



MASSACHUSETTS
FARM TO SCHOOL

Capturing Terrific Food Photos & Showcasing Fabulous Menus

September 17, 2025



MASSACHUSETTS FARM TO SCHOOL

Massachusetts Farm to School strengthens local farms and fisheries and promotes healthy communities by increasing local food purchasing and education at schools.



MASSFARMTOSCHOOL.ORG



ADVOCACY



TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE



LOCAL FOOD
PROMOTION



PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

Introductions



Leah Botko, SNS
Food Service Director
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Mary Palen, MBA
Administrator of Food Services
Wilmington Public Schools
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Abby Getman Skillicorn, MBA
School Nutrition Programs Manager
Mass. Farm to School
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About our Presenters

Leah Botko

Background in Cooking & Nutrition
School Nutrition for 9 years

Passionate about Universal School Meals and increasing local purchasing

Social Media helps us showcase our priorities!

Favorite part of School Nutrition:

Opening students eyes to new and nutritious food choices



Littleton Public Schools Food Service Goals:

Increase sustainability:

- Stainless Steel Trays
- Purchasing Local
- Composting
- Meatless Mondays

Encourage Student Input

- Friday-Try- Days
- Meet with students
- Hydroponic harvests



Littleton Public Schools Food Services

Top Vendors:

- Boston Food Hub
- Worcester Food Hub
- Fairview Orchard
- The Good Crust
- Fat Moon Farms
- Harvesting Good
- North Coast Seafood
- Spring Brook Farm



About our Presenters

Mary Palen

30 years in School Nutrition
20 with Wilmington

Works with students to find the meals kids want to eat and make them the healthiest ways possible.

Local or healthy doesn't matter unless students are eating it!

Popular Menu Items:

- Fresh foods
- Local chicken entrees
- Chipotle seasoning
- Lime cilantro rice
- Pico de gallo



Wilmington Public Schools Food Services

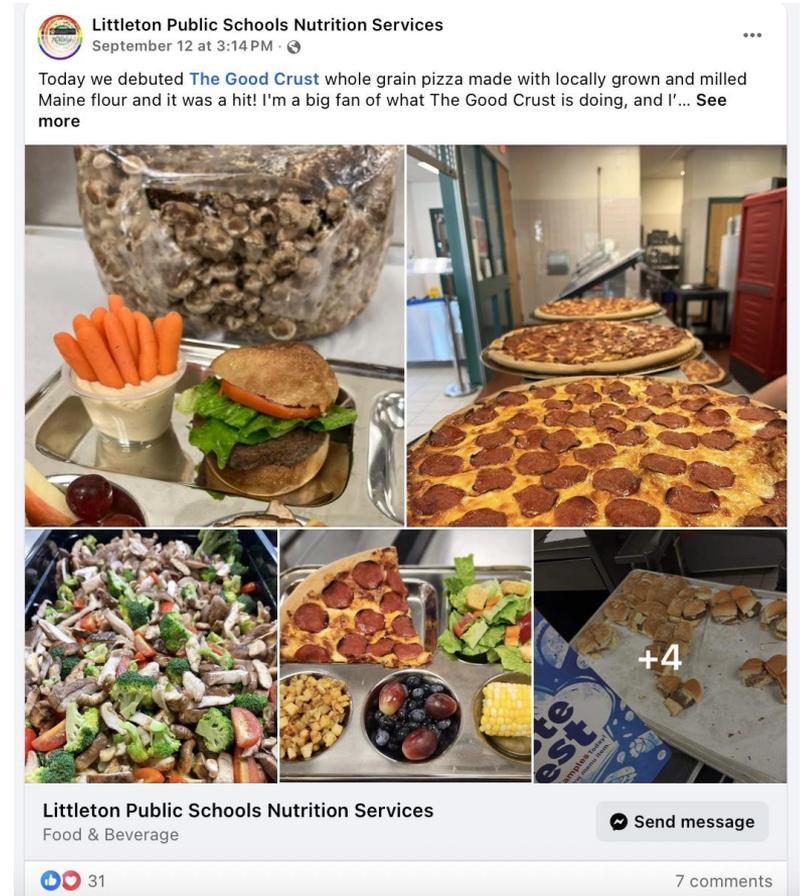
- Incorporate student participation on key meals
 - Showcase the program
 - Leverage resources thanks to universal free meals
- ★ Hired Assistant Food Service Director to manage photographs and social media in 2024
- Target menu items to capture
 - Color, color, color
 - Participation skyrocketing!
 - Local Farm Partnership with Nallie Pastures:
 - TT meal with local rotisserie chicken and corn on the cob now preferred now over breaded chicken
 - Local boneless, skinless chicken breasts for teriyaki stir-fry
 - Fresh, local, chicken parmesan



Power of Food Photos

Capturing high-quality images of your school nutrition programs serves many purposes:

- Provides content for regular updates to school community
 - District social media
 - Food Service social media
 - District-specific platform to communicate with families (Parent Square, Class Dojo, Schoololgy, etc.)
 - Portfolio to share with press
- Training for staff (and internal competition among kitchens!)
- Enter to compete in Terrific Trays



About Terrific Trays



Run in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)'s Office for Food and Nutrition Programs (FNP), the Terrific Tray competition recognizes submissions from Massachusetts school meal programs operating the National School Lunch Program in Massachusetts.

- Program started in School Year 2023-2024
- Has recognized 16 exceptional photos from school nutrition programs across the Commonwealth
- Drawn local and statewide press illustrating the appeal and quality of school meals
- Received strong, public recognition and press from Governor Healey & the Executive Office of Education
- Is gaining national recognition among school nutrition professionals, organizations and funders that support child nutrition programs

State Wide Photo Competition: Terrific Trays

Benefits

Monthly Terrific Tray Monthly winners are recognized with the following:

- Featured in DESE FNP's Fueling the Commonwealth Newsletter and monthly Town Hall
- Featured on social media from partners including Mass. Farm to School, DESE, The John C. Stalker Institute for Food and Nutrition, and the School Nutrition Association of Massachusetts (Please Note: This list is not exhaustive.).
- Receive local food swag from Massachusetts Farm to School
- Compete for the title of Terrific Tray of the Year (the Terrific Tray of the Year winner will receive two free tickets to next spring's Healthy Kids, Healthy Programs Summit)
- Receive \$2,500 to reinvest in their School Nutrition Program from the [Henry P. Kendall Foundation](#)



State Wide Photo Competition: Terrific Trays



Eligibility

Terrific Tray photographs must contain the following for consideration:

- All five components that make up a reimbursable meal (fruit, vegetable, meat/meat alternate, grain, and fluid milk)
- **Feature specifically Massachusetts grown, raised, or caught foods**, with preference given to trays that feature at least 2 or more local ingredients that represent different meal components
- Display unflavored milk or a nutritionally equivalent milk alternative (Lactaid)

Submit your Terrific Tray today!



State Wide Photo Competition: Terrific Trays



Eligibility, continued:

- Photographs are high-quality resolution
- Do not contain foods that are wrapped in plastic
- Have a shareable recipe that corresponds with the photograph, with preference given to recipes that are standardized for use in School Nutrition Program
- Demonstrates an innovative menu item, with scratch made elements, that is culturally-relevant or represents student voice
- Are submitted by districts that represent geographic diversity among current Terrific Tray winners

To ensure Terrific Trays celebrates a diversity of programs throughout the Commonwealth, while there are no limitations on the number of tray submissions an SFA can submit, DESE will only be awarding one monthly Terrific Tray award per SFA in a given school year.

Terrific Tray Resources

Terrific Tray Checklist:

- ❑ **All five meal components are displayed**
 - ❑ Fruit
 - ❑ Vegetable
 - ❑ Meat/Meat Alternate
 - ❑ Grain
 - ❑ Fluid Milk - unflavored milk or a nutritionally equivalent milk alternative (Lactaid)
- ❑ **Feature Massachusetts grown, raised, or caught foods**, ideally 2 or more local ingredients that represent different meal components
- ❑ **Photographs are high-quality resolution**
- ❑ **Do not contain foods that are wrapped in plastic**

- ❑ **Have a shareable recipe** that corresponds with the photograph, with preference given to recipes that are standardized for use in School Nutrition Program
- ❑ **Demonstrates an innovative menu item**, with scratch made elements, that is culturally-relevant or represents student voice

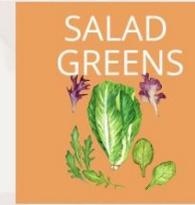
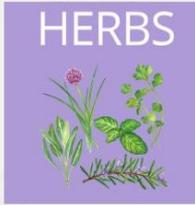
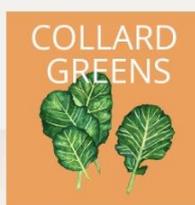
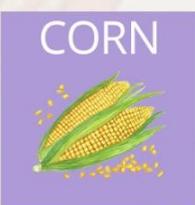
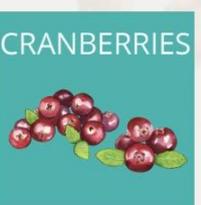
Keep in Mind:

- ★ Colorful trays with ranges of food colors are highly desired
- ★ Bright lighting helps colors pop
- ★ Consider your backgrounds and tray angles when photographing
- ★ Engage staff or students to help capture images

Making the Most of Harvest of the Month

Harvest of the Month: Mix and Match!

Twelve Main Foods (with months printed on posters); Eight Alternates



Farm to School Northeast: Podcast!



- Monthly podcast exploring creative ways that local food is getting into school cafeterias and how food system education is playing out in classrooms and school gardens across the northeast region (New England & New York State)
- 20-30 min episode
- Highlights the innovative work of educators, food service staff, school garden coordinators, policy makers, farmers, and more.

Updates on MAPC Northeast Produce RFP



MAPC Northeast Produce RFP

Valid for July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026

- SFAs can work with one of the awarded distributors/food hubs to source produce
- Schools/Districts are responsible for issuing a contract under the RFP
- ***RFP only covers produce listed in the pricing lists***
- MFTS can support with procurement solicitations & 3 Quote process for additional items not covered by RFP:
 - 3 Quote Sample for Small Purchases (up to \$100,000 in FY with vendor)
 - Micro-Purchases: non-recurring purchases from vendor under \$10,000

State-Wide Conference

MASSACHUSETTS
FARM TO SCHOOL
**FARM
& SEA**
to School
CONFERENCE



Save the Date!

MARCH 18, 2026

SMITH COLLEGE, NORTHAMPTON

Submit a proposal to contribute to the 2026 Conference with a workshop, activity station, field trip or networking session.

- [Read the full Request for Proposals.](#)
- Submit your proposal online through our [Proposal Application Form.](#)



Submission deadline: November 14, 2025

Questions? Contact Dinah Mack at dinah@massfarmtoschool.org



Questions & Closing

Please use the Q&A function to ask questions.

Get in Touch:

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