

Edible Gardens LA: Creating School Gardens That Delight And Inspire Kids

Description



Lauri Kranz, Founder of Edible Gardens L.A. and Christina Simon in The Willows School Garden

At 8 a.m. on a bright, sunny morning surrounded by bok choy, lettuce, wildflowers, kale and one very large sunflower, I sat down with my friend, Lauri Kranz, founder of [Edible Gardens LA](#) at The Willows Community School to talk about her amazing work building the Willows School garden. I first met Lauri when our kids were in kindergarten at The Willows. She's a friendly, eco-minded mom of two boys with an eclectic, urban style. One of our most memorable afternoons was spent at Lauri's house where she hosted a "Pilates and Margaritas" party. She makes a fabulous fresh margarita (or two!). Lauri, who is quickly becoming known for her beautiful yet practical gardens, works with celebrity chefs, families and schools (Willows, Westland and Walther Preschool) to create edible gardens. For this talented garden designer, the focus is on creating gardens that bring people and nature closer

together.

Question: How did you become interested in school gardens?

Answer: I've always loved gardening. I got very involved in teaching gardening when I started volunteering at The Willows when my son was in DK. I've been gardening ever since!

Question: What's the best thing about gardening with kids at schools?

Answer: There's nothing better than watching a spark go off when the kids make the connection between the garden and where their food comes from. They learn about how a seed turns into a seedling and then into a plant that is harvested and used to make food. Their excitement about this process inspires me.



Christina's son having fun gardening with Lauri at The Willows

Question: Do you think school gardens motivate kids to eat vegetables?

Answer: Absolutely. Even the pickiest eaters will pluck a snow pea from the trellis and eat it. I have parents tell me that their kids, who never eat green vegetables, come home from school are suddenly eating vegetables.



Willows School Garden

Question: What are you obsessed with right now?

Answer: Greenhouses



Lauri Kranz at The Willows School

Question: Do you have a favorite garden store?

Answer: [Sunset Nursery](#) in Silverlake

Question: Do you have any recipes you'd like to share?

Answer: Chef Suzanne Goin (Lucques, AOC and The Tavern) has an amazing recipe for green rice. In Suzanne's garden we are growing loads of herbs and fennel. Here is Suzanne's delicious recipe for green rice, which uses generous amounts of both.

Green Ric

1 cup chicken stock

1/2 cup packed parsley leaves

1/4 cup packed mint leaves

2 tablespoons minced chives

1/4 cup packed cilantro leaves

1/4 cup plus 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

3/4 cup finely diced fennel

3/4 cup finely diced red onion

2 teaspoons fennel seeds

1 dried chili d'arbol

1 1/2 cups white basmati rice

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Cooking Directions:

Bring the chicken stock and 1 1/4 cups water to a boil in a medium pot and turn off the heat.

Place the parsley, mint, chives, and cilantro in a blender. Add 1 cup of the hot stock and puree the herbs on medium speed (keeping your hand tightly over the lid so it doesn't explode). Slowly pour in the rest of the stock and puree on high (holding the lid again) for almost 2 minutes, until you have a very smooth, very green broth.

Toast the fennel seeds in a small pan over medium heat for 2-3 minutes, until they release their aromas and light golden brown. Pound them using a mortar and pestle.

Quickly rinse out the chicken stock pot and heat it over high heat for 2 minutes. Add the olive oil, diced fennel and onion, ground fennel seeds, chili, and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Cook over medium high heat for about 5 minutes, stirring often, until the onions and fennel are translucent. Add the rice, 1 teaspoon salt, and a pinch of freshly ground black pepper. Stir well to coat the rice with the oil and vegetables. Add the herb stock and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Bring to a boil and reduce the heat to a low simmer. Add the butter, cover, and cook the rice 15-20 minutes, until tender. Turn off the heat and leave the rice covered for 5 minutes. Fluff the rice with a fork and taste for seasoning.

For more information and inspiration, visit, [Edible Gardens LA](#)

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