

BCCASA

VOLUME 25 / ISSUE 3

The Bouquet Garni

Whistler

Mini Conference
Recap

**NOTES FROM
THE B. O. H.**
Canada's new Federal
Lunch Program

THE BOUQUET GARNI

Newsletter of the British Columbia Culinary Arts Specialist Association



President's Message



Typically, I would write a President's message this time of the year and reflect on how quickly the year went. This one will be different. For me, this year seemed busier, fuller, almost non-stop, and impossible to catch up with just about everything. I like to have things done well in advance; this year I have found myself sort of triaging each day. Asking myself on the way to work, what needs my attention today.

I don't necessarily see this business as a negative, in fact as I reflect on the year, I see how much has been accomplished. However, as usual, like you, I am never satisfied and always thinking more could have been done. Since our October PSA Day in Vernon, (which seems so very long ago), very organically, great efforts have been made to re-establish BCCASA's relationships with industry associations such as the Chef's Table Society and the BC Chefs Association all to provide opportunities for BCCASA members and students. Both major industry associations are very excited to go back to their respective boards and come up with ways to encourage and assist our culinary arts students in their journey into the industry. This has already happened through scholarships, field trips, guest speakers, and demonstrations in our various classrooms.

Following our October conference, the power and effectiveness of our PSA membership were put on display as a few of the executive attended multiple meetings with one specific district's pro D chair and local VP to advocate for equal funding for our members attending BCCASA-sponsored events. This school year was also greatly capped off with our Spring conference in Whistler. Not only did we receive some great formal education, but the chance to meet many teaching chefs and their spouses for the first time in an organized but informal setting was by far equally as valuable as the planned learning. I can assure you, that as long as this Executive has a voice in shaping our BCCASA experiences, collaboration will always be a major part of our learning and professional development. I feel it is essential to what we do and we simply don't get enough opportunities.

Looking back, yes, we achieved a lot this year, and it is no wonder why it felt so full. I can confidently reflect and be proud of what we achieved this year as a PSA but will honestly never be satisfied. I know I share this attitude with our entire executive and most of our members. This is why we are so unique and never stop developing and is what makes BCCASA so special.

A huge thank you to everyone who contributed to making this year a success. Whether it was scheduling a meeting, attending a conference, contributing to the Bouquet Garni, or replying to an emailed question. You are all what make BCASA strong, and it makes me proud to be even a small part of it.

I hope you take the time this summer to do what you love, take time to catch your breath, recharge your body and mind, and be ready to hit the ground running in September

Trevor Randle

Editor's note:

Hi there folks!

Hope you like our new cover! Something new I'm trying, let me know if you have any feedback.

What a PACKED issue we have this month! Big thank you to all who spent the time to contribute, I very much appreciate your time. I'm looking forward to a restful summer, and already getting excited for our AGM & Conference in October, which is always one of my favourite weekends of the year.

I'd like to pool your collective minds for something I'm working on. I'm trying to update a list of current teaching kitchen around the province, and who's in charge of the program, but I have some information gaps.

If you can take a look at the list [HERE](#), it's also on the website under the "RESOURCES" tab. You can help BCCASA have a very good picture of the current state of Culinary Arts classrooms and programs around our province!

I hope you all enjoy some travel time, reading time, pool time, camping time, beer/beverage time, family time, and just some good 'ol relaxing time this summer break.

Your friendly neighbourhood editor,
Stephen Schram

WHAT'S GOING ON

...around British Columbia

World Championship of Chinese Cuisine

By Trevor Randle



May 21 to 23 saw chefs from around the world gather at the PNE forum for the 9th Annual World Championship of Chinese Cuisine, hosted by the World Federation of Chinese Catering. Over 85 culinary arts students from Delta and Maple Ridge Secondary School were granted VIP Access to the competition on the final day.

After a tour of the regular sights and vendors, students were brought behind the security gates to see the action up close. Our host, Vivian Zhang owner/operator of Shanghai Wonderful Restaurant in Richmond and Sergeant-At-Arms of the B.C. Chef's Association, went above and beyond to give every student an unforgettable experience.

While there, the global chefs were very excited to see the students and were very generous with their time. They did their best to show the students what was being created and even provided samples. The group was also treated to a behind the scenes look at the judging station and process and were introduced to the global top judges. Even the chairman who flew in from China was eager to take photos with the group and talk through Vivian acting as an interpreter. There is no telling when this will return Vancouver so this could have been a once in a lifetime opportunity for most attending.



This experience could not have been possible without the dedication Vivian has for culinary education and the passion to provide students culinary experiences.



Surrey CASA May 3rd Pro D Luncheon

By Renee Thomas



An eclectic group of teacher chefs gathered around the prep table in the middle of Queen Elizabeth Secondary School's Teaching Kitchen. Daniel Kim, Chef de Cuisine of Boulevard Kitchen & Oyster Bar is preparing Salmon Coulibiac, basically a Salmon Wellington with a Russian Eastern European influence. Traditionally it would include egg, spinach, mushroom, and rice, but being Canadian he chose to use wild rice over saffron rice. He is using a two-year-old 10-12pound farmed steelhead trout, farmed in a man-made river beside



the Cascade River located in Washington's Cascade Mountains. The trout is grown in moving water giving it a firm fatty flesh its quality comparable to Coho Salmon that will still be moist if over cooked. Kosher salt and lemon zest were gently rubbed onto the surface, allowed to cure for about 8 minutes to help prevent the leaching of the white coagulant as the fish cooks.

The trout was rinsed and allowed to dry for several hours before being rolled into a roulade wrapped in saran. The trout may be brined using a higher percentage of kosher salt. The trout trim was made into a mousse ensuring nothing went to waste. Since he was not worried about the texture of the mousse egg whites were not used in its preparation.

The layers were composed of:

- 12 hard cooked eggs were peeled, the yolks and whites separated
- Spinach sautéed in oil with shallots, garlic, and lemon peel, cooked to evaporate the water, and finally seasoned with salt and pepper The spinach allowed to cool, chopped, and mixed with mousse.
- Mushroom duxelles was added to the mousse for the mushroom layer.
- Wild rice was cooked in salted water until tender and all the grains were open. The cooled wild rice was mixed with mousse.

The Coulibiac was built on a long piece of saran wrap draped over a shallow metal hotel pan making it easier to move it around. Protein leaches a lot of water when cooked. To prevent the pastry from becoming soggy a rectangular piece of brioche the size of the trout was placed in the center of the saran

The trout was lightly re-seasoned before being placed on top of the egg white, mushroom and wild rice mousse. Each layer layered so it would be clearly visible when cut. The coulubiatic was tightly rolled in the saran.

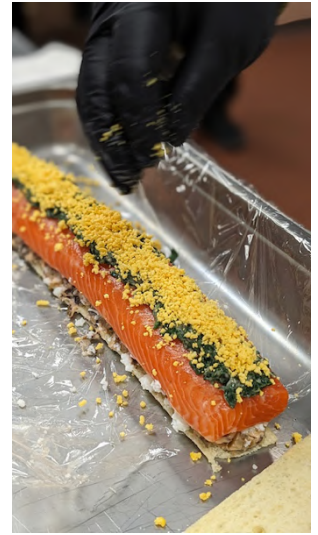
The lattice layer of puff pastry was also rolled thinner on a flat surface and cut with a lattice cutter. If the surface is not flat, you will be recutting the lattice with a knife which is very time consuming. Gently separate the lattice and place it on top of the wrapped coulubiatic trimming it carefully.

To achieve that "golden brown crust" the pastry was brushed 2-3 times with a basic egg wash made with egg yolks and a

splash of cream to get the most contrast. If the egg wash is allowed to pool in the "divots" of the lattice pastry, it will be darker when baked. Chef Kim suggested that It was much easier to control the final product if it is baked from frozen which will probably double the cooking time.

Boulevard Kitchen's "No Fail Hollandaise Sauce Recipe" may be prepared ahead, vacuum packaged and stored for weeks in the refrigerator. Fresh Tarragon or chervil can be quickly dried in a microwave oven and added to make a Bearnaise sauce. The prepared vacuum packaged Hollandaise sauce was rethermed sous vide, placed in an Isi gun with a CO2 charger, and kept warm in a hot water bath.

The Coulubiatic was plated to show off the multiple layers of mousse and finished a light sprinkling of a premium lemon olive oil.



Voila! A picture-perfect masterpiece. Seated in QE's teaching classroom silence ensued as the guests took their initial bites, followed with moans of pleasure and squeals of delight as they savored the elegant, multiple flavors of a perfectly seasoned, and cooked to perfection "Trout Coulubiatic" complimented with the acidic bite of the hollandaise sauce.



Dessert consisted of a Pistachio Sponge Bread, Poached Rhubarb, finished with a Chantilly Cream. The rhubarb was trimmed and peeled. The trim and peel saved for infusing in the poaching liquid, a simple sugar. The reserved rhubarb trim and peels, the peel of one lemon, grenadine and a bunch of fresh thyme were added to the hot poaching liquid, removed from the heat, allowed to steep for 30

minutes to infuse the flavors, strained and cooled. The rhubarb was cut into serving length pieces, a single layer placed in a bag and sous-vide at 78C for 10-15 minutes or until tender. The rhubarb is delicate and must be watched carefully it can go from perfectly tender to mush in seconds. Agar was used to thicken the reserved liquid from the cooked rhubarb because it has a higher melting point than gelatin. The Chantilly cream was made with equal parts lemon curd and whipping cream whisked together to an almost sauce like consistency. The ingredients for the Pistachio sponge bread were combined in a bowl and mixed with an immersion blender. The batter was poured into Isi gun with two CO2 charges. The cups were filled one at a time half full of batter using the Isi gun and placed in the microwave oven for 1 minute on high. Steve and Megan took charge of the microwave oven and after several attempts found microwaving for 40 seconds yielded much better results. This process was very theatrical to watch. The baked sponge bread was flipped onto a cooling rack to cool. Once cooled an offset spatula was used to



scrape the inside of the cup and pop them out. Since the pistachio nut is not strong flavored to enhance the pistachio flavor powdered pistachio nuts were used to garnish the plated dessert. Spiced walnuts may be substituted.

The perfect seasonal dessert that teased all the senses, the texture of the cake, the fragrance of pistachio nuts, the sweet and sour rhubarb, the brightly colored rhubarb gel and poaching liquid. Time is quickly running out; the desserts are virtually inhaled standing around the prep table in the teaching kitchen taking full advantage of what little time is left to share with Daniel.

A huge thank you to Daniel Kim for sharing his time, creativity, style, technical skills, and his Micheline Star experiences at Boulevard Kitchen & Oyster Bar, located in the Sutton Place Hotel located in downtown Vancouver, BC.



Annual Surrey Chili Cooking Competition

By John Buist



Lord Tweedsmuir hosted the 21st annual Chili Cook-Off Competition in the Alice McKay building on the Cloverdale Rodeo Grounds. Our hosts provided the space free of charge with handwashing facilities, a place to rinse the dishes and washrooms. The rodeo staff dropped by to sample the chilis as the competition progressed and helped eat the leftovers 😊

The participating teams came from Abbotsford, Burnaby, Surrey and 'The Island'. To get to the event on time "the Islanders", Chef Botter's students were on the first ferry. It's amazing what kids can do when they are motivated, their alarms must have been set for 3:30am to make that ferry.



A total of 22 teams participated with 22 very different themes. The creativity displayed in choice of ingredients and presentation was truly 'next level'. If chili is defined as meat, spice and nothing else, then there were a few chilis today that would not qualify as chili with those ridged guidelines. The visiting Rodeo Staff

were dubious and cautious at first to taste test the chilis. Some of the comments they made were ‘there are some interesting combinations on those tables’ and ‘I didn’t think that ingredient would go with that, but it did, and it tasted great!’

There were some excellent beef chilies but when you use the same ingredients as everyone else you must really make a concerted effort to stand out. On that note, this year the meat category presented wild boar, venison, lamb, and the teams of mixed cultures created fusion chilis. The seafood chili students (yes, I said seafood chili) had one member of their team wear a shrimp costume for the day and their chili made with so many good things from the sea.



One of our Judges, a long-time Surrey Schoolboard Trustee and Chili Judge, and Laurae McNally, our ‘Lifer Chili Judge’, said: ‘the kids just get more and more creative every year’. I would agree, I saw so many things I had never seen before that I would attribute to the growing multicultural composition of our school’s student bodies. For example: the Afghan chili used a ‘Munto pot’, basically a multi layered steamer to steam their chili filled dumplings. The



dumplings were presented to the judges with a yellow split pea chili and a colorful yogurt ‘labneh’. A Persian inspired crispy saffron basmati rice cake was inverted from a heavy bottom pot onto a cutting board and sliced to become a colorful accompaniment their mushroom yellow split pea chili. Filipino vinegar and soy sauce were key ingredients in a pulled pork chili. Many teams created colorful posters that hung in front of their tables with their team’s name and pictures sharing the multicultural influence of their ingredients and chilis. When team *Irine* was asked about their name it was explained ‘Irine’ was fusion for Filipino and Iranian; and team ‘Fizilian’ was fusion for Filipino and Brazilian.

As the judging progressed the teams were each given a critique by the four judges that took into consideration their observed food safety, kitchen management, organization, sportsmanship, techniques, ingredients, flavors, originality, and presentation. Listening to their experienced critique I thought to myself perhaps it is time to redefine the classical definition of ‘Chili’ to be more inclusive of the multicultural influences seen in today’s competition.



I enjoyed running around and asking the teams questions, looking at their work, seeing how they set up their workstations, and occasionally thought “I don’t think, you thought this through”. They have forgotten the rice, the spices, the spoons for tasting, or it’s too salty, too spicy, too watery, the split peas too hard; the time is counting down minutes left and the pastry is not rolled to make the chili burrito, the fat is too hot for deep frying and a team was missing all their fresh ingredients. This made for a fun show to watch as they are forced to problem-solve on the spot

So, who won? As trite as this may sound, when I saw the smiles, and the interactions between the students from different schools with their varying backgrounds and witness



the elation of some kids (and their Chefs) receiving a trophy, a medal, and/ or knives, I think everybody won.

Big congratulations to Enver Creek and their teams, “Day at the Beach” & “Flaming Tandoori Chili”. Muna Al-Kebasi took home, Best Team Spirit, Best Meat Chili & Best Overall Chili for her delicious Lamb Chili. Kudos Muna!

Dea Bains and Ashley Josan took home Best Vegetarian and Best Presentation. Great work!



was something to tantalize every taste bud. Judges, consisting of local food experts, former faculty, as well as industry partners, face the challenging task of selecting the winners amidst a sea of delectable aromas and tantalizing presentations. Criteria ranged from taste and texture to presentation and creativity, ensuring a fair evaluation of each entry.



Annual Daniel Lesnes SD42 Chowder Competition By Brent McGimpsey



Maple Ridge Secondary turned into a battleground of flavors as culinary arts students gather on May 30th for the 21st Annual Daniel Lesnes SD42 Chowder Competition. The event, held in the school's cafeteria, showcased a diverse group of 23 teams from Garibaldi Secondary, Thomas Haney Secondary, Abbotsford Senior Secondary, and Maple Ridge Secondary who all competed hard to make a wide range of delicious and beautiful chowders. Some of the different recipes were Unlucky Lobster Chowder, Carrot Coconut Vegetarian Chowder, Cajun Prawn & Halibut Chowder, and Southwestern Corn and Tomato Chowder.



Each contestant brought their own unique twist to the classic dish, and there

Among the contenders, the competition was fierce. Students poured their hearts and souls into their recipes, drawing inspiration from family traditions, cultural heritage, and personal culinary experiments. The atmosphere buzzed with excitement and anticipation as attendees eagerly awaited the verdict.



After much deliberation, 3 chowders emerged victorious, earning the admiration of judges and attendees alike. Taking the top spot was the MRSS team of Lucia Lopez & Stefan Dobler, followed by a team from GSS of Jana Hussein and Chloe Arkwright. Rounding out the top three was another team from MRSS, Charlotte Bonney and Deseray Mintus.

As the winners basked in the glow of their triumph, Maple Ridge Secondary School celebrated not only their culinary talents, but also the spirit of community and camaraderie that is fostered by events like the Daniel Lesnes Chowder Competition. With taste buds satisfied and hearts full, attendees departed with memories of a deliciously memorable day, eagerly anticipating next year's competition.



Big thanks for a great selection of prizes generously donated from GFS, Sysco, Russell Hendrix, and other partners.

BC Chef's Association Scholarship Brunch By Stephen Schram



On Sunday May 19, 2024, The BC Chef's Association hosted their 66th annual Scholarship Awards Brunch.

The BC Chefs' Association is dedicated to the education of both junior members and the upgrading skills of regular members.

Annual scholarships are

given out to deserving students who distinguish themselves in the culinary field and want to further their education to a TQ certification (Red Seal). Funds are also generated by the board of directors and a few members of the association prepare specific and healthy menus to cook at people's homes. An amount is predetermined before the food is served. The money is 100% to support education and scholarship for Junior Chefs. Other activities is raised through fundraising activities year-round:

This year's recipients were, Adera Riggs, Gibron Buchahin, Laurence Donahue, and Elena Amundsen.



Elena Amundsen had this to say on her entry form:

"When I was a kid, I begged my mom for an Easy Bake Oven. Every Christmas and birthday it was on the top of my list, yet she always said no. After many years I asked her why and she answered, "if you want to bake, you can bake real food, not fake crap". So, I started baking on my own. Little things like pancakes, cookies, and muffins. Quickly I became the designated baker of the family even though we have a family of accomplished bakers. I would make the birthday cake at every party, even my own. For big holidays me and my mom are the first ones up to divide and conquer. I also became my nanas number one student. She was a home EC teacher then a sous-chef in her school's kitchen for 17 years before passing down all her knowledge to me. Then when I was eleven my two older sisters went vegan. They would always send me new recipes and different substitutes to try. Then eventually I started cooking for my sisters after my parents divorced. My dad moved away and my mom was too busy so I began to cook for my sisters and friends. I cook for my own friends when they're hungry or slept over. I bring a meal of treats anywhere I'm invited. Cooking and baking for people has been something I've done my whole life. It is my love language as well as a coping mechanism for me. When I have a big test or I'm stressed, that is when I'll end up making three different desserts. As well as working in my school's cafeteria, I also work at a bakery where I work in sales but help bake whenever possible. I'm so excited to further my culinary education and continue doing what I love to do"

Congratulations to all the recipients!



Chef at Morgan Creek and on the BCCA

Moi

President of BCCA & first women president in history!

Whistler

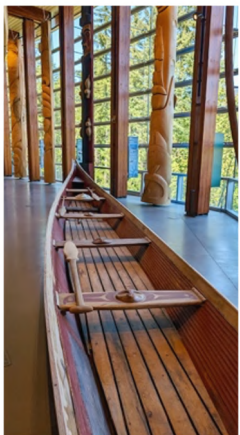


Skwxwú7mesh Lil'wat7úl
Cultural Centre
WHISTLER

Mini Conference



On May 11th, BCCASA had the privilege to attend the Spring BCCASA conference at the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre in beautiful Whistler. The weather could not have been more cooperative, and our hosts worked hard to develop for the first time, a unique culinary themed professional development opportunity that was both inspiring and educational.



Our host, Chef Steve Fecho and his team went above and beyond to create a learning and dining experience that will not be forgotten. The group was treated to a guided tour through the Cultural Centre Museum where we learned about Squamish and Lil'wat cultures and traditions. We received a commercial sized Bannock making demonstration with the very talented and

humble Maggie. A group presentation featuring local traditional foraging and of course an amazing lunch featuring many traditional flavours and ingredients that were modernized and elevated. Without a doubt, the day ended with the group wanting more.



A special thank you must go out to our hosts at the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre for all of the work done and for being so open to sharing their knowledge and skills



with us. Their endless efforts created such an educationally valuable and soul enriching day. With any luck, we can return and continue our Indigenous education with these truly passionate and giving group of professionals.





Garibaldi Secondary School 8:30am - 3:30pm

This PSA Day will have the 2024 BCCASA Conference and AGM hosted in Maple Ridge. This one day will be filled with local specialty food suppliers showcasing their products and talking about their passions. We will also be treated to a guest speaker from SD #42 to showcase and discuss some unique assessment tools you may want to implement into your teaching kitchen. The day will wrap with a locally inspired lunch and time for reflection and collaboration. Registration details TBD, stay tuned.

COST: \$180.00 (Includes \$30 membership fee)

2024 BCCASA Conference Agenda



8:30 - 9:15 - Registration and morning refreshments compliments of Garibaldi Secondary School Culinary Arts Students

9:30 - 10:30 - BCCASA Annual General Meeting

10:45am - 12:45pm - Vendor Tour. Specialty Food Vendors will showcase and share their products and discuss their operations. Vendors will include owners and operators from Ponderosa Mushrooms, Bruce's Country market and Deep Roots Family Farm. As well, the SD #42 District Assessment team will share culinary arts specific assessment ideas created especially for this conference.

1:30pm - 3:30pm Participants will transport themselves 10 minutes to the Kingfisher Waterfront Restaurant for a locally inspired plated lunch and group collaboration.



2024 BCCASA Conference Hotel Information



21650 Lougheed Hwy.
Maple Ridge, BC
Tel: (604) 467.1511
Toll Free: 1.877.467.1511

A block of ten (10) rooms have been held specifically of BCCASA conference attendees. Guests must call the hotel directly and reference "BCCASA" to receive the negotiated rate. Each room is fitted with two queen beds. If there are more than two (2) adults in the room, a \$10 fee will be added per adult. Kids are free.

Room Rate : \$149.99 plus tax and charges. \$10.00 extra will be charged for each extra adult in the room.

Please note, rooms will only be held until October 11, 2024. There are also limited rooms reserved so please be sure to book early.



See you in Maple Ridge! October 25th, 2024

Full sized pdf can be found [HERE](#)
or at www.bccasa.ca

NOTES FROM THE BACK OF HOUSE

...great thoughts on what we do

What we know — and don't — about the national school food program.

Natalie Stechyson · CBC News ·

Posted: Apr 03, 2024

Accessed at:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/national-food-program-schools-explain-1.7160901>

The federal government's plans to launch a national school food program might have left some people with more questions than answers about how it will actually work.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says he hopes the program will deliver meals to 400,000 children per year by the 2024-25 school year.

"We all want kids to have the best start in life, including the most vulnerable," Trudeau said, announcing the program on Monday.

However, not many details were released. Officials at the Prime Minister's Office would not comment on the record. More details may be revealed in the federal budget, planned for April 16.

In the meantime, here's what we know — and don't — about the \$1-billion program.

Who is it for?

The federal government says in a statement its target is to provide meals to 400,000 kids every year, "beyond those served by existing school food programs."

Debbie Field, co-ordinator for the Coalition for Healthy School Food, says about two million children are already participating in school food programs.

The other 400,000 are at the 1,000 schools that are on waiting lists for such programs, Field told CBC News.

A national program would also help families in need overcome the stigma of taking part in programs that only target low-income students, says Rachel Engler-Stringer, a community health and epidemiology professor at the University of Saskatchewan.

"There are plenty of kids who are not participating who could be participating," Engler-Stringer told CBC's Saskatoon Morning. "There are plenty of families that won't participate because there's a stigma involved."

Is it a new program?

Not exactly. Don't expect every child in Canada to suddenly get served a hot lunch. The program will support existing provincial and territorial programs.

Field says there's a good chance Ottawa will transfer the new money into those jurisdictions, so that "it's not a new bureaucracy, it just flows directly."

Children sit with plates at the Boys and Girls Club East Scarborough on Monday. Canada's current school food programs are an uneven patchwork operating at the provincial and local levels. (Chris Young/The Canadian Press)

"What we're hoping we'll see in the budget is the details on how that will happen," Field said.

She wants to see Ottawa share the cost of feeding schoolchildren like it does with the \$10 a day child-care funding.

Programs look different in different schools, regions and provinces. It depends on need. Some programs offer a mid-morning snack or a breakfast, lunch or "grab and go" bins. Some are free, others are pay-what-you-can.

Prince Edward Island's Bon Appetit program offers all students from kindergarten to Grade 12 a daily lunch option (like mini pancakes and yogurt, or a ham and cheese snack box) using a pay-what-you-can model. The meals are \$5.75 each for those who can afford the full price.

B.C. provides a website to help schools develop programs that fit the needs of their students.

Field says parents will likely see the effects of the federal program school by school — so, if you're in a community with a school that has a program already, your kid will be more likely to access that food, and probably better food.

If your school doesn't have a program, "this will allow provinces and territories to have a little bit more money so they can expand," she said.

How good are the existing programs?

It varies. Programs exist in most provinces and territories — which have jurisdiction over education — but "highly unevenly," according to York University's Food Policy for Canada website.

"Many needs go unaddressed ... participation rates are highly variable," it says.

Researchers at the University of Toronto echoed that sentiment in a 2021 report, saying the thousands of programs "vary greatly in design."

They are delivered by charities, school boards, governments, churches and corporations.

Only about 65 per cent of Toronto-area children participated in the school food programs available there, according to 2023 data compiled by the University of Toronto from local surveys and focus groups with parents and caregivers.

Barriers to accessing those programs included a lack of culturally appropriate food, program reductions including less food and less availability. The research also found some schools lacked kitchens and volunteers.

Students at St. Roch Catholic School in Toronto eat Cheerios, oranges and yogurt during their morning snacktime. (CBC)

Several provinces and territories have recently increased their budgets for student food programs.

This includes a recent Ontario pledge for an additional \$5 million (bringing its 2023 total to \$38 million), a Quebec pledge for \$34 million over five years, and a B.C. pledge for \$214 million over three years, just to name a few.

In late February, Nova Scotia announced it was investing \$18.8 million for new lunch program for students in the public school system.

"The current school food program landscape is complex," Katerina Maximova, an associate professor of epidemiology at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at University of Toronto, said via email.

"There are different mandates, different types of programs, multiple and overlapping sources of funding, and limited program co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation. This makes it difficult to monitor and to ensure consistency of standards."

How will Canada's program work?

A 2023 stakeholder report on building a national program, compiled by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), may provide some hints.

Respondents said they supported a "universal program delivery model" in which every child has access to school food in order to reduce stigma.

"Though programs often target low-income households, there is no 'stereotypical' hungry child," the report noted.

The participants also supported aligning any policy with Canada's Food Guide.

Other reports have mirrored these findings. For instance, the University of Guelph's Arrell Food Institute wrote last year that, ideally, a national program would provide universal access to nutritious food for students from junior kindergarten through Grade 12.

"What we know from best-practices is that it's all children who need to eat at school, not just children from a low-income household," Field said.

Canada is the only G7 country without a national school food program. Advocates say it's time

While it could be that, initially, the funding is allocated more in low-income neighbourhoods, it should still be universal within those schools, Engler-Stringer said.

"We could start there and then build," she said.

Why do we need it?

Nearly one in four children in Canada don't get enough food, the government says, and more that one-third of food bank users are children, according to Food Banks Canada. And there's been a 29 per cent increase in food insecurity in children in the last year, according to the charity Children First Canada.

Canada is also the only G7 country that doesn't have a national school food program or national standards, according to the Breakfast Club of Canada. Advocates have argued that a national program is needed to fill gaps left by the patchwork of provincial, local and charitable programs that are under strain due to low resources and high food prices.

And full stomachs help learning. Evidence shows that hunger affects focus and concentration, Engler-Stringer says.

"It is one of those tools that we have to help children fully participate in the classroom and be able to be the best student that they can be."

THE EXECUTIVE

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Have something to share?

Response to an article?

Great recipes?

Wanna join the Executive?

LET US KNOW!

Please send any
communication to
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It is important that we keep
BCCASA current,
Sharing the ideas and voice of Chef Instructors
throughout British Columbia

