



McClatchy ***Tribune***

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Veggiecation program encourages students to eat their veggies

Will your kids eat asparagus? Do they even know what a parsnip is? We all have to pick our battles, and the Battle of the Veggie has probably been won by the kids in your house or school. But now, Lisa Suriano and her Veggiecation program is on the side of teachers, afterschool program leaders and moms.

Veggiecation is a series of adaptable lessons and materials - a CD of music, an activity book, stickers, recipes and more that incorporates kid-friendly vegetable preparations into each lesson. Activities can be adapted for science, literacy, art, social sciences, math and physical education for kids in pre-K-3rd grade.

Suriano is the owner and founder of Veggiecation and grew up in gardens and kitchens. After getting her undergraduate degree in business and a master's degree in nutrition, she joined the family business, J.C. Food, Inc., a school food service company for independent schools in New York, Connecticut and Boston. She said she enjoys creating recipes for healthy snacks and incorporating local and organic product into food.

"I was fortunate to be raised in a household where we always had access to fresh vegetables. Healthy and nutritious food is not only a passion of my family, and mine but also, it's our business," Suriano said. "One of my goals was to provide teachers with a fun, easy tool to teach young students that eating vegetables is not only important for their health, but also, vegetables are delicious and fun."

Program materials include:

- A seasonal vegetable lunchtime lesson plan with corresponding recipes for school food service managers
- Classroom companion books with lessons to fulfill state curriculum requirements for grades one through three
- Veggie of the Month informational posters that include science, nutrition and geography lessons
- "Veggiecation Across the Nation" theme song in CD as well as lyrics and sheet music
- Reward stickers for students
- Take-home recipe books with recipes adapted for family servings
- Veggiecation lunchroom box ballot materials
- And member's only access to Veggiecation's online classroom resources and tutorial videos for teachers, parents and students.

The Veggiecation program starts at \$59.99 and a fee of \$3.49 per child, which includes Veggiecation materials. Additional materials can be purchased individually.

After-school programs prices start at \$39.99 and home schooling prices start at \$24.99.

Learn more at www.veggiecation.com.

Veggiecation program's tips for how parents can make nutrition changes in schools:

- Eat lunch with your kids at school. Find out what is really happening in the cafeteria (i.e. what foods are being served, how much time do students have to eat, what kind of equipment and staff does the kitchen have). Understand the limitations and possibilities
- Create a wellness committee to implement and support community activities, such as school gardens and after-school healthy cooking classes.
- Develop and dispense a list of suggested healthy snacks for parents to use for birthday treats.
- Start a private after-school program for the kids in your school or neighborhood. With Veggiecation, you can show them how to prepare vegetables, sing and dance to a song about veggies and the kids can vote on their favorite recipe.

Recipes:

Cauliflower Popcorn

1 large head of cauliflower, cut into florets

3/4 cup panko bread crumbs

4 tablespoons olive oil

1/2 teaspoon sugar
Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. In a large bowl, combine the panko, olive oil, sugar, salt and pepper, Add the cauliflower and toss well. Spread the cauliflower florets on a baking sheet and top with any remaining panko from the bowl.

Roast for 15-20 minutes, turning 3 or 4 times, until most of the pieces have turned brown. Serve hot or cold. Note: In some markets, whole wheat panko is available.

Teriyaki Snap Peas and Carrot Stir Fry

1 pound fresh snap peas, snip the ends, wash and dry
1/2 cup julienned carrot
1 tablespoon canola oil
2 teaspoons fresh minced ginger
1 garlic clove, minced
1 1/2 tablespoon teriyaki sauce

In a large skillet or wok, heat the oil. Saute the snap peas and carrots until tender. Add the ginger and garlic and saute for 1 minute. Add the teriyaki sauce and saute for 30 seconds.

Butternut Squash and Pear Soup

1 whole 2-pound butternut squash peeled, seeded and cut in to 1-inch pieces
4 tablespoons canola oil
1 medium onion, diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 Bartlett pears, (firm and ripe), peeled, cored and cut into 1-inch cubes
4 cups low-sodium chicken stock or vegetable stock
Salt and pepper

In a soup pot, saute the onions in the canola oil, stirring over medium-high heat until soft.
Add the garlic, squash and pears and cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Pour in the stock and bring to a simmer. Cook until the squash is fork tender; about 15-20 minutes.
Puree with a hand blender. Season to taste.