

## Eden Foodservice's Classroom Cooks Menu Development Initiative



### What is Classroom Cooks?

At Eden Foodservice we know that school children have a passion for food and cooking. Classroom Cooks, our exciting innovative marketing initiative, was launched in November 2013 and uses pupils' enthusiasm as a vehicle to educate them about nutrition, food, cookery and healthy eating. Classroom Cooks has been hugely successful and provides pupils with the opportunity to become mini menu developers for Eden. Every Eden menu, adopted in 353 primary schools, now features a pupil developed and evaluated dish each week which can be enjoyed by thousands of children across the country. Classroom Cooks was recently shortlisted for the prestigious Cost Sector Marketing Award 2014.

### Key Objectives

- To strengthen pupils' understanding of food, nutrition, cooking and healthy eating.
- To give pupils a sense of ownership of their school meals and provide them with an opportunity to have an impact on the food served in schools.
- To develop healthy recipes based entirely on pupil feedback to include in Eden menus

### Adopting a Whole School Approach, The School Food Plan & Food for Life Schools Award

Classroom Cooks supports schools in adopting a *whole school approach* to food. There is a current focus on engaging pupils in cooking and their school food. This is highlighted in the recently revised primary school curriculum, The School Food Plan and the Food for Life Partnership's Schools Award which recognise schools transforming their food culture. Along with the principles of the whole school approach, these all emphasize the importance of children and young people having basic cooking skills along with a sound knowledge of ingredients and a concrete

understanding of healthy eating. Below are examples of the way Classroom Cooks links to some of the key recommendations in these Government and Non-Governmental Initiatives:

#### *The School Food Plan*

- Teaching England to Cook again
- Giving pupils opportunities to prepare and cook their school food
- Hearing their feedback on school food through a School Nutrition Action Group or Pupil Council

#### *Primary School Curriculum*

- Pupils should be taught how to cook and apply the principles of nutrition and healthy eating.
- Key stage 1
  - Use the basic principles of a healthy and varied diet to prepare dishes.
- Key stage 2
  - Understand and apply the principles of a healthy and varied diet.
  - Prepare and cook a variety of predominantly savoury dishes using a range of cooking techniques.

#### *Food for Life School Awards*

- School meals meet the Silver Food for Life Catering Mark Standards which shows they take care that school food is healthy, ethical, and uses local and organic ingredients
  - All recipes developed meet Silver Food for Life criteria as *Eden operate the Silver Catering Mark as a minimum standard in all primary schools.*
- Pupils are involved in planning improvements to school menus and the dining experience via a school nutrition action group
- The school has a cooking club

## Classroom Cooks Logo

An important part of the development of Classroom Cooks was to create a child friendly, recognisable logo which would be understood across the primary school age range. The purpose of the logo is to give the initiative an easily identifiable image, to indicate Classroom Cooks dishes on menus and to be used in promotional material. The logo has been really well received by our pupils and schools and is a great marketing tool.



## Initiative Mechanisms

When a new menu is being developed by Eden, three areas that we cater for are chosen and the local Operations Manager nominates a school to be part of Classroom Cooks and contribute a dish to the new menu cycle. With each menu change (biannually) three different areas are chosen to give as many schools as possible the opportunity to participate. Detailed below is how the initiative works:

### *Session 1 (classroom environment)*

The purpose of this session is to put together a single recipe to be evaluated in Session 2. The session is ran by Eden's Craft Trainer or Executive Chef and Development Manager (a qualified Nutritionist) or Company Nutritionist and in some cases the local Operations Manager.

This session is a classroom based exercise where pupils first have a talk on healthy eating, ingredients, where food comes from and food preparation. This is followed by pupils choosing a dish to develop, compiling a recipe and method and giving the dish a name.

### *Session 2 (school kitchen or food technology room)*

The purpose of this session is to evaluate and finalise the recipe developed in Session 1. Pupils help to prepare the dish and then complete a recipe evaluation exercise. Following this pupils decide as a group whether they would like to make any changes to their recipe.

### *School Follow Up*

A key component of Classroom Cooks is the involvement and communication with the school and the pupils so once Session 2 is completed and the dish has been finalised Eden carry out a range of follow up activities with the school. This includes attending a school assembly to present the pupils with certificates and a "I have been a Classroom Cook" apron and to present the school with a framed Classroom Cooks certificate and photos for their school reception area. A summary report of Classroom Cooks is issued to the school. This includes the principles of healthy eating, summary of their sessions, recipe with method, key findings of the evaluation and any pictures. This can then be used in the classroom.

### **Classroom Cooks on the Menu**

The Classroom Cooks dishes are issued to all units as part of their standard new menu recipe pack and include key relevant nutrition information within our unique Nutritional Hints and Tips section. Classroom Cooks dishes are denoted on the menu with the logo and the schools are highlighted and congratulated within the menu leaflet text. Eden menu leaflets are issued to all schools and parents; they are displayed in the school foyer and typically on school and Council's websites

## Classroom Cooks and Pupil Councils

Eden chose to use the school Pupil Councils to participate in Classroom Cooks as it enabled us to consult with pupil representatives across the whole age range. In addition, one of the principal roles of Pupil Councils is to report back to fellow students, thus we feel this is the best way to ensure that the key educational message is conveyed across the whole school. The process of pupils reporting back to their classmates helps to reinforce what they had learnt; assists in identifying the key aspects of Classroom Cooks; and provides an opportunity to enjoy sharing positive experiences.

## Classroom Cooks Exceeding Expectations

At Eden we are delighted that Classroom Cooks has proved so successful. Our clear objectives for the initiative have been exceeded, as detailed below.

*To strengthen pupils' understanding of food, nutrition, cooking and healthy eating.*

Participating pupils engaged in discussions on healthy eating and how to make meals more nutritious – highlighting a step change in their knowledge and understanding in this area. Witnessing pupils engaging with cooking has been so exciting and for many children there has been a significant development in their understanding of ingredients and cooking methods as well as nutrition and healthy eating. Our decision to use students from Pupil Councils has also proved a success. Participating schools have reported to us that these students take active roles in classroom discussions on Classroom Cooks and issues surrounding nutrition, food and healthy eating.

*To give pupils a sense of ownership of their school meals and provide them with an opportunity to have an impact on the food served in schools.*

Pupils loved the idea that they were part of the school meal development process and had the chance to directly affect what their classmates and pupils all over the country would eat. This was perfectly described by a pupil in one of our testimonials:

*"The fact that we're making a school meal for lots of children over the country is really cool!"* Year 8 pupil, Woodlands Middle School Academy, Bedford

*To develop healthy recipes based entirely on pupil feedback to include in Eden menus*

The real proven outcome of the initiative was the development of healthy and appealing dishes that will be prepared and served in schools. At a national level the incorporation of Classroom Cooks dishes will happen twice a year when menus change. Through extending the marketing initiative to a greater number of schools we are confident that Classroom Cooks will occur much more frequently as it will be easy to incorporate the pupil developed dishes as part of a school theme day menu.