



CASE STUDY:

GIVING K-12 STUDENTS A TASTE FOR **CULINARY EDUCATION**

With greater access to the wide world of cooking than ever before, more K-12 students are considering careers in the culinary field. But too often, students gain little or no opportunities in culinary education before they graduate.

When students lack a good understanding of nutrition and food preparation, they are less likely to make healthy choices in adulthood—and less likely to pass this knowledge on to their own children. As a result, they spend more money on fast food and convenience foods with little nutritional value.

Recognizing this opportunity, leading K-12 schools and districts have introduced robust culinary education programs for their students. They are driven by a variety of purposes — including helping students learn to cook healthy foods for themselves and their family members, helping prepare their students for successful adult lives, and providing students a pathway to future careers.

Students who get the chance to participate in culinary programs gain transformative opportunities, including helping prepare and serve gourmet meals at annual banquets, participating in and winning cooking competitions, and preparing for future job applications and interviews.

A foodservice provider can add tremendous value to existing culinary programs or implement new, innovative ones. This guide offers a closer look at culinary education programs in three Aramark K-12 school districts — Chelsea Public Schools, Crowley ISD and Castleberry ISD — and how they are inspiring the next generation of chefs.



CHELSEA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CHEF-IN-TRAINING PROGRAM

Chelsea Public Schools' motto is "A Bridge to Success." The entire staff of the Massachusetts K-12 system is dedicated to ensuring all students graduate ready to start college or begin a career—including careers in the culinary field. Chelsea has created a program to help students develop basic skills for foodservice careers, called the Chef-in-Training Program.

It began as a monthly club but was so successful the district wanted to expand it. The Aramark Dining Services team helped develop a standard curriculum for the program and expanded it to a weekly program. The program is now part of the after-school curriculum offered at the district's high school and runs from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. every Wednesday, which also gives the students a safe space to be after school.

Chef-in-Training teaches students the basics of food preparation, including knife skills, how to prepare fresh, local ingredients, and personal and food safety.

80%

of Gen Z consumers
(ages 13-20) watch
food TV shows.

52%

of kids ages 8-18 say
they like to watch
"Tasty"-style videos on
Facebook and Instagram.

(Aramark research)





Students participate in Chopped-style competitions, where they develop their own recipes from a basket of ingredients and compete with each other. Winning students also receive prizes, including gift cards for local restaurants. They watch cooking demonstrations from local higher education institution chefs and gain hands-on experience preparing an annual gourmet banquet for school administrators and their own family and friends. They also take field trips to restaurants, bakeries and local farms in the Boston area.

The program teaches students to prepare a variety of different types of food—everything from street tacos and pasta to traditional Thanksgiving dishes. It delivers another critical benefit: It helps students learn to cook for themselves and their siblings at home. Many of the students have parents who work more than one job, so they're often on their own for dinner. Being able to prepare meals gives them a feeling of self-sufficiency and satisfaction.

Today, the program has about 25 students, many of whom participate every year. Several have even gone on to pursue culinary careers.

“ This program is a big deal for many of our kids. They love it and are excited to attend every Wednesday.

All of the various elements of the program not only help train students for future careers, but also to cook for themselves and family members. What's more, they gain the motivation to actually pursue what they love to do now — and in the future.”

— Aramark Foodservice Director Amanda Muniz

CROWLEY ISD

STUDENT-PARENT CHEF PROGRAM

Students require healthy meals to perform their best, but their parents don't always have the time, resources or skills to prepare healthy meals every day. Recognizing this challenge, the Crowley Independent School District in Texas launched an after-school Student-Parent Chef Program to teach children how to cook healthy foods.

Under the management of Aramark's Dining Services team, in partnership with the 21st Century afterschool program at Crowley ISD, the program has reached many of the district's elementary campuses and serves approximately 150 students each year. The program is adaptable to each of the 24 campuses throughout the district, including its middle school and high school campuses.

Teaching healthy eating skills is the heart of the program. The program covers nutritional basics, such as choosing whole-grain instead of white bread, understanding the USDA's MyPlate nutritional guidelines and using local, fresh ingredients. It also includes hands-on experience, such as the chef teaching students and their parents how to make homemade pizza with a wide variety of local vegetable toppings, such as tomatoes, zucchini and bell peppers.

"It's evident when you attend that the kids are just having a great time and they're really learning something of value that they may not learn anywhere else," General Manager Jen Kattner said. "Our administrators and our school board are very happy with the program. Educating our students and their parents on proper nutrition is very important to them. We can all see the benefits in action."

96%

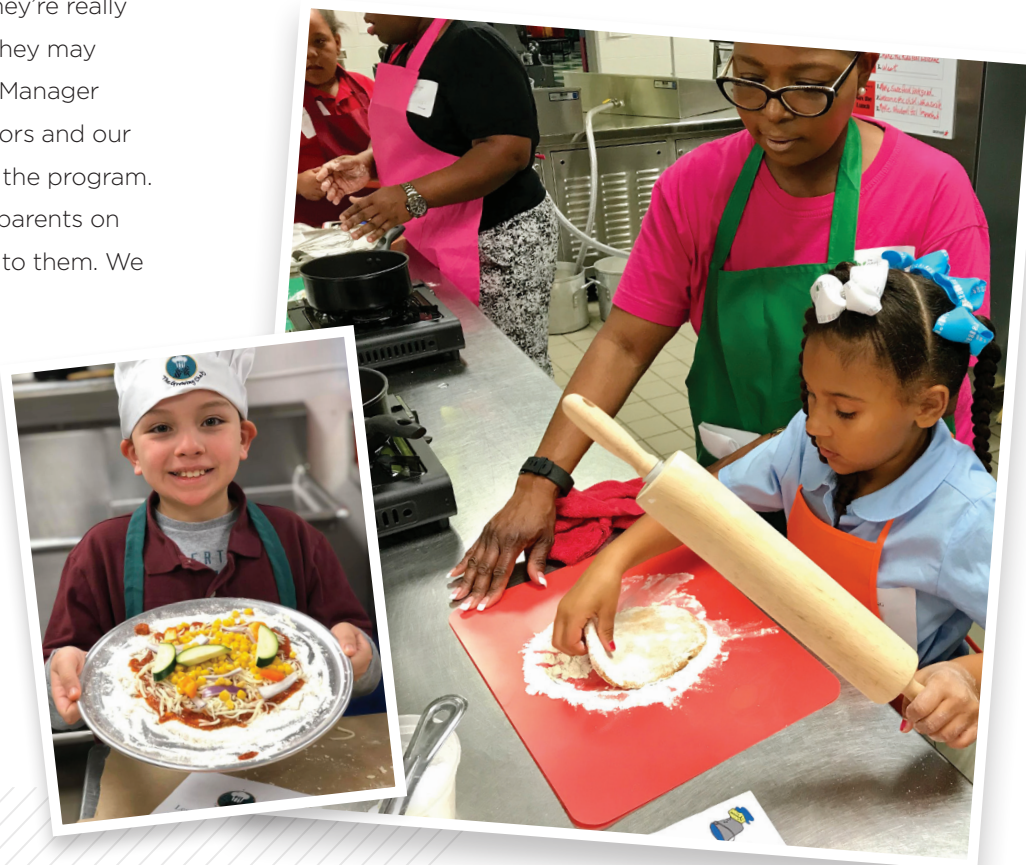
of parents of children under 18 feel it is important for their children to learn how to cook.

But only

33%

of parents of children under 18 cook with their children at least once a week.

[\(UNCLE BEN'S Kitchen Confidence Survey, August, 2016\)](#)



National Partnerships That Enhance Culinary Educational Opportunities

Aramark's national partnerships allow districts to offer exciting opportunities for field trips and competitions. For instance, Crowley ISD also hosts an annual chef competition for students across the entire local region, called the Lone Star Chef Competition. One of Crowley's students won two years in a row and received two scholarships.

This series of area competitions are modeled after American Culinary Federation events. Students prepare recipes for the competition ahead of time, based on a basket of ingredients shared with them in advance. On the day of the competition, students are presented with three surprise ingredients and must incorporate two of them into their dish. Each team of students has 30 minutes to prepare their recipe. A panel of industry and community judges grade each team, and the winning team from each district advances to the state finals. State finals include tours of the locations and meet-and-greets with chef judges.

Aramark has partnered with institutions including Southern Methodist University, Baylor University, and Minute Maid Park in Houston to host the Lone Star Chef competition and provide students a glimpse into unique foodservice operations.

“Our community has benefited from the services provided by Aramark greatly. This class allows families to learn and cook together. Chef Tess has provided it to many of our 21st Century Afterschool families and it is a big hit.”

— Crystal Polk, Director of Grant Administration, Crowley ISD



CASTLEBERRY ISD

CULINARY CLASS

In 2019, Castleberry ISD wanted to revamp its student culinary program. At that time, it was more of a traditional home economics course and less focused on food preparation and nutritional education. The students who participated in it had started competing at regional competitions and found themselves losing to their peers at other schools.

“The students weren’t being taught the basics of food prep,” Castleberry ISD Food Service Director Sara Bintrim said. “The previous instructor did a lot of baking and fun stuff with the kids, but when they got to competitions, they didn’t know how to, for example, even cook rice. Meanwhile, many of the students want to pursue culinary professions and need specific training to help them.”

Castleberry enlisted Aramark’s Dining Services team, which has partnered with the school district to operate its food services for five years, to enhance its culinary program, which included hiring the new instructor and writing the curriculum. The district now has a rigorous curriculum that includes ServSafe Food Manager certification for high school seniors, job training and hands-on experience. Aramark uses its own culinary hiring qualifications and input from program alumni to ensure the program stays up to date.

The program now enrolls approximately 40 students.



Students in the program also participate in several extracurricular learning opportunities, such as:

- Catering for vendors at the district's annual health fair, including preparing made-to-order omelets and waffles
- Working with the district's Aramark catering department to help execute the annual full-service Christmas banquet attended by the superintendent, principals, and other district staff
- Assisting with the Castleberry ISD Education Foundation's annual spring gala, including making handheld hors d'oeuvres like bruschetta

"These events give them a unique opportunity to learn on-the-job, including things like taking people's food orders and understanding different food textures and flavors," she said. "Plus, events like the annual Christmas dinner are a big experience for them. It's an opportunity they might not otherwise get to learn gourmet cooking techniques."

Castleberry's culinary education program has exceeded expectations for the district and its students. "In particular, we are able to help the students, many of whom are from economically disadvantaged homes, gain different experiences that they can use after school," she added. "This experience may even change the expectations they have for themselves after they graduate. As a bonus, they also feel prepared to compete against their peers in our area's student chef competitions."

“ I began my training in the culinary industry my freshman year of high school as I entered the Hospitality and Tourism program. The program later segued into cooking and business lessons, giving me ideas of what I may want to do post-graduation. Getting to work with Chef John and Sara allowed me to gain more skill and confidence in the kitchen. From helping my classmates and I prepare for competitions to allowing us to be hands on feeding other students and staff. Not only did I feel prepared continuing my education but also for a career.”

— Irlanda Grado, Castleberry High School alumni

Continuing Culinary Education During COVID-19

With a little creativity, some school districts have kept students engaged in their culinary education programs even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to its feeding program, Chicago Public Schools hosted virtual versions of its culinary classes. Thirty-seven high school seniors at 13 of the CPS Culinary schools enrolled in the classes. Participating students used provided ingredient kits to prepare dishes created by members of the Chef Council, a panel of local chefs in Chicago who help inspire the nutritious, delicious meals that CPS serves every day to more than 360,000 students.

Through the virtual program, students learned to make cinnamon rolls, Asian stir fry, duck bowls, vegan walnut and mushroom tacos, pan-roasted chicken with parmesan-crusted vegetables and other enticing dishes.

"The only thing better than eating great food is learning to prepare it so you can make it for yourself and the people you love," said Chef Cliff Rome of Peach's Restaurant in Bronzeville. "I'm thrilled to share this knowledge with seniors of the Class of 2020 and hope to inspire a life-long love of cooking."

ARAMARK BRINGS A FULL SET OF DINING SERVICE SKILLS TO THE TABLE

More schools across the country than ever are offering well-rounded culinary education programs for their students, thanks to Aramark's wide-ranging support. Our teams offer districts a many resources to create or enhance K-12 culinary programs, including:

- Highly trained and experienced chefs
- A wide network of partners and job opportunities
- Innovative menu planning
- A consistent, proven approach to culinary curriculum development
- Dietary and culinary staff to support culinary programs

Ready to take your district's culinary education program to the next level?

GET STARTED



For more information visit us at:

[K12INSIGHTS.ARAMARK.COM](https://k12insights.aramark.com)

