

Kids deliver an impressive restaurant experience at Chef Camp

The second annual Chef Camp at Kaitoke Outdoor Education Centre culminated in an impressive display of culinary competence. The attendees set up, staffed and catered their own restaurant, serving 55 guests a three-course meal – all under the watchful eye of our qualified head chef.

It was a suitably grand ending to what was a wonderful experience for everyone involved. The children started the week by baking bread, moved onto pizza, chocolate art and even sushi – as well as honing their knife skills. Making the most of their surroundings, they also headed outdoors into the forest to cook over an open flame.

They also learned about healthy eating: Jumpstart coordinator Emily Morris stopped by to talk about nutrition and what food groups should be on a plate for a balanced meal. She showed the participants about making smart food choices at the supermarket, and provided a guide on food label reading. Each child went home with an 'Easy Choice Family Kai' booklet from Love Food Hate Waste NZ to share with their families.

Chef Camp hosted 20 kids aged 8 to 12, all with a passion for food and cooking. On the final night they showed impeccable manners and incredible aptitude, creating a feast for their guests with a minimum of assistance. The children were split into teams, getting the dining area ready for the guests, decorating, setting up the tables, preparing speeches and dressing up smartly before the guests arrived at 6pm.

The evening began with pumpkin soup and fresh bread, followed by a main course of bacon-wrapped chicken breasts stuffed with cream cheese and apricots.

The chicken was accompanied by baby heirloom carrots, roast potatoes and fresh minted peas. Dessert was a dark chocolate mousse topped with cream and chocolate art.

“The kids were absolute superstars – they really knocked it out of the park,” says Matt Clark, who was the lead chef. “I’ve been a chef for 17 years and I was so impressed to see kids that age so attentive in the kitchen. The way they listened, took it seriously and gave it 100% was just amazing.”

The night finished with singing and dancing – a fitting finale to an outstanding demonstration of just what Kiwi kids can achieve when they work together.

Chef Camp is an annual event and very popular; it’s just one of the holiday camp programmes available from the YMCA. Each one is designed to help children become more independent, confident and healthy.

Check out ycentral.nz for more holiday camp options.

