



## **SPOONS ACROSS AMERICA™ History**

In **1995**, a group of educators, chefs, and food professionals created a discovery-based curriculum for elementary school children called **Days of Taste®**. “It was clear that our children were losing the connection between the land and their food and we needed to do something about it,” explains educator Julia V. Jordan, **Days of Taste** founder. A four-part experiential curriculum is made available to many New York public school 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms each fall.

In 2001, the founders of the **Days of Taste** created **Spoons Across America** – a not-for-profit organization dedicated to educating children and families on the benefits of good nutrition, healthful eating, and passing along the important traditions of supporting local farmers and sharing meals around the family table. Expanding on the **Days of Taste** program, **Spoons Across America** provides programs for elementary and middle school children in the classroom and via community-based organizations and health care institutions. “Children who lack proper nutrition are more susceptible to limited growth, restricted brain development, reduced immune function, and limited cognitive development,” says Jordan. “A 1995 Cornell University study showed that children who have had hands-on opportunities to explore and prepare new and nutritious foods, will be more likely to eat in a healthy way,” she says.

The American Institute of Wine & Food (AIWF) adopted the **Days of Taste** program in 1998 and it became a national AIWF program.

Culinary legend Julia Child was an enthusiastic supporter of **Spoons Across America** programs from the beginning. She believed in the importance of teaching children about the origin and importance of eating fresh locally-grown foods. “In this age of fast and frozen foods, we want to teach school children about real food – where it is grown and how it is produced – so they can develop an understanding and appreciation of how good, fresh food is supposed to taste,” said Child, referring to the **AIWF Days of Taste\***.

**Spoons Across America** partners with businesses, professional organizations, and volunteers – farmers, chefs, restaurateurs, and food professionals – across the country to coordinate and sponsor programs for elementary and middle schools, including:

**The Dinner Party Project™** is a dynamic family-focused food education program involving 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> graders in the entire process of producing a dinner party for their parents at a school or community center in the spring. Through the project, children are taught about nutrition, food safety, meal planning, table setting, etiquette, and cooking. Children learn about the value of community, family, teamwork, and sharing while building their self-esteem and having fun. “There is a loss of connection with food that features fresh ingredients, with taste, with home-cooked meals, and with family dinners,” explains Tim Love, chef/owner, *Lonesome Dove Western Bistro* and **Dinner Party Project** event director. **The Dinner Party Project** was launched nationally in 20 elementary schools in early 2001. Today, 45 dinner parties have been held with over 1,300 children participating across the United States.



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***AIWF Days of Taste® New York*** is an exciting discovery-based curriculum designed specifically for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students that is conducted each fall. Days of Taste is a program of The American Institute of Wine & Food and the New York City Chapter has engaged *Spoons Across America* to implement the program. *AIWF Days of Taste New York* teams up chefs, food professionals, farmers, and teachers to help children explore the nuances of taste, develop a food/nutrition vocabulary, and experience and compare basic tastes and flavors. Children taste fresh produce from a local farm, prepare a harvest salad with a chef in the classroom, and visit that chef's restaurant to dine and discuss career options. Each fall 50 New York City public school classrooms and more than 1,500 ethnically diverse 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders participate in *AIWF Days of Taste New York*. The New York City effort has been supported by the Greenmarket (the citywide farmers market program of the Council on the Environment of NYC); New York City College of Technology/ CUNY; the French Consulate; and The James Beard Foundation since its inception in 1995.

***On the Farm*** is a day-long exploration of a working farm for 3<sup>rd</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> grade children, led by a farmer and an educational specialist. The complete farm to table experience includes a tour of the farm, harvest scavenger hunt, "hands-on" lunch preparation, discussion of the benefits of locally-grown food. This program has been adapted for Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture, Westchester County, NY.

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\*\*The Days of Taste® trademarks and copyrights are the sole and exclusive property of The American Institute of Wine & Food (AIWF). Days of Taste® is a national program of The AIWF implemented throughout America by a majority of its 30 chapters in cities throughout the USA. The AIWF New York Chapter has engaged Spoons Across America to implement The AIWF's Days of Taste® program in the New York area solely on behalf of the AIWF New York Chapter.\* To learn more about the AIWF Days of Taste® program in your area, please contact The American Institute of Wine & Food national office at (800) 274-2493 or visit [www.aiwf.org](http://www.aiwf.org). If you're interested in the AIWF New York Chapter's Days of Taste® program, please contact the AIWF New York Chapter at 718-229-6565.