



FACT SHEET: *The Dinner Party Project*®

***The Dinner Party Project*®** is a dynamic family-focused food education program involving 5th, 6th, and 7th graders in the entire process of producing a dinner party for their families at a school or community center. Through the seven-week curriculum, 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.

Since 2001, over 50 dinner parties have been held with over 5,000 children, teachers, and family members participating across the United States. Each Dinner Party Project is coordinated by a local food professional and a chef. Chef participants have included: Chef Tim Love, *Lonesome Dove Western Bistro*, Ft. Worth, TX; Chef Marlin Kaplan, *One Walnut*, Cleveland, OH; Exec. Chef Feliberto Estevéz, *Gracie Mansion*, New York, NY; Pastry Chef Bill Yosses; and Author and Television Celebrity Chef Daisy Martinez.

***Highlights of The Dinner Party Project*®:**

- **What is a Dinner Party? Introduction & Invitations**
Students discuss family dining habits, decide on their Dinner Party theme and create invitations.
- **What's Cooking? Fresh Food, Seasonal Menus**
Students explore ingredients and recipes for their Dinner Party, develop a vocabulary for describing tastes, learn about the food system and the importance of eating locally and seasonally, explore the recipes they will prepare, and create a menu card for their Dinner Party.
- **What Should I Eat? Healthy Behaviors and Balanced Eating**
Students learn about healthy behaviors for a total wellness and are introduced to MyPyramid and the different food groups, analyze TDPP menu items and the food they eat for nutrients and balanced eating, learn about proper portion sizes, how to read a nutrition label and about safe food handling and preparation.
- **Setting The Scene, Traditions, Mood, Table Setting and Etiquette**
Students discuss family and cultural traditions, practice the traditions of table setting and napkin folding, discuss the concept of mood, decide upon a theme for their party and explore ways to create a festive table, learn about proper etiquette at a dinner party and practice serving and interacting at the party.
- **Work Period—Collaborate, Cooperate...And Then We Eat!**
Students form committees and work in cooperative groups to complete various tasks for the Dinner Party, practice making some of the recipes, review table setting, napkin folding and etiquette



- **The Dinner Party! Cooking and Hosting**
Students put into practice all they have learned to prepare and host a meal for their families; children cook, decorate, set the table, greet parents, and enjoy the meal.
- **Reflections, Final Projects and Thank-You Notes**
Students reflect in writing and discussion about their experiences participating in the Dinner Party Project®, write thank you notes to people and organizations that supported the project.

ABOUT SPOONS ACROSS AMERICA®:

Spoons Across America® (SAA)- the source for children's culinary education- is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to educating children, teachers, and families about the benefits of healthy eating. We work to influence the eating habits of children through hands-on education that celebrates the connection to local farmers and the important tradition of sharing meals around the family table.

Spoons Across America® is a collaborative effort of professional organizations, businesses, and volunteers committed to supporting the ***Spoons Across America***® mission. Our partners include The James Beard Foundation; The American Institute of Wine & Food/New York Chapter; Freedman Meats, Inc.: Lonesome Dove Western Bistro, Fort Worth, TX; March of Dimes; New York City College of Technology/CUNY; Greenmarket (the citywide farmers market program of the Council on the Environment of New York City); New York Women's Culinary Alliance; Blue Smoke-Jazz Standard; Wheat Foods Council; plus farmers, chefs, restaurateurs, and food professionals across the United States.

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