

CULINARY ARTS

In an urban farm school, growing food is the centerpiece of the educational experience for each student who joins the community. From the food that grows in the garden beds right outside their classroom windows to Kitchen Labs that integrate science, math, history, and art into cooking instruction, Verdi EcoSchool students become immediately familiar with the cultivation of whole foods and their nutritional value. Following the life cycle of a plant is a profound experience for children who learn that what we put into the soil can sustain life; not just the life of the plant which grows from the ground but also the lives of the people who have sown it. This awareness ignites a spark of realization in the children: we can grow our own food! On harvest days the excitement is palpable and the children are anxious to get their hands in the soil to release the fruit, vegetables, and herbs that they have cultivated from seed.

In our Kitchen Labs, students use the ingredients harvested from our school garden and urban farm just a few blocks away to create delicious, nutritious meals for a school community of 24 children. The children sit down together at long wooden tables to enjoy the communal meal. They share observations about the food, vote on favorite recipes and swap stories about other food adventures. This school year, we created our own Verdi EcoSchool cookbook for purchase. It includes our favorite recipes from the entire school year. It is our hope that our students will continue to explore the joy of cultivating food and experimenting with taste as they grow into adults who will look back fondly on their time at the EcoSchool and their community meals with their school family.

