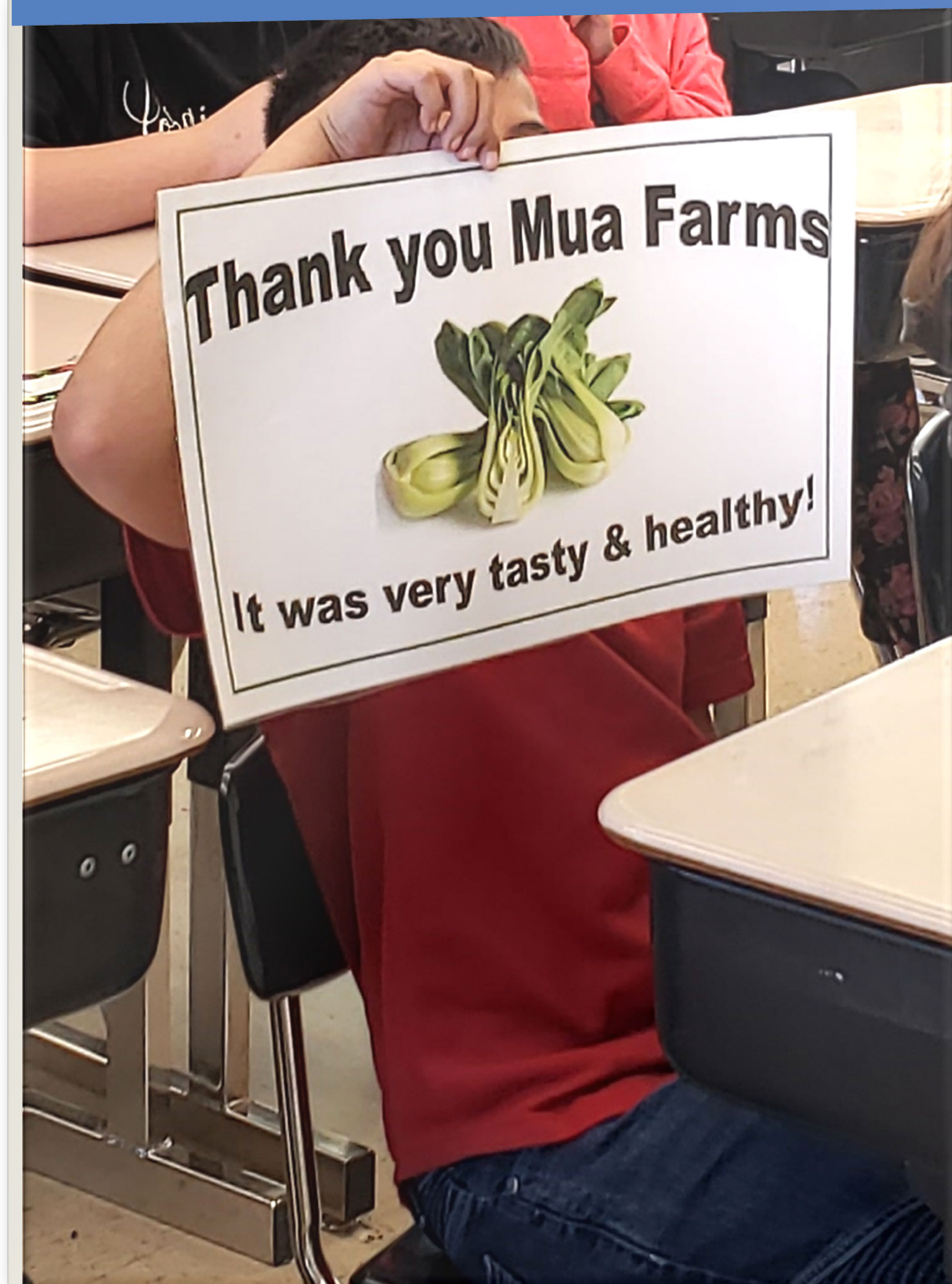


# Farm to School Activities in Rural, Northern California

## Local Produce Tastings



### Introduction

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Education (SNAP-Ed) CalFresh Healthy Living, University of California Cooperative Extension (CFHL,UCCE) Program is funded to improve healthy lifestyle habits among students in schools where at least 50% of students qualify for free or reduced-price school meals.

Participation in SNAP-Ed - combined with farm to school programs - has shown to increase fruit and/or vegetable intake among children (Keihner et al., 2016; Moss, A 2013). Farm to School programs include a variety of activities that teach youth about where their food comes from and what types of food are produced in their local area. This educational content is developed for students from preschool to 12th-grade with the overall goal of improving understanding of the seasonality of local foods and the complexity of food systems while promoting fruit and vegetable intake.



**Asian Pears:** "It was great to hear the students comments! They loved this tasting. They said they were sweet, crunchy, juicy, and tasted like jolly ranchers." – 1st Grade Teacher

**Romanesco:** I have never heard of this veggie! The picture you sent was perfect to show to my students what it looks like when it grows. This one was either *It's so good!* or *I don't like it at all.* Thank you for introducing us to a new vegetable! – 3rd Grade Teacher

### How It Works

During each school year from October to April, the CalFresh Healthy Living, UCCE Butte Cluster Program provides teachers with a newsletter to go home with students along with minimally processed produce tastings from farms local to the five-county region of Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Sutter and Yuba Counties. Over 8,000 elementary school students receive tastings each month. A *Teacher Tasting Tool* evaluation is administered in the classroom immediately after all students have tasted the produce item. Students are asked to raise their hand in response to the following statements:

- 1) Before today's class, how many of you have tasted [name of target food item] before?
- 2) How many students ate (or tasted) [name of target food item] today?
- 3) How many of you are willing to eat [name of target food item] again?
- 4) How many of you are willing to ask for [name of target food item] at home?

See *Table 1*. Below for results from the 2023 – 2024 school year.

### Results

Table 1. Teacher Taste Tool Evaluation Results

Produce Item	Asian Pears	Jicama	Mandarin	Kiwis	Romanesco	Purple Snap Peas
<b>f</b>	135	105	149	131	24	85
<b>Mean</b>	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Tasted today</b>	93	96	96	91	77	92
<b>Willing to try again</b>	77	69	88	77	38	56
<b>Ask for at home</b>	71	62	83	71	32	47

### Future Plans

The CFHL, UCCE program plans to work with school food service leaders to provide monthly tastings in the school cafeteria setting. Student council leaders will be trained to implement a *Large Group Taste Test Tool* with their peers. The results will be presented to school food service leaders to show student-body preference for the specific local produce items that students would like to see incorporated into their school food menus. This future project will give students a voice in their school meals and support the institutional procurement of produce from local farmers.

### Cost and Resources Needed

Most minimally processed local produce tastings are 2 oz or less per student. This tends to cost approximately \$0.40 - \$0.88 cents per student including serving supplies. Resources needed include, food safety equipment, serving supplies, and staff time to prepare and distribute tastings, and to administer evaluation tools. Printing costs for monthly, 1-page newsletters for each students should also be considered, which will vary based on location, organization, and printing methods.

**Jicama:** "The students were asking where they could purchase jicama. Most wanted more. Students said it was good." – 2nd Grade Teacher

**Purple Snap Peas:** "The Children and teachers had never seen purple snap peas before, so we were excited to try them. The children who tried them really liked them. Most of the children who tried them asked for more!" - 3rd Grade teacher