MY FOOD STORY

A Collaboration between BronxWorks Youth and Seniors
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The Helping Youth Promote Healthy Eating and Nutrition (HYPHEN) project is BronxWorks’ youth food justice program. In empowering a group of youth to change their food environment and learn about the impacts of an unhealthy diet, the HYPHEN program aims to reach and educate Bronx residents about food justice and nutrition.

In the summer of 2015, BronxWorks employed 28 Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) youth to learn about food justice, food systems, nutrition, and urban gardening practices and complete three service learning projects. One crew worked on a project entitled “My Food Story,” with the seniors of Morris Innovative Senior Center to discuss nutrition, recipes, and their own food histories and cultures. Students spoke one-on-one with seniors about what they’d eaten what they were younger, how their diets had changed over time, and the role food played in their lives. In our meetings with the seniors, we played a game to draw out our food stories and food discussions; brainstormed healthy recipes and ways of making traditional recipes healthier; and celebrated our work together by cooking together. This book is the product of their collective work of the youth and seniors.

We would like to extend a special thank you to the Levitt Foundation, NYC Department of Youth & Community Development (DYCD), NYC Department for the Aging (DFTA), and Morris Innovative Senior Center for their generous support of the SYEP HYPHEN program. Thank you as well to Vanessa Santiago and the seniors of Morris Innovative Senior Center.

Older people like our grandparents, for instance, pass down traditions. They tell us stories and give us recipes. When asking the seniors questions I had the privilege to learn a little bit about their history and what types of foods they enjoyed and disliked.

Kristie Carvajal
Our first meeting...

On July 14, 2015, we had an event that occurred which helped me on communication skills and also gave me knowledge on my community. This event was spent with the seniors in Morris senior center. My coworker and I were assigned to a specific senior and we were told to get to know them. During that time I was a little shy because I wasn’t used to talking to people I don’t know. Also I think the senior felt the same way because he wasn’t speaking at all which made things a little more complicated. Luckily our group was playing a game called “cabbage patch” which helped us to speak with senior. It had simple questions like “what’s your favorite color?” or “what’s your favorite food?” after getting to know our senior, he seemed very fond of us and told us that he had a great time. He even asked if we would come again. It was a blissful experience for me as because I got to learn new things and was a little more open then I usually am. People have to be open-minded about new things because you’ll never know if you’ll love it.

By Ashanti Harrell
During the first part of the day we headed to the cafeteria and communicated with the elderly. I enjoyed conversing with older people and sharing stories. I liked how in my case, the elderly were telling me about their families and their experiences throughout the years in the U.S. They also complimented me and said it was a good idea for seniors and teens to work together. They shared stories with me (In Spanish) and mentioned how they are getting old, and want to enjoy the rest of their lives without stress.

By John Acevedo

My experience with the seniors was better than I expected. The seniors were nice and enjoyed our presence. I also liked how the seniors I was with were Jamaican which is similar to the island my Grandma was born.

By Taliah Peña

Today I met a nice lady named Joyce. She was a senior citizen. I enjoy my time with her because we share a favorite dish, mac and cheese.

By Devonna Heyward
Inés

El problema es la cantidad de porción. La persona puede comer seis veces al día y no se engorda. Hay que comer vegetables de muchas colores.

The problem is the size of the portion. A person can eat six times a day and not gain weight. It’s important to eat vegetables of many colors.

-Inés, a Morris senior from Ecuador

Healthy recipe: ensalada rusa/Russian salad, page 8

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Milagros

La calidad era natural de la tierra. No tenía química. Comía hierba natural. Los pollos se fueron creciendo con maíz, ahora usan antibióticos. La comida no tiene fuerza, mucha química.

The quality [of the food] was natural from the earth. It didn’t have chemicals. I ate natural herbs. The chickens were raised with corn, now they use antibiotics. The food now doesn’t have substance, many chemicals.

-Milagros, a Morris senior from the Dominican Republic

Healthy Recipe: Sancocho/Dominican Stew, page 9
Ensalada Rusa
(Russian Salad)

**Ingredients:**
3 large or 4 medium russet potatoes
4 medium organic brown eggs
4 small carrots
2 small cucumbers
2 small beets
¼ cup of mayonnaise
¼ cup fat-free plain yogurt

**Directions:**
1. In a large pot, boil water and cook your potatoes, carrots and eggs until done. Let them cool.
2. Meanwhile, chop your turkey and cucumbers into 1/2 inch pieces.
3. Once your potatoes, beets and carrots are cooked, it is really easy to peel the skin off just using your fingers.
4. Peel and chop your eggs, then do the same with the potatoes, beets and carrots. Add them to the large bowl.
5. With your entire ingredients ready, simply mix them evenly and add in the mayonnaise and yogurt for dressing.
Sancocho (Dominican Stew)
A lightened up version by Cheyenne Guadalupe

- 1 medium sweet potato
- 4 cups chicken broth, store-bought or homemade
- 1 1/2 skinless, bone-in chicken thighs
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 medium shallots, thinly sliced
- 1 cup corn kernels, fresh
- 1 ripe plantain, halved and sliced
- 1 can (10 ounces) unsweetened coconut milk
- plum tomatoes, seeded and sliced lengthwise
- coarse salt
- 1/4 cup cubed avocado
- 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro

**Directions:**
1. Prick the sweet potato a few times and microwave on high 3 minutes, until partially cooked. When cool enough to handle, peel and cut into 1/2-inch pieces. Set aside.
2. Meanwhile, in a large soup pot, bring the broth to a boil. Add the chicken and simmer until just cooked through, 15 to 20 minutes. Transfer the chicken to a cutting board, and when cool enough to handle, dice. Discard the bones. Set the chicken aside.
3. In a small saucepan, heat the oil. Add the shallots and chili pepper and cook until soft, about 3 minutes. Transfer to the soup along with the sweet potato, corn, and plantain. Cook until the plantain is soft, about 10 minutes. Stir in the chicken, coconut milk, and tomatoes. Season to taste with salt.
4. Simmer for 5 minutes to heat through.
5. Serve the soup topped with the avocado and cilantro, and with lime wedges for squeezing.
**What is Food Justice?**

I learned about food justice, which is the right to grow, sell, and eat healthy foods. I learned about how being unhealthy can cause many diseases. They also talked about how the Bronx is the unhealthiest statistically city in New York. We learned about negative and positive thinking and how that can affect your mind; for example, thinking negative when you start the day might cause you to continue thinking negative throughout the day. The same goes for positive thinking. Pretty much everything in our country can relate to food justice, even racism can relate to it.

– André Torres

Food justice is having the right to buy, sell, and purchase fresh produce to live a healthier lifestyle. This plays a major role in how we adapt to our environment, for instance the decreasing amount of parks. With deforestation happening more often, people are not as privileged as those who have a number of parks around their neighborhood. The few parks not only reflect on our standard of living but our nutrition as well. Living near a park or a healthy green open space provides a higher chance of living a whole and hearty life. This means they’re can be more access to gardens, running routes, and better eating. The creation of more parks is essential to food justice simply because it provides the people that live near parks to have healthy food options and allows people to create a positive state of mind knowing there are better choices in what they eat.

– Kristie Carvajal
Visit to Farmers Market and Cooking

Yesterday, me and the group went to a mini farmers market on 161st. First me and Kiyasia went around asking the farms questions like, “how many years have you been a farmer?” One of the ladies said she was a farmer for 40 years. Then we went back and made food with the things we got. So we had corn, kale, and another type of kale. Then we had black beans, green pepper, tomatoes.

By Aalyiah Griffith

Yesterday I went to the farmer market to interview the farmers. I interviewed the farmer and he was a farmer for over 40 years. The farm is from Orange County. He only sells vegetables not fruit.

By Devonna Heyward

My Favorite Fruits: Menthley plums, apples, tomatoes, and cucumbers. We can make it healthy by mixing fruit and vegetable like tomatoes, lettuces, cucumbers, and olives. You don’t need no salt or sugar.

By Jaquan Williams
Xiarra tasting the salad dressing

Cheyenne mixing the salad!
Massaged Kale Salad

- 2 bunches kale, washed, dried, and cut into thin strips
- 2 apples, chopped
- Kernels from 3 ears of corn

**DRESSING:**
2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
6 Tbsp. Red Wine Vinegar
1/4 cup Extra Virgin Olive Oil
1 Tbsp. Dijon mustard
1 Tsp. honey
Salt and Pepper to taste

**DIRECTIONS:**
In a serving bowl, massage kale until it becomes darker in color. Add apples and corn. In another bowl, whisk together all of the dressing ingredients. Pour over salad ingredients and toss well.
Spicy Black Bean Dip

- 2 (15 oz) cans black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1/2 onion, chopped
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 1/3 cup chopped cilantro
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 3 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon chili powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper

**DIRECTIONS:**
Combine all ingredients in blender. Serve with vegetable sticks (carrots, bell peppers, cucumber) or multigrain tortilla chips.
Pauline, Xiarra, and Aalyiah enjoying the delicious bean dip

Kiyasia, Tyasia, and Aalyiah cutting cucumber and pepper sticks for dip
Getting to know Jerry...

I enjoyed working with the older people, it was actually really fun and interesting due to the fact that I was able to meet new people and learn about their lives and how they stay healthy throughout their lives. I had a senior citizen named Jerry and he was in a motorized wheelchair he told us about how he makes his own choices to be able to eat healthy and even though he claims he really never knew how to cook it made it quite hard since his wife recently passed away he stills attempts to take care of himself very well but even though the struggles of that, he still continues to eat healthy to continue his own life. Jerry still tries to work out his body; legs, arms, anything you can think of. He still goes out to shop healthy wherever he can get to. He goes to food markets and further supermarkets to get fresher food. Jerry continued on to say that the way he eats healthy is by grilling his chicken, steaming his chicken in a rice compressor, and eating fresh locally grown fruits and vegetables such as strawberries, blueberries, tomatoes, lettuces, carrots and things of that nature. Overall I came to realize about my experience that as a person, male or female, gets older, if you want a longer life span then you must, and I mean must, take very good care of yourself.

By Cheyenne Guadalupe
Jerry’s Rice-Cooker Chicken
Recipe and tips collected by Justin Jamison and Jaquan Williams.

“I have a rice cooker, but you know what I use with it? I put chicken in it! Just put the chicken in with a little seasoning and turn it on. Easier than putting it in the oven.” -Jerry, from Morris Innovative Senior Center

Ingredients:
1 large chicken bouillon cube, preferably all-natural
3/4 cup hot water
1 cup jasmine rice
1 1/4 pounds skinless, boneless chicken thighs, cut into 1-inch cubes
One 2-inch piece of fresh ginger, peeled and cut into matchsticks
3 packed cups baby spinach
1 cup unsweetened coconut milk
Kosher salt

Directions:
In a small bowl, dissolve the bouillon cube in the hot water. In a rice cooker, combine the rice with the chicken and ginger. Arrange the spinach on top. Pour the coconut milk and bouillon broth into the cooker and season lightly with salt. Turn the cooker on; the dish should be done in about 40 minutes (when the cooker turns itself off). Let stand for 5 minutes. Fluff the rice with a fork, spoon into bowls and serve.

More tips...
- Jerry likes healthy foods, but he drank soda and he used white sugar.
- Now he eats steam chicken, veggie burgers, and 1 whole egg with 1 white of an egg.
- He likes healthy frozen food. He drinks a lot of water. He now uses sugar in the raw.

Porridge with Cinnamon ‘n Apple
by Aaliyah Griffith

1 part rolled oats to 2 parts milk
pinch of salt
1 apple
2 tbsp. honey
handful toasted pecans, roughly chopped

Measure the porridge in a small glass then add it to a small sauce-pan with twice the milk. Place the saucepan on a medium-high heat and bring to the boil, then turn off the heat. Add a pinch of salt and stir consistently until you have a thick, creamy mixture, this will take roughly 8-10 minutes. Grate the apple and stir half of it into the porridge, then add the cinnamon and honey and mix well. Serve the porridge in a bowl then top it with the rest of the grated apple, some more cinnamon and honey. Sprinkle the toasted pecans on top; it’s a nice little addition to add some cold milk over the top to if you like.

Adapted from: http://www.donalskehan.com/2015/02/apple-cinnamon-porridge/
Healthier Rice Pudding, or “Arroz con leche”

Found and written by Devonna Heyward

- 1 1/2 cups water
- 3/4 cup uncooked brown rice
- 1 1/2 cups low-fat milk
- 1/3 cup white sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup low-fat milk
- 1 egg, eaten
- 2/3 cup raisins
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

- Combine water and rice over high heat in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover, and simmer until tender, about 45 minutes.
- Combine cooked rice, 1 1/2 cups milk, sugar, and salt in a clean saucepan. Cook over medium heat until thick and creamy, 15 to 20 minutes. Stir in remaining 1/2 cup milk, beaten egg, and raisins. Cook 2 minutes more, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and stir in butter and vanilla extract. Serve warm.

Recipe adapted from http://m.allrecipes.com/recipe/24059/creamy-rice-pudding/
Steamed shrimp with vegetables

Found and written by Kiyasia Decosta

10 ounces spinach, cleaned
2 medium zucchini, sliced crosswise
2 medium sweet red peppers, cut into strips
1 lb large shrimp, peeled and deveined
2 tablespoons basil, minced
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1/4 teaspoon table salt
1/8 teaspoon black pepper
15 ounces canned white beans, rinsed and drained

Directions

Place spinach, zucchini, bell peppers and shrimp, in that order, in a steamer basket. Set in a saucepan over 1 inch (2.5 cm) of boiling water. Cover and steam until vegetables are tender-crisp and shrimp are cooked through, about 4 to 6 minutes. Meanwhile, in a blender, combine and purée basil, lemon juice salt and pepper. In a large bowl, combine basil dressing with beans and shrimp to serve, divide vegetables among 4 plates. Top with shrimp and beans. Place spinach, zucchini, bell peppers and shrimp, in that order, in a steamer basket. Set in a saucepan over 1 inch (2.5 cm) of boiling water. Cover and steam until vegetables are tender-crisp and shrimp are cooked through, about 4 to 6 minutes in a blender you put, combine and purée basil, lemon juice, salt and pepper.

In a large bowl, combine basil dressing with beans and shrimp.

Adapted from http://www.food.com/recipe/steamed-vegetables-with-shrimp-291882
Berry and Oat Smoothie

Recipe invented by Kristie Carvajal

➢ ½ cup of apples and cranberries oatmeal
➢ 1 spoonful of blueberries
➢ 1 spoonful of strawberries
➢ Some milk

Directions
Place all ingredients in blender and combine. Serves four.
Celebrating with the seniors!

The youth thanked the seniors by preparing a healthy watermelon cooler and sharing with them.

Watermelon Cooler
Recipe by “My Food Story” group

Ingredients

- 4 cups watermelon, cubed
- 10 ice cubes
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice

Directions

Place all ingredients in blender and combine. Serves four.

Kiyasia squeezing lime into the watermelon cooler
A special thank you to everyone who made this project a success!

Seniors
Delia, Elvira, Inés, Jerry, Justo, and Milagros

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