

Healthy Eating Made Fun: Home and School Gardens



Are you looking for ways to encourage your kids to eat healthier? Consider introducing them to gardening!

It doesn't require a garden plot or even a yard. Kids can plant seeds in small starter pots or even disposable cups at home or school. Once they are established, seedlings can be transferred into existing landscaping or containers on decks or porches. It can be a fun science experiment for your kids with the added benefit of eating juicy fruits and vegetables right off the plant or in summer treats like delicious smoothies! We've included a recipe below and many more are readily available through an online search.

In addition to experiencing first-hand where their food comes from, kids benefit from physical activity, sunshine and time spent away from electronic devices. It's fun deciding what to grow, sowing the seeds, nurturing the plants. By making it their own project, your kids can gain a sense of purpose and responsibility – and this can lead to greater interest in eating the healthy foods they've grown.

For all these reasons, school gardens are a growing trend. Located on school property or donated land, they are hands-on learning labs where students are responsible for planting and nurturing healthy foods for school cafeteria meals. Several years ago, the USDA Farm to School Census reported more than 7,000 schools across the nation had school gardens.

As vested participants, kids feel empowered and are more likely eat the healthy fruits and vegetables of their labor.

Case-in-point: Little Falls School District in Minnesota. In a video (<https://youtu.be/CLOeKtZZah0>) District Superintendent Stephen Jones explains the district's "garden-to-cafeteria" program, where

students actively participate in growing foods used in school lunches. Prior to COVID-19, the program made it possible to add salad bars to all five schools in the district.

“In the first three months, we found about one-third of our elementary students were eating salad – and that shocked people,” he said. “Kids learning about their own food has started giving them more ownership about the food they put into their bodies.”

Farmers’ markets also offer opportunities for kids to learn about healthy eating. Consider taking your kids to one this summer! They will experience a wide array of colorful fruits and vegetables, as well as homemade canned goods like jams, jellies and pickles. Encourage your kids to ask the farmers questions about their gardens and how they grow the food.

Make the most of the growing season by embracing gardening and healthy eating with your kids!

Raspberry-Strawberry Yogurt Smoothie

Cool off on a hot, humid day with a sweet raspberry-strawberry smoothie.



PREP TIME
5 mins

TOTAL TIME
5 mins



COURSE
Drinks

CUISINE
American



SERVINGS
4 servings

CALORIES
108 kcal

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup low-fat vanilla yogurt
- 1 cup frozen raspberries unsweetened
- 1 cup frozen strawberries unsweetened
- ¾ cup low-fat milk
- 1 cup ice (about 12 cubes)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Blend all ingredients in a blender until smooth. Serve immediately and enjoy.

NOTES

Substitution Idea: For those with lactose intolerance, lactose-free milk may be used in place of regular milk. The yogurt in this smoothie can also aid in digestion.



Recipe courtesy of the Midwest Dairy Association
<https://www.midwestdairy.com/raspberry-strawberry-yogurt-smoothie/>