

Healthy choices start young

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CLIPPER STAFF

For Sonia Kelly, owner and lead teacher of Blue River Montessori School in Duxbury, a healthy child consists of a well rounded child.

“Teaching them to eat well is part of making a child whole,” said Kelly. “I want to feed the whole child, not just in the academic sense.”

Any parent can tell you that getting children to eat well is no easy task, but for Kelly it is a welcome challenge. With an arsenal of tools at her disposal, including a fully licensed kitchen where she prepares meals for her students, to an organic vegetable garden, learning becomes fun instead of a requirement.

Incorporating a healthy food program into her school was an important next step for Kelly, with her love of cooking

sink after meals, say please and thank you, learn how to politely ask for more of something and other table manners. She also uses every opportunity as a chance for learning, asking the children questions that teach them vocabulary, using the cooking of meals to integrate math and science and making learning more fun.

“It doesn’t feel like teaching, it’s more subconscious,” said Kelly. “It’s not a lesson, it becomes a game. The children were hesitant at first but they have started trying more now, it’s been a process.”

Kelly attempts to create a diverse palette in her students with many different options. She uses foods that are good for the brain and memory, as well as energy and nutrient rich foods such as quinoa, basmati rice, kale, swiss chard, berries, herbs and mint. Kelly

easiest thing to grow, lettuce is easy too.” Kelly says that her meals for the children usually don’t take longer than a half hour to 45 minutes to make. “It doesn’t take much longer to cook real chicken than to throw chicken nuggets in the oven.” Kelly will cook a whole chicken in the morning before her students arrive and then serve them lunch and a snack throughout the day. Kelly will then take the leftovers and make a soup or chicken salad for the next day saying that it’s an easy recipe for the week. This is also important to the program since Kelly does not use any processed meats in her meals.

For the future of the nutrition program Kelly wants to introduce the children to new flavors like curry powder and garlic, show the children Thai and Chinese food, and learn



Sonia Kelly in her state licensed kitchen where she serves her students at Blue River Montessori School meals.

and desire to create a nurturing environment that will last a child’s lifetime. The program implemented at the school is partly funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) which covers about a third of the costs of food and supplies. The USDA also supplies Kelly with pamphlets and newsletters, recipes and workshops, as well as food studies that help her stay current in her nutrition program.

Kelly’s program is closely monitored by a liaison between the USDA and the home and family-based childcare programs that are offered in this nutrition program. There are surprise visits to ensure good food practices are being used, as well as checking expiration dates and safety measures. The liaison also provides support, including food suggestions for children with allergies, recipes and new foods to incorporate and more.

Kelly wants her school to feel like a home away from home, so she teaches the children grace and courtesy. The children wash their hands, bring their own dishes to the

also stresses the importance of color variety in foods.

“A yellow pepper will have different nutrients than green peppers,” said Kelly.

Kelly always tries to make sure the children know what they are eating and to not hide good food in something “kid friendly.” Including the children in the process and teaching them food groups and food names helps get them excited about what they eat.

However, there is no lack of sweets or “fun stuff,” the children will have multigrain pancakes with real maple syrup for one of their meals.

“You can have the fun stuff, just in moderation,” said Kelly.

The children can also have as much of something or as little of something as they want, as long as they at least try all that is offered.

Kelly’s other goal is to get families involved in the process at home, she stresses that anyone can have healthy fresh food. “You can fill a small child’s swimming pool with soil and grow lettuce, tomatoes, and herbs, herbs are the

to make healthy food with diverse flavors. She also looks forward to working with the children in the vegetable gar-



Kelly in her garden where she grows fresh, pesticide-free vegetables to teach the students where their food comes from.

den and showing them where their food comes from to help them make more informed food choices as they grow.

Starting children off at a young age with informed food choices and helping them

learn about healthy habits is one way in which Sonia Kelly incorporates learning and fun into her school while helping to combat childhood obesity and create healthy, happy and strong children.

Crispy Panko Ranch Chicken

Cube boneless chicken breast and soak in ranch dressing for about an hour.

Roll in Panko bread crumbs to fully cover each piece

Spread out on an ungreased baking sheet in a single layer

Bake at 350 degrees for about a half-hour, flipping over after 15 minutes

Serve with honey-glazed carrots and rice

Quick and Easy Roasted Chicken

This chicken is much juicier than store-bought rotisserie chicken, and you will have plenty of leftovers!

Wash the inside and outside of a whole chicken, roughly 4 pounds and, if possible, let it sit in sink for about 30 minutes to drain and reach a good temperature for even roasting

Stuff the chicken with a few halves of lemon

Place in an ungreased cast-iron skillet; rub on olive oil if the chicken is less than 3 1/2 pounds or if using chicken breasts

Generously salt and pepper the chicken using kosher or sea salt

Surround with chopped carrots and potatoes

Bake at 450 degrees for about 1 and a 1/2 hours (12 minutes per pound) and until the internal temperature has reached 165 degrees at the thickest part of the thigh.

Use this chicken as a springboard for many meals including quinoa, couscous, or pasta dishes, or sandwiches, quesadillas, salads, and soups.

Ginger-Chicken Soup

Saute a thinly-sliced red onion in olive oil. Add salt, pepper, and a touch of sugar. Caramelize.

Add 3 cloves of garlic, fresh or minced

Add a one-inch piece of grated ginger

Add 6 cups of chicken broth then bring to a boil

Add chopped parsnips, carrots, celery, peas, and left-over chicken from the roasted chicken (pulled with a fork)

Simmer for 15 minutes, add a touch of soy sauce before serving.

Serve with bread or rice.



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