



This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Farm Field Trip to IDEA's Eastside School in San Antonio, Texas

While attending the School Nutritional Association (SNA) Annual Conference in San Antonio, Texas, we had the opportunity to visit IDEA's Eastside School Child Nutrition Program (CNP) Farm. Their "mission to cultivate wholesome food for our school cafeterias, teach responsible stewardship, and ignite the student spirit." Since its founding in the 2016-2017 school year, the Eastside Campus Farm has grown into a thriving hub of sustainability. It encompasses Farm to School Program, an Agricultural STEM Program, and the ability to practice innovate Agribusiness Techniques. The Agribusiness Career and Technology Education Program is available to students in grades 8 to 12.

We were welcomed to explore the farm unique green space and its two key components:

- Traditional Inground Farm
- High-tech Hydroponic "Leafy Green Machine" (LGM).

Inground Farm: Cultivating Healthy Habits from the Ground Up

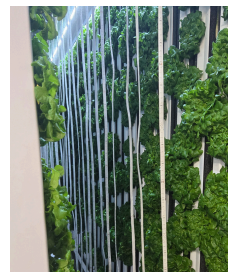
The inground farm is more than a garden—it's a living classroom that brings nutrition, science, and sustainability to life for students. Designed to strengthen students' connection to the environment and their food, the farm is a hands-on learning space where healthy habits take root and grow.



The school's inground farm features a mix of in-ground plots and raised beds, maximizing space and making gardening accessible to students of all abilities and with special needs. Thus, these beds not only expand growing areas but also create opportunities to fully participate in farm activities. Using the traditional "Three Sisters" system—corn, squash, and beans—the farm teaches students how companion planting supports soil health and plant growth. Crops are carefully selected to align with the academic calendar, ensuring students are present to engage with the planting, growth, and harvest of seasonal produce. A diverse crop selection exposes students to new vegetables and flavors, encouraging adventurous eating through positive food experiences. For many, tasting a vegetable they helped grow is the first step to a lifelong healthy habit.

Hydroponics the Leafy Green Machine

The Eastside LGM one of only several hydroponic systems in the San Antonio School District. The LGM is a 40 foot shipping container used for hydroponic cultivation maintain a cool, consistent 66°F to create the ideal environment for lettuce cultivation. The lettuce-growing process is as efficient as it is fascinating. It begins with seed selection—typically oakleaf and green oak opening lettuce—followed by a four-week germination period under humidity domes. Once seedlings are ready, they're transplanted into vertical columns where they continue to grow for another four weeks before harvest. The whole process takes about eight weeks from start to finish, and the harvested lettuce has an impressive shelf life of up to four weeks.



The LGM produces between 30 and 40 pounds of lettuce each week, which adds up to more than 1,000 pounds annually. With the campus cafeteria serving approximately 1,000 students a day, this local harvest plays a significant role in the school's food service program. Not only does it offer students fresh, healthy options, but it also helps to reduce cost, saving the cafeteria several hundred dollars during peak production. Kudos and Mahalo to Stephanie Patillo, CNP Farm Manager and Elva Mendez, CNP Farm Assistant Manager at Eastside School for their hospitality and passing their knowledge to us.



COCOA ZUCCHINI MUFFIN TOPS From Idea Public School Cook Book

Serves 18



INGREDIENTS:

6 cups Whole Grain muffin mix
(Pioneer Brand)

1 cup ground cinnamon

1/4 cup brown sugar

1/2 teaspoon salt

Pan spray

1/2 cup avocado oil

3 cups water

2 teaspoon vanilla extract

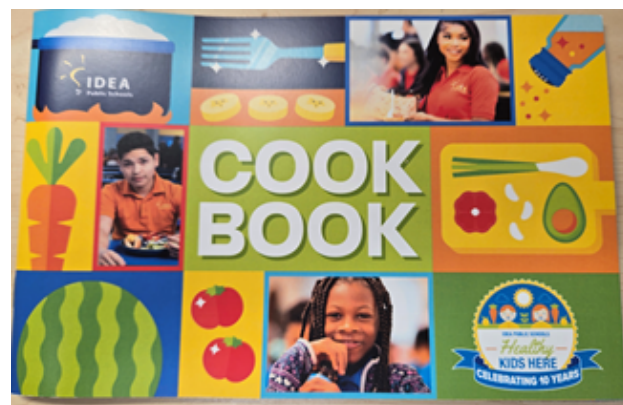
1 cup shredded zucchini

1 cup chopped pecans

2/3 cup dried blueberries (opt)

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Grease a muffin pan with pan spray or line them with paper liners.
2. Combine muffin mix, brown sugar, cinnamon, and salt in a large bowl.
3. In a separate bowl, whisk together oil, milk, egg, water and vanilla until smooth.
4. Stir wet ingredients into flour mixture until batter is moistened and completely combined.
5. Fold in zucchini, blueberries, and pecans.
6. Spoon batter into the prepared muffin cups fill each 2/3 full.
7. Bake in the preheated oven until a toothpick inserted into the center of a muffin comes out clean, 20 to 25 minutes Cool on a wire rack.



IDEA Public School Cook Book

https://issuu.com/ideapublicschools/docs/cookbook_2024_final

Exciting Grant Opportunity: Hydroponic Gardening in Schools!

The Hawaii Child Nutrition Programs (HCNP) is thrilled to announce a new grant opportunity for the 2025–2026 school year: the Hydroponic Grant under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). This innovative grant is designed to help schools across Hawaii bring hydroponic gardening into the classroom — promoting sustainability, enriching nutrition education, and encouraging student engagement through hands-on learning.

Grant Purpose

The Hydroponic Grant provides funding for the purchase or construction of hydroponic systems, including essential materials such as seeds, growing media, and nutrients. It's a fantastic way to integrate STEM education, environmental awareness, and healthy eating habits into the school environment.

Who's Eligible?

All Hawaii schools currently participating in the NSLP are eligible to apply. Don't miss this chance to grow something great in your school community!

Let's cultivate the future — one seedling at a time.

You can access **Hydroponic Grant information**, using the following link:

<https://hcnp.hawaii.gov/farm-to-school/>

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Buy Local, Eat Local, Stay Local



Hydroponic System

Constructed of PVC pipes, water pump and water pan