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Planting The Seeds

Anybody who wants to train as a chef must already know quite a bit about food, right? Wrong. Chef Ian Lai is an instructor at [Northwest Culinary Academy](#), and he has been astonished to discover how little new students know about the ingredients of their fridges and pantries. "We'll talk about vegetables, and about a third of them have no idea if it grows above or below the ground, or in a tree," he says.

Ian felt compelled to do something about the knowledge gap. Beyond educating his adult students, he decided to start planting the seeds of food wisdom in younger minds. In 2005 he founded the Terranova School of Food Society, a 5000 square foot garden inside a 63-acre park in Richmond. The non-profit organization gets kids started while they're young, teaching organic gardening and healthy cooking to children from kindergarten through grade 12. Participating teachers discuss their curriculum with Ian, and together they come up with a plan to connect activities from the garden and the kitchen lessons in science, history and math. One example is the way the students



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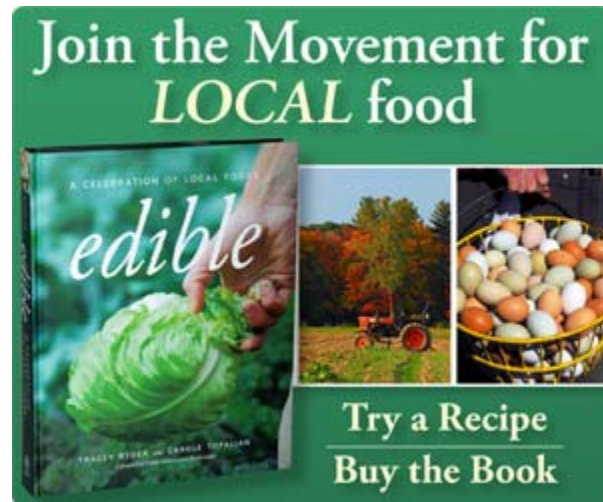
made butter from whipping cream, chanting the multiplication tables v doing the shaking.

Young children partner with older kids from the same school, and each are given a plot measuring 12 square feet. "We let them choose what plant," Ian explains. "Because children aren't often given choice. Adult 'Do this, do that'. But when kids are given a choice, they take more ownership and responsibility."

The students grow plants with fanciful names, like Rainbow Carrots, Si Sunflowers and Scarlet Runner Beans. As Ian says, "Fun names are m draw. What boy wouldn't rather grow rocket than arugula?" He runs th store at Terranova, observing the kids' doubtful expressions as he put three seeds into their hands, and explaining that those few small seed going to grow into something big that produces a lot of food.

Last autumn, the kids made bread from oats they grew in their garder harvested the oats, kneaded the dough, baked the bread, and took fre loaves home at the end of the day. "Their parents wanted to know wh them the bread," Ian says. "We told them, 'Your child made this.'"

The Terranova project grows healthy, interested kids who learn to resp food and the people who grow it. The students aren't bussed to the ga they must walk from their school—sometimes 40 minutes each way. C class came from too far to walk, so they cycled in a caravan along the Teachers have watched some of their more challenging students imprc academically and socially as a result of the holistic, hands-on experien "It's authentic learning," says Ian. "It's tactile. They can see it, touch i understand it." myterranova.ca



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