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Taste test raises student interest in Alaska Grown vegetables

(Anchorage, AK) – An analysis of survey results from a school taste test featuring roasted Alaska Grown root vegetables showed a positive impact on student perception of those vegetables.

This school year, East High School students created a recipe featuring Alaska Grown roasted beets, parsnips, turnips, and squash. In late January, they cooked and served the dish to more than 100 students at Polaris K-12 School. On a scale of 1 to 5, 80 percent of the students gave the dish an overall rating of 3 or better. The winning vegetable was the parsnip, which received a rating of 5 from more than half of the students.

Participating students also filled out a pre and post survey about their vegetables preferences, their willingness to try vegetables, and their knowledge of vegetables grown in Alaska. The results of the survey were analyzed by the Alaska Farm to School program staff. The post survey indicated that the students had a stronger preference for the vegetables used in the taste test, an increased willingness to try new vegetables at school, and increased knowledge about vegetables grown in Alaska, according to the Farm to School Program.

“It is exciting to see the benefits that a simple taste test can have on students,” says Farm to School Program Coordinator Johanna Herron.

The survey results have been shared with the Anchorage School District Student Nutrition Services and the recipe will be incorporated into the menu for the upcoming school year. LaDonna Dean, the registered dietician for Anchorage Student Nutrition Services, worked with the Alaska Farm to School Program and the Cooperative Extension Services at the University of Alaska Fairbanks to create a standardized recipe.

“The Anchorage School District is very excited to team up with the Alaska Farm to School Program to increase vegetable selections on the menu and offer more Alaska Grown produce to our students,” Dean said.

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