



Students at Blue Heron Middle School participate in a cooking class put on by the Food Co-op. Pictured are Callen Johnson, left, Samara Kingfisher, Cadin Keever, Eden Jackson, and Sage Brotherton. (Zach Jablonski | Peninsula Daily News)

Food Co-op offers cooking classes at Blue Heron

Classes taught students about Mexican, Brazilian, Indian and Ethiopian cuisines

By Zach Jablonski

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PORT TOWNSEND — Blue Heron Middle School students had the opportunity to explore different cultural cuisines through cooking classes put on by the Food Co-op.

The Food Co-op in partnership with Blue Heron offered four different cooking classes in the fall that had about eight students attend each lesson, organizers said.

The classes taught Mexican cuisine on Oct. 16, Brazilian cuisine on Oct. 30, Indian cuisine on Nov. 13 and Ethiopian cuisine on Dec. 4, said Blue Heron Principal Theresa Campbell.

The classes were taught by Food Co-op culinary instructor Sidonie Maroon with the assistance of Mindy Dwyer, said organizer Andrea Stafford, the marketing manager for Food Co-op.

They were held after the early release on Wednesdays at Blue Heron and cost students \$25 each per class. However, Stafford offered a few full scholarships. A core of four to five students attended all four classes, Stafford said.

Students learned basic knife skills, how to grind together a spice blend and other basic cooking skills, as well as the cultural-focused recipes, Stafford said.

“Middle-school-aged kids are very receptive to cooking ... we really wanted to focus on world cuisines and so we decided to do a series of four multi-cultural cuisines,” Stafford said.

Dwyer enjoyed her time helping teach the different lessons with the students.

“One of my favorite things about the class was to watch kids taste things that they had made — with ingredients they had never heard of before,” Dwyer said. “Flat bread made from teff flour and sorghum, ghee (clarified butter) and in one class we made tortillas out of sunflower seeds.

“It started out as mush and turned into a delicious pliable tortilla to eat our fresh cooked homemade black beans.. No one turned their nose up at anything.”

Being active participants in the class was important to the students, Dwyer said.

“The kids loved the hands-on activities and the tasting the most,” Dwyer said. “They learned knife skills, to appreciate the beauty of the foods you prepare, how to know which measurement to use, to taste your food as you cook, how to cook together and how to eat together.”

The students would be walked through the process of preparing the different meals and then would sit together at a table and eat together, Dwyer said.

“We sat down to a nicely set table, had conversations like grown-ups and cleaned up together,” Dwyer said.

“Sidonie would tell tales of geography, helping the kids to understand where the different foods came from and to see how food equals culture.”

Stafford and Campbell are collaborating again to bring another cooking series to the students. Stafford hopes to offer another course in spring.

“We’d definitely would like to offer it again,” Campbell said. “I think it was a good collaboration between our groups and Stacy Larson, our district food director, really does so much with having the natural foods and the foods around us and working with the community that it was just a really nice partnership.

“We’d love to have them back.”

Jefferson County reporter Zach Jablonski can be reached at 360-385-2335, ext. 5, or at zjablonski@peninsuladailynews.com