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FRESH, LOCAL FOOD FOR MARYLAND STUDENTS

For the third year, many Maryland schools will offer locally grown products in school lunches for Homegrown School Lunch Week, Sept. 13-17. Maryland farmers grow and produce a wide variety of food including fruits, vegetables, bread, cheeses and meats for lunches and snacks that are available from farmers' markets, grocery stores, and community supported agriculture farms (CSAs). This year all 24 public school systems are participating in the Farm to School Program and Maryland Homegrown School Lunch Week.

According to Christine Baer, Food Coordinator, public schools in Frederick County have been serving fresh fruit from local farmers since the first day of school. Posters will be in cafeterias during Maryland Homegrown School Lunch Week. Locally grown tomatoes, plums, peaches, watermelons and apples will be on the menu.

“Providing students with local food for lunches and snacks as well as associated lessons helps to educate them about where their food comes, how it is produced, and the benefits of a healthy diet,” said Agriculture Secretary Buddy Hance. “At the same time, when you buy local products, you are helping to keep farmers in business and the land open and green. Buying locally-grown food is good for you, and good for Maryland.”

Governor Martin O'Malley has declared Maryland Homegrown School Lunch Week as September 13-17. The following are ways to ensure students can eat local all year long:

- Find out what your children's schools are doing to educate students about healthy, local eating.
- Frequent the Farmer's Markets to purchase fresh, local products (try apples, peaches, pears, vegetables, meats and cheeses). To find a market in Frederick County visit <http://www.discoverfrederickmd.com/farmersmarket/>
- Incorporate locally grown and produced foods into family meals.

New this year is a YouTube video contest asking students what buying local means to them. In a video lasting no longer than three minutes, students must thoughtfully and creatively answer the question, “What does ‘local food’ mean to you?” The first place winner(s) will receive an Apple iPod Touch, a Maryland State Park Pass, and a school lunchtime visit from MDA Secretary Buddy Hance. The deadline to submit the video is September 20. Visit www.marylandfarmtoschool.org for details.

Linking to the old custom of bringing an apple to the teacher, Maryland's Best is promoting apples in September. Apples are in season and tasting great, so it is the perfect time of year to take a trip to an orchard or a farmers' market to try all of the delicious varieties our state has to offer and to savor fresh cider, pies and other treats. Crisp, juicy Maryland apples are also in many local grocery stores. For a fun, family activity, visit

a Frederick County orchard and spend afternoon gathering apples to make your favorite dishes. We have included recipes to give ideas. According to the Maryland Office of the National Agricultural Statistics Service, the state's apple production in 2008 brought \$8 million into the local economy.

APPLE SALAD WITH HONEY-YOGURT DRESSING

1 1/2 cups coarsely chopped Granny Smith apples
1 1/2 cups coarsely chopped Golden Delicious apples
1 cup thinly sliced celery
3/4 cup coarsely chopped Red Delicious apples
1/2 cup seedless red grapes, halved
1/2 cup golden raisins
1/4 cup chopped pecans
1/2 cup plain nonfat yogurt
2 tablespoons honey
1 tablespoon white wine vinegar
1 1/2 teaspoons Dijon mustard

Combine first 7 ingredients (apples through pecans) in a large bowl, toss well.

Combine yogurt and next 3 ingredients in a bowl; stirring well with a wire whisk. Add yogurt mixture to apple mixture, tossing gently. Cover and chill 30 minutes. Makes 6 (1-cup) servings.

APPLE-NUT CHEESE BREAD

2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup sugar
2 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
2 eggs
1/4 cup vegetable oil
3/4 cup milk
1 1/2 cups shredded Cheddar cheese
1 medium apple, peeled and chopped (1 cup)
1/2 cup chopped walnuts

Preheat oven to 350°. Grease and flour 9x5 inch loaf pan. In a large bowl, mix flour, sugar, baking powder, salt and cinnamon. Stir in eggs, oil and milk just until mixed. Stir in cheese, apples and nuts just until mixed; pour into pan. Bake for 1 hour and 15 minutes or until bread pulls away from sides of pan. Let cool 5 minutes; remove from pan and cool on wire rack. Makes 1 loaf.

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