

Eating healthy can be fun

By A.K. Whitney
Food Editor

“WOULD YOU like to play a game?” Shea Estanislau asked the little boy who stopped by her booth Saturday at the Junior League of Long Beach’s Second Annual Kids in the Kitchen event, which was held in a parking lot at City Place.

He looked at her, taking in the recent Cordon Bleu graduate’s crisp white chef’s jacket, with her name embroidered in blue in a flowing script. He nodded shyly.

“Ok, try to pick the one that’s better for your body,” Estanislau said.

What followed was a seemingly simple, but not necessarily so, test of common foods found in most people’s pantries.

“Grape juice or grapes?”

“Grapes.”

“Plain bagel or whole-wheat?”

“Whole wheat.”

“String cheese or cheddar cheese and crackers?”

“String cheese.”

Hmm. The adult standing to one side, scribbling in a notebook, would’ve chosen the cheddar, which is apparently the least healthy choice. And they say kids don’t know anything about food?

Well, many do. But there are also many who don’t, which is why the Junior League, concerned by soaring obesity rates among children in this country, gave this event, said committee member Sarah Swain. And, she added, it’s not just the kids, but also their parents, who need to be educated.

The three-hour event included booths like Estanislau’s, as well as booths where kids could make ants on a log (that would be celery spread with peanut butter and sprinkled with raisins), monkey mix (a snack mix) and macaroni necklaces. Kids and parents could also learn what amounts of sugar, fat and salt were in their favorite foods.

While everyone learned about healthy eating, they mingled with



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Sure, eating whole wheat pasta can be good for you, but making a macaroni necklace is even more fun.

a life-size pineapple (wearing fetching pink sneakers) and her friend, a banana.

The highlight of the event was a presentation of the Kids in the Kitchen snack recipe pamphlet. Earlier in the year, the League asked kids between grades four and eight to contribute recipes for simple, healthy snacks they could make themselves.

That, however, did not mean a trail mix, say, couldn’t include a marshmallow or two.

“We were looking for that healthy balance,” Swain said. “All vegetables is not realistic.”

Seventh grader Zach Arend came up with frozen bananas rolled in peanut butter and nuts.

“My dad used to make chocolate-covered bananas, but they weren’t very healthy,” said Zack, who before putting together his recipe first consulted the Internet.

Nicolette Bencito, a fifth grader, came up with her trail mix by consulting with her uncle. And yes, it has a marshmallow or two.

Seventh grader Clay Thomas wanted a better yogurt dip for his veggies.

“I was looking through a recipe book, and I found a recipe but it had very little flavor,” he said.

Some horseradish and chili fixed that.

Kyla Espina got her inspiration

for smoothie pops while sitting on her couch.

“I wanted to make something healthy, with milk and fruit,” said the fifth grader.

For fifth grader Mary Pollard, her trail mix fruit salad was inspired by indecision.

“I just liked both of them and couldn’t figure out what to choose,” she said.

To avoid such confusion, all the children’s snack recipes follow. For more information on the Junior League and its nutrition programs, go to www.jllb.org.

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Young recipe developers, from left to right, Mary Pollard, Zach Arend, a big pineapple with sneakers, Kyla Espina, a banana, Nicolette Bencito and Clay Thomas.

NICO'S CAMPFIRE HEALTHY TRAIL MIX

- 2 1/2 cups raisins
- 2 1/2 cups dried banana chips
- 2 1/2 cups dry-roasted unsalted peanuts
- 2 1/2 cups sugar-free gummi bears
- 1 cup unsalted cashews
- 1 (6-ounce) package mixed dried fruit bits
- 1/2 cup mini marshmallows

Place all ingredients in a brown paper bag. Close bag and shake six times. Makes about 12 servings.

—Recipe by Nicolette Bencito, Fifth Grade



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Bubbles, bananas and health facts were all part of the fun at the Junior League's Kids in the Kitchen event Saturday.

SNACK ATTACK!

- 1 cup of your favorite dried fruit
- 1 cup of your favorite nuts
- 1/2 cup M&Ms
- 1 cup sunflower seeds
- 1 cup dried cranberries

Place all ingredients in a bowl, and stir well with a spoon.

Serves about 8.
—Recipe from Samantha Hardy, Eighth Grade

VEGGIE TRAY WITH TANGY YOGURT DIP

- 1 cup plain, fat-free or reduced fat yogurt
- 2 tablespoons chili sauce
- 1 teaspoon horseradish (or to taste)
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest
- Bell pepper strips
- Broccoli florets
- Baby carrots
- Cauliflower florets
- Cherry tomatoes
- Jicama sticks
- Snow or snap peas
- Zucchini strips

Mix yogurt, chili sauce, horseradish and lemon zest in a small bowl. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Arrange veggies on a large platter, and serve with dip.

Serves about 8.
—Recipe from Clay Thomas, Seventh Grade.

SMOOTHIE POPS

- 2 bananas, peeled and cut into chunks
- 2 apples, cored, peeled and quartered
- 1 pint strawberries, stemmed
- 1 cup 1 percent milk

Place ingredients in blender, and mix until it is a thick liquid. Pour into ice cube trays. Place a popsicle stick into each cube (the popsicle stick will lay at a diagonal).

Freeze 1 1/2-3 hours.

—Recipe from Kyla Espina, Fifth Grade

TRAIL MIX FRUIT SALAD

- 1 medium-size banana, peeled and cut into chunks
- 1 small to medium apple, cored and cut into chunks
- 1 (6- or 8-ounce) carton low-fat yogurt
- 1 single serving trail mix of your choice

Mix all ingredients together in a bowl. Divide among two bowls.

Serves 2.

—Recipe from Mary Pollard, Fifth Grade

KID-FRIENDLY FRUIT SMOOTHIES

- 1 cup fruit of your choice, such as peaches, bananas, pineapple, strawberries, etc.
- 1 1/2 cups nonfat yogurt
- 2 cups nonfat or reduced fat milk
- 1 packet Splenda (optional)

Peel fruit, if needed, and cut into pieces. Put all ingredients in a blender, and blend until smooth.

Pour into a tall glass and serve with a straw.
—Recipe from Claudia Tan, Seventh Grade

ZACH'S BANANA POPS

- 3 bananas
- 6 popsicle sticks
- 1/4 cup softened peanut butter
- 1/4 cup chopped peanuts, walnuts, granola, rice cereal or sunflower seeds

Peel bananas and cut them in half width-wise. Push popsicle stick through the cut end of each half. Spread peanut butter on bananas and roll them in nuts.

Wrap each banana in wax paper and freeze for 3 hours.

Serves 6.

—Recipe from Zach Arend, Seventh Grade