

# Willow School students get taste of gardening

Bernards Inn cultivates teaching program

By Susan Bloom  
Special to the Courier News

FAR HILLS — Bernardsville resident Luca Pizzale, 10, thought the tomato he picked was juicy and full of flavor, but Bedminster's Eliot Richards, 9, had different words for the cinnamon basil leaf she sampled.

"It's really strong," she laughed, grabbing for her water bottle.

All of the fourth-graders at Gladstone's Willow School enjoyed a two-hour introduction to local, seasonal and sustainable gardening at Bernards Inn's 2,000-square-foot vegetable and herb garden in Far Hills. Hosted by Bernards Inn executive chef Corey Heyer, the Sept. 24

program was part of the restaurant's ongoing garden-to-plate initiative with the independent day school. The 4-year-old program offers the school's fourth- and fifth-graders a hands-on opportunity to plant and harvest a variety of vegetables and herbs, better understand where food comes from and experience the cycle of growth.

### In a class by itself

"The garden presents a wonderful opportunity to teach kids," Heyer said of the century-old Bernardsville restaurant and inn's main vegetable garden and smaller



Willow School classmates Eliot Richards and Katharine Krag, both Bedminster, sample tomatoes during a visit to the Bernards Inn's garden.

See GARDEN, Page A8  
SUSAN BLOOM/SPECIAL TO THE COURIER NEWS

## GARDEN

Continued from Page A1

herb garden, which produce, among other things, 15 varieties of tomatoes, several types of eggplant, peppers, peas and beans, up to 10 varieties of lettuce, and more than 60 types of herbs.

"From the restaurant's perspective, it's practical

for us to have the garden because we can grow so many unique things there that we can't source from any of our purveyors, like lemon verbena, red ribbon sorrel and pineapple sage, and we can pick everything at its perfect size and maturity to ensure consistency and expert complete control," Heyer said.

The value of those natural world.

At the same time, he noted, "it's great for kids to see the whole life cycle — for instance, how we can use peas at three different stages of life — and teaches them a respect for these products and the importance of not wasting them."

Hosting student visits to the farm in both May and September provides a full season of lessons, Heyer said.

"In the spring, students have the opportunity to see the start of the season and help us plant things like tomatoes, squash, zucchini, and herbs," he explained.

"Then in September, they can return to pick the produce and try everything we've grown."

"The Willow School is all about sustainable living, and in our class we study indigenous cultures, the use of plants as food and medicine, and various biomes and how and why different things grow," Fontaine said.

"We also use our own property as a classroom for math, science, and social studies," she said, citing such projects as the recent installation of a temporary gravity irrigation system by the fourth-grade class to the current construction of the school's 20,000-square-foot Health, Wellness and Nutrition Center, a "living building" designed to become one of the world's greenest certified structures, complete with its own garden and teaching kitchen.

"We're very much into having the students learn by doing, not just by being told," she said.

In that regard, the Garden-to-Plate program was tailor-made for the school's students.

"Chef Corey is so proud of his garden and took so much pleasure in having them try what he'd planted," Fontaine said. "The children had a

benefits to the chef?

"In the end, every restaurant can get the same thing as every other restaurant — it's how you manipulate those products that separate you from everyone else," he said. "Having the farm enables us to create something unique and special and deliver customers a wonderful experience."

ball."

For the Bay Head-raised, Culinary Institute of America-trained Heyer, himself a father of three, the garden and the Garden-to-Plate program are both labors of love.

"As a kid, we had a nice garden, but my interest in gardening really took hold when I became a chef. I love being outdoors and had a thirst to learn more," he said. "We try to grow something different each year in the garden and see what happens. There's a lot of labor and maintenance involved in a garden, but once it's up and running, it's so rewarding."

During the visit, student Katharine Krag, 9, of the Potter'sville section of Bedminster, was especially impressed by the variety of items planted. "It was fun to walk around and look at all the fruits and vegetables in the garden," she said. "My favorite was the lemon basil."

For classmate Pizzale, there was value in the behind-the-scenes look at the culinary process. "It was fun to be here and interesting to see how the restaurant produces their food," he said.



THE BERNARDS INN  
EST. 1907

908.766.0002

WWW.BERNARDSINN.COM







# In a nutshell

Any way you slice them, nuts make for a tasty and healthy ingredient or snack anytime

**By Susan Bloom**  
For the Courier News

Do you favor filberts? Or are you partial to peanuts, pistachios or pecans? Take your pick — available in a wide range of tasty, healthy and filling varieties to please every palate, nuts are a great snack on their own or make the perfect addition to everything from salads, appetizers and entrées to smoothies and baked goods.

**Healthy nuts**

“Nuts are extremely healthy,” said Colts Neck-based nutritionist Adria Magenheim. “They incorporate high levels of mono-unsaturated fat, which lowers bad cholesterol

and raises good cholesterol, and are a good source of B vitamins, fiber and magnesium, the latter of which more than two-thirds of Americans are deficient in.

“Each nut also has unique properties,” she said. “For example, walnuts are a good source of heart-healthy Omega 3 fats and have the highest antioxidant level of all nuts, while coconuts offer high levels of lauric acid, which is both a great source of energy and an effective anti-fungal, and just one or two Brazil nuts daily will meet the recommended dietary allowance (RDA) for selenium, which is critical for good prostate and thyroid health.

According to Magenheim, the addition

See NUTS, Page B2

**Perfect pairs**

At the Bernards Inn in Bernardsville, “we use a ton of nuts, especially at this time of year,” Executive Chef Corey Heyer said. “They have a nice creamy, meaty quality that adds an appealing crunch and offers a great mouth feel.”

At the restaurant, Heyer incorporates a variety of nuts in creative ways, from his goat cheese and pear appetizer with a toasted pistachio crumble to a beet dish featuring sour cream-frosted hazelnuts, and a popular scallop entrée served with black barley risotto and pineapple sage pesto dressed with Spanish Marcona almonds.

“Nuts all have different qualities,” Heyer explained. “For instance, pecans pair well with blue cheese, hazelnuts work beautifully with chocolate, and pistachios are a perfect balance for the gaminess of duck and pheasant.” His takeaway? “Nuts are delicious, healthy, and come in a variety of different textures and profiles to enhance a wide range of salad, fish and vegetable dishes.”

Chef Heyer’s Seckel Pear, Bruleed Goat Cheese and Pistachio Crumble Appetizer Recipe on the next page.



Arranged artfully on a plate is seckel pear and goat cheese brulee with mache greens, braised cranberries, candied orange zest and toasted pistachio crumble from The Bernards Inn in Bernardsville created by Executive Chef Corey Heyer.

KAREN MANCINELLI FOR THE COURIER NEWS



THE BERNARDS INN  
EST. 1907

908.766.0002

WWW.BERNARDSINN.COM



**SECKEL PEAR, BRULÉED GOAT CHEESE AND PISTACHIO CRUMBLE APPETIZER**

Serves 4 to 6

**SECKEL PEARS**

**INGREDIENTS:**

12 seckel pears, peeled, cut in half, and cores removed  
4 cups water  
2 cup sugar

**DIRECTIONS:**

» Heat water and sugar together in a pot large enough to hold all of the pears until the sugar dissolves.

» Simmer the pears very gently for approximately 10 minutes or until they soften.

» When the pears are just tender, pour them into a clean bowl set in a larger bowl with ice water, which will stop the pears from cooking further.

» Store pears in the sugar water in the refrigerator.

**GOAT CHEESE**

**INGREDIENTS:**

1 8-ounce log fresh goat cheese  
2 tablespoons fennel fronds, chopped  
2 tablespoons basil, chopped  
1 tablespoon marjoram, chopped  
1 teaspoon thyme, chopped  
¼ cup Sugar in the Raw  
Small kitchen blow torch

**DIRECTIONS:**

» Roll goat cheese in the chopped herbs, wrap tightly in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for one hour.

» Unwrap the goat cheese and slice the log into 12 disks. Lay the disks on a cookie tray

and refrigerate until ready to use.

» Right before plating the salad, sprinkle each disk of cheese with the sugar and torch the sugar with the blow torch to caramelize it, being careful not to burn it.

**TOASTED PISTACHIO CRUMBLE**

**INGREDIENTS:**

1 cup pistachios  
1 teaspoon pistachio oil  
Salt

**DIRECTIONS:**

» Toast the pistachios in a 350-degree oven for 8-10 minutes or until the nuts are golden and aromatic.

» Toss the nuts with the pistachio oil and salt to taste and cool them on a clean, dry tray.

» When cool, chop nuts into a coarse crumble and store them in an airtight container at room temperature.

**BRAISED CRANBERRIES**

**INGREDIENTS:**

1 cup cranberries  
2 cups red wine  
2 ounces red wine vinegar  
1 tablespoon black peppercorns  
3 allspice berries  
3 anise cloves  
6 sprigs thyme  
1 clove  
1 cup sugar

**DIRECTIONS:**

» Put cranberries in a baking dish that will hold them in a single layer.

» Combine remaining ingredients, bring to a boil, and reduce by half.

» Pour mixture over cranberries and cool in the refrigerator; cranberries should not get mushy.

**MACHE**

**INGREDIENTS:**

4 heads mache or other tender young lettuce  
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
1 teaspoon lemon juice  
Salt

**DIRECTIONS:**

» Dress mache with olive oil and lemon juice and season with salt.

» Dust plates with the pistachio crumble, arrange the pear halves on the plate, and place the cranberries around the pears.

**TO MAKE THE PEAR AND GOAT CHEESE APPETIZER:** Arrange the bruléed goat cheese around the pears and top with the dressed mache.

*Recipes courtesy of The Bernards Inn, Bernardsville*



THE BERNARDS INN  
EST. 1907

908.766.0002

WWW.BERNARDSINN.COM

