Pioneering chef Alice Waters and her team at The Edible Schoolyard say think again. Think kids are interested only in junk food?

Alice Waters has spent most of her career as chef at one of America’s most famous restaurants, Chez Panisse, in Berkeley, Calif. Her “Seed to Table” approach to cuisine involves emphasizing locally grown, seasonal ingredients that are simply prepared.

Now she is applying this philosophy that has made her a household name in foodie circles to school cafeterias. (See “Reading, Writing, And Winnowing Wheat,” on page 52 of the July 2006 issue.) She calls it “The Edible Schoolyard.” She’s teaching kids in a Berkeley middle school how to grow their own fresh foods and prepare all-natural dishes. Waters and her team hope to change “food education” in this country, encourage families to eat more healthily, and tackle the nation’s obesity epidemic.

Here are some recipes that have been kid-tested and kid-approved by students at The Edible Schoolyard. Why not prepare some of these dishes together with your kids?
Thai-Style Cabbage Salad

Makes 14 servings

Kids love using the mortar and pestle to mash ingredients.

SERVING SIZE: ¾ cup

For the salad
1. medium cabbage, cut into thin shreds
4. medium carrots, peeled and grated

For the dressing
1. clove garlic, peeled
1. Tbsp. brown sugar
2. limes, juiced
2. Tbsp. tamarind juice
1. Tbsp. fish sauce

For the garnish
¼. cup unsalted, roasted peanuts, shelled and chopped
6. sprigs cilantro

1. In a mortar and pestle, combine the garlic and brown sugar, pounding it into a paste. Add the lime juice, tamarind juice, and fish sauce, mixing well.
2. In a salad bowl, combine the dressing with the cabbage and grated carrots.
3. Garnish with cilantro and chopped peanuts.

NUTRITION FACTS

Serving Size ¾ cup

Amount per serving
Calories 45
Calories From Fat 13
Total Fat 1 gram
(Saturated Fat 0.2 grams)
Cholesterol 0 milligrams
Sodium 145 milligrams
Total Carbohydrate 7 grams
(Dietary Fiber 2 grams; Sugars 5 grams)
Protein 2 grams

Vegetable Stock

Makes 14 servings

For the spice mixture
2. whole cloves
4. whole peppercorns
6. whole coriander seeds

1. Measure the water into a large stock pot. Add the vegetables and peppercorns.
2. Bring the stock to a boil over medium-high heat, then reduce to a simmer, cooking for 30 minutes.
3. Strain the stock into a large bowl or plastic bucket, and store in the refrigerator until needed.

NUTRITION FACTS

For soup and stock
Serving Size 1 cup

Amount per serving
Calories 84
Calories From Fat 13
Total Fat 1 gram
(Saturated Fat 0.2 grams)
Cholesterol 0 milligrams
Sodium 8 milligrams
Total Carbohydrate 16 grams
(Dietary Fiber 3 grams; Sugars 2 grams)
Protein 3 grams
Moroccan Pumpkin Stew

Makes 8 servings

SERVING SIZE: ⅛ recipe

For the spice mixture
1 tsp. cumin seeds
½ tsp. black peppercorns
5 cardamom pods
1 Tbsp. coriander seeds
1 tsp. fresh ginger, peeled and minced
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
2 cloves
¼ tsp. dried red pepper flakes
1 tsp. salt

For the stew
2 cups pumpkin, peeled and cubed
1 medium onion, peeled and diced
1 bunch dark, leafy greens, like chard, spinach, or mustard greens, washed and roughly chopped
1 cup cooked chickpeas
2 Tbsp. raisins or currants
1 cup tomato sauce
⅛ cup olive oil (could also use 2 Tbsp. of oil instead, to reduce fat content)

1. For the spice mixture: combine the spices in a mortar and pestle and grind to a fine powder.
2. In a large pot, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion and spice mixture, and sauté for 3 to 5 minutes, or until the onion is limp.
3. Add the pumpkin, chickpeas, raisins, greens, and tomato sauce. Lower the heat to low, and simmer, uncovered, until the pumpkin is tender, about 10 minutes.
4. Serve over couscous.*

NUTRITION FACTS
Serving Size ⅛ recipe
Starch Exchanges 0.5
Vegetable Exchanges 1
Fat Exchanges 1.5

AMOUNT PER SERVING
Calories 136
Calories From Fat 69
Total Fat 8 grams
(Saturated Fat 1 gram)
Cholesterol 0 milligrams
Sodium 518 milligrams
Total Carbohydrate 16 grams
(Dietary Fiber 4 grams; Sugars 6 grams)
Protein 3 grams

*Couscous

Makes 8 servings

SERVING SIZE: ¾ cup

2 cups couscous
2 cups water or vegetable stock
3 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
1 tsp. fresh ginger, peeled and minced
2 Tbsp. olive oil

1. Bring the stock to a boil in a medium-sized saucepan.
2. Measure the couscous into a medium-sized mixing bowl.
3. When the vegetable stock is boiling, add the garlic, ginger, and olive oil, then lower the stock to a simmer, cooking for 2 minutes.
4. Pour the stock over the couscous and cover the bowl with a plate or plastic wrap. Set aside for 5 minutes.
5. With a fork, fluff up the couscous before serving.

NUTRITION FACTS
Serving Size ¾ cup
Starch Exchanges 2
Fat Exchanges 0.5

AMOUNT PER SERVING
Calories 180
Calories From Fat 32
Total Fat 4 grams
(Saturated Fat 0.5 grams)
Cholesterol 0 milligrams
Sodium 7 milligrams
Total Carbohydrate 31 grams
(Dietary Fiber 2 grams; Sugars 0 grams)
Protein 5 grams