

Students Excited to Take a Bite of B.C.

This fall, students and staff at fourteen secondary schools across the Fraser Valley and Metro Vancouver are getting excited about local food in a program coming to their schools. Schools with Culinary Arts programs will help students connect to B.C. food products through the Take a Bite of B.C. Program pilot. Over the next four months, cafeterias in these schools will feature B.C. products such as eggs, turkey, chicken, beef, pork, milk, cheese, blueberries, cranberries, root vegetables, frozen vegetables, cole crops and greenhouse vegetables – all donated by local agriculture producers.

The idea for the program started two years ago when a delegation of teaching chefs approached Lindsay Babineau from the B.C. Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation (BCAITC), housed in the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. The chefs wanted to promote the use of local products to students, but were having trouble sourcing the product they needed. BCAITC worked with the chefs and industry representatives to put fresh local food in schools. When the first food delivery was made on September 15, it was clear that the program was off to a good start.

“The excitement from the chefs was overwhelming,” said Lindsay Babineau of BCAITC. “They were all very grateful and so humbled to think that the industry would support their efforts in this generous way. They were thrilled to take class sets of product information to share with their students. These chefs will be solid ambassadors for B.C. products and will instill that support in their future chefs and the thousands of students at their schools.”

Within half an hour of the first delivery at Maple Ridge Secondary School, fresh blueberries were added to the usual coffee cakes and pancakes. Fresh turnips and rutabagas beefed up the soup of the day and even more blueberries put a twist on the day’s salad. “As soon as we saw the product, ideas started flowing,” said Chef Trevor Randle. “The students were asking questions about the products and everyone was blown away by the abundance of fresh ingredients. Tomorrow’s lunch is turkey, mashed potatoes and roasted root vegetables.”

The Take a Bite of B.C. Program pilot helps government and industry meet the shared goal of engaging future generations in B.C.’s diverse and important agricultural sector. Funding for distribution of product will come from the agriculture advisory committees of both Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley Regional Districts. Signage is provided by BCAITC. Take a Bite of B.C. will run from September to December 2009. For more information, please visit www.aitc.ca/bc.