



www.kidsfirstri.org

*Guiding Communities to Improve the
Nutritional and Physical Well Being of
Children and Their Families*



www.realfoodfirst.org

*Improving the Health and Productivity
of Your Employees and Your Business*

November 1, 2010

Dear President Obama:

We were sorry to hear that you missed eating the delicious foods grown and prepared by RI farmers and chefs during your visit to the Ocean State. We hope you told the First Lady about little Rhody's efforts to promote and serve healthy, fresh and local foods while you were in town.

But Rhode Island grown potatoes, Rhode Island grown apples and Rhode Island grown green beans aren't just for special Presidential dinners. All of these foods and more have been served this season in our RI schools as part of the Farm to School project. As coordinators for RI Farm to School, Kids First encourages school communities to serve RI Grown foods in every district cafeteria across our state. We also provide educational programs to help students understand how to eat seasonally in our New England region, how eating locally protects green space and supports the local economy and why locally grown foods increase the nutritional value (and taste!) of school meals.

Mrs. Obama would be delighted to hear of our state's efforts to push processed foods out of school cafeterias and replace them with fresher, healthier and yummiest RI foods including asparagus, carrots, corn, cucumbers, lettuce, apples, peaches, nectarines, green beans, tomatoes, peppers, spinach, milk and beef - all served in dozens of RI districts since school opened in September.

There is still work to be done to make school lunches healthier. Too often, RI school menus feature chicken nuggets, chicken patties and other breaded commodity chicken bits. These kinds of foods should not be seen every week, or in many schools, every day on our students' plates. Healthier, kid-friendly, locally grown and kitchen-prepared entrees need to replace the frozen, highly processed foods (like nuggets) that have become too common in school cafeterias. All of us, like the First Lady, need to continue to be involved in demanding fresh, healthy foods for America's school children that nourish our nation's children while teaching them about daily healthy eating. This is one very key strategy for addressing the serious and costly childhood obesity problem we see in our communities.

To help reduce the presence of processed foods in school cafeterias, we all need to ask for and support menus that use RI Grown foods. We need to ask for whole muscle meat, like chicken breast, to be served to children instead of high sodium, mystery conglomerate chicken patties. We need to support local foods, and local farms, by buying school lunch whenever RI Grown is part of the menu.

In your RI Grown meal, Mr. President, you would have been eating many of the same foods, from many of the same farms, that school children in RI are often served for school lunch. Your meal would have been a fresh, delicious, locally grown and healthy meal and you can bet that nobody would dream of serving you a chicken patty. Shouldn't we aim to do as well for our children?

Sincerely,

Kimberly Clark
Farm to School Coordinator
Local Food Forager & Chef
Kids First & Real Food First
www.kidsfirstri.org
www.realfoodfirst.org