



FACT SHEET

ABOUT US



Blue Watermelon Project, established in 2016 under Slow Food Phoenix, formed to give school garden produce a home in student tummies of the then-named Arcadia Learning Center. Since then, the school has been renovated and renamed Echo Canyon with gardens that wrap around the entirety of the school's campus. Led by Lou and Ann Rodarte, this is Blue Watermelon Project's flagship school with 23 additional schools across the Phoenix and Tucson areas that join in the fun of the organization's premier program, Chef in the Garden (CITG). To date, CITG alone serves roughly 3,500 students per year.

Blue Watermelon Project is a group of chefs, restaurateurs, and community food advocates that works in a collective effort with students, parents, educators, and the community to assist schools in redefining a student's relationship with food. Today, Blue Watermelon Project operates under its own 501(c)3 non-profit status and carries out this mission under three primary programs.

CHEF IN THE GARDEN

Chef in the Garden is a garden-based program that encourages students to rethink unfamiliar foods through the engagement of growing and cooking activities throughout the season. This program has grown to integrate core curriculum concepts under the financial support and guide of the Steele Foundation and the Sprouts Healthy Communities Foundation.

FEEDING THE FUTURE

Feeding the Future event is an annual culinary student competition which aims to teach students the value of food by challenging teams to create a school meal that meets the nutritional and fiscal guidelines of the National School Breakfast and School Lunch Program. This program has expanded and reaches elementary, middle and high school students. Attendees are encouraged to enjoy the creativity of participating student teams while learning more about the positive impact of these food assistance programs.

RECIPE DEVELOPMENT

Blue Watermelon Project Chefs have been invited on a number of occasions to develop recipes for school community events and for school food service teams, most recently with the Arizona Department of Education on a project called Kitchen Creations.



Photo Credit (except blue corn mush dish): Jill Richards Photography

BLUE WATERMELON'S IMPACT

Blue Watermelon Project primarily operates on a lean, volunteer-centered model with minimal paid staff to support its efforts. To keep operations strong, key funders like the Steele Foundation and Sprouts Health Communities Foundation help to make this work possible. Without these funders our impact would be much less and as such, it is important that any media promotion connected to the Blue Watermelon Project include recognition of these funders. All media inquiries should be directed to barb@teamworkspr.com.



In addition to the large network of chefs, food advocates, educators, local businesses and volunteers that work behind the scenes to make Blue Watermelon successful, we recognize that none of this work could be possible without our farmers, land stewards and gardeners.



5,000 students

24 Site Representatives

26 School Districts

TESTIMONIALS



"My littles loved this project, the kitchen was a mess, the kids were a mess, but we had fun!"

Gladys Tomala, teacher at Girls Innovation Academy, K-8th, December 2021 Chef in the Garden, Wheat Kit

"Kahmari brought home her collard green project today and couldn't wait for me to get home from work to start. I had her do most of the work and we took pictures along the way. Her sister helped her make a slideshow for you. She was super proud of herself."

Brittany Downs, parent at Cheatham Elementary School, November 2021 Chef in the Garden, Collard Greens Kit

"We loved this one!!!! Last time we cut the tomato, drew and labeled what we saw inside. I use it as a "labeling" writing lesson."

Meghan Gilbert, teacher at Rover Elementary, Kindergarten, 2021 Chef in the Garden, Tomato Kit



Photo Credit (except for kit): Jill Richards Photography