

Directions: Pre-Heat oven to 350 degrees. In a mixing bowl, cream together butter replacements and sugars. Once mixture is light and fluffy, beat in the eggs and vanilla, until completely combined. Place flour in an additional mixing bowl and combine with baking soda. Add flour and baking soda mixture to the mixing bowl with the previously combined ingredients. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are blended in. Add in oats, and mix thoroughly. Mix in dairy free chocolate chips by hand. Line cookie sheets with parchment paper. Take a golf ball sized scoop of mixture and roll into ball. Flatten balls of dough onto the cookie sheets. Fit six to a sheet. Or, if you choose to do larger ones, space accordingly. Bake at 350 for 7-8 minutes, while watching carefully. Remove cookies from oven when browned.

Goodtella Cookies (winning dish from Shelton district contest)

By: Emily V., 5th grader, Shelton

2 cups hazelnut spread
2 cup coconut sugar
2 large eggs
¼ - ½ cup sifted cocoa powder
1 cup crushed almonds
Sea salt

Directions: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a mixing bowl, whisk eggs until frothy. In a large mixing bowl combine hazelnut spread, coconut sugar, sifted cocoa powder, and add eggs last. Mix well and then add almonds and stir. Place a golf ball sized ball of cookie dough on a lined baking tray. Press down on each cookie with a fork. Sprinkle sea salt over each and place in oven. Bake for 7-10 minutes until golden brown. Cookies may seem undercooked but they will firm up and maintain a chewy texture.



Whole Wheat Oatmeal and Raisin Muffins

By: Alicia T., 6th grader, Ansonia

1 cup whole wheat flour
¼ cup granulated sugar
¼ cup packed brown sugar
2 tablespoons untoasted wheat germ
2 tablespoons wheat bran
1 ½ teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon salt
1 ½ cups quick oats
1/3 cup chopped pitted dates
1/3 cup raisins
1/3 cup dried cranberries
1 cup low-fat buttermilk
¼ cup canola oil
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 large egg
½ cup boiling water
Cooking spray



Directions: Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Combine flour and next 7 ingredients (through salt) in a large bowl. Stir with a whisk. Stir in dates, raisins, and cranberries. Make a well in center of mixture. In a separate bowl, combine buttermilk, oil, vanilla, and egg; mix and add to flour mixture. Stir just until moist then add in water. Let batter stand 15 minutes. Spoon batter in 12 muffin cups coated with cooking spray. Bake for 20 minutes or until muffins spring back in middle when touched. Place on wire rack to cool.

2014 Healthy Cooking Challenge Finalists



From left to right: Kiersten L., Dr. David Katz, Madysen M., Chef Neil Fuentes, Faith R., and Natalia W.

This final section of the VITAHLS Cookbook includes student-created recipes for healthy salads. The four salads featured in this section were created by the finalists from the 2014 Valley-wide Healthy Cooking Challenge. Congratulations to our 2014 finalists and to the 2014 Healthy Cooking Challenge Champion Faith R. from Seymour.

Rainbow Riot

By Natalia W., 6th grader, Derby

- 1 banana
- 24 apple slices
- ½ of a peach
- Watermelon chunks
- Vanilla and/or strawberry yogurt
- 10 strawberries
- ¾ cup of blueberries
- Diced Kiwi



Directions: Slice banana into pieces, arrange on the bottom of a bowl/plate. Dice strawberries, mix with blueberries, and add watermelon, diced kiwi, and diced peach. Add yogurt to the mixture and pour on top of banana slices. Arrange apple slices to form a wreath on top. In center, place a dab of yogurt with a strawberry in the middle.

Black Bean and Corn Salad (winning dish from the 2014 Healthy Cooking Challenge)

By Faith R., 6th grader, Seymour

- 1 can corn
- 1 can black beans
- 1 medium red onion
- 1 lime
- ¼ cup cilantro
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- Romaine lettuce leaves
- Multigrain tortilla chips



Directions: Drain corn and rinse black beans. Finely chop 1 medium red onion. Chop ¼ cup cilantro. Add corn, beans, onion, lime, and cilantro to bowl. Add salt, pepper, and olive oil and toss. Place lettuce leaves on platter. Place corn and bean salad on top of lettuce and serve with tortilla chips. Tip: For taste sampling, place lettuce in small dish and place ¾ cups of salad mixture and serve with 8-10 multigrain tortilla chips.

Broccoli Raisin Salad

By Madysen M., 5th grader, Shelton

- 4 cups of fresh broccoli
- ¾ cup golden raisins
- 1 small red onion (chopped)
- ½ cup Miracle Whip
- 1 teaspoon apple cider vinegar
- 3 teaspoons sugar
- 3 bacon strips cooked/crumbled



Directions: In a large bowl, combine broccoli, raisins and onion. In a small bowl, combine Miracle Whip, vinegar, and sugar and pour over broccoli mixture. Toss to coat. Sprinkle with bacon crumbles. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours before serving.

Grilled Buffalo Chicken Salad in Wonton Bowls

By Kiersten L., 6th grader, Ansonia

- 1 bag of chopped Romaine lettuce
- 2 ribs celery (chopped)
- ½ cup of light blue cheese dressing
- ½ cup of blue cheese crumbles
- 1 pound of cut up grilled chicken
- Frank's Red Hot Sauce
- 1-16 ounce package of wonton wrappers



Directions: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray muffin pan with cooking spray. Insert 3 wonton wrappers in pan to form bowl and bake for 10 minutes. Allow wrappers to cool off, and remove from pan. Put lettuce into a large bowl. Add chopped celery. Place chicken into a separate bowl and add Frank's Red Hot Sauce to taste, mixing well. Add chicken to lettuce, sprinkle blue cheese crumbles and top with blue cheese dressing. Toss salad. Place salad mixture into wonton bowls and serve.

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