

News & Updates - January 2026



Programming Update!

By: Laura Genello

What do farm educators do in the winter? In recent years, our winter programming has picked up, and on any given January day, you'll find us testing recipes and lesson ideas at the farm or traveling to classrooms all over the city to cook, plant, and taste fresh fruits and veggies from the farm. This past summer and fall, we spent hours preserving farm produce: pureeing pumpkins for the freezer, making jam from figs, drying herbs and popcorn, or pickling cucumbers or peppers. Now, these efforts are paying off, as we are using a wide range of farm ingredients in our winter cooking and tasting programs. Thus far this year, we've run over 52 Farm to Classroom programs for more than 3,400 students, with cooking programs making up the majority of programming hours.

We've made pumpkin pancakes and veggie soup, tasted cinnamon apples and saved seeds, and examined our composting worms under a microscope. This past week's weather forced us to postpone activities, but next week, we plan to welcome students to the farm for our annual Climate X Food Summit. At this event middle school students will explore the intersection between agriculture and climate change through hands-on workshops. These lessons will focus on raising awareness of the link between climate and food waste, water, soil, transportation, and resilience within the food system. If you were to stop by the farm this winter, you'd find frozen fields outside, but a steady hum of activity inside.

Cozy Winter Squash Soup Recipe

This creamy squash soup is comforting, nourishing, and perfect for cold days in the heart of winter. It's naturally sweet, full of flavor, and easy to make with simple ingredients.

Serves: 4–6

Prep time: 15 minutes

Cook time: 30–40 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 medium winter squash (butternut, acorn, or kabocha), peeled, seeded, and cubed
- 1 tablespoon olive oil or butter
- 1 small onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 3–4 cups vegetable or chicken broth
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt (more to taste)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon black pepper
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon or nutmeg (optional)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk, cream, or coconut milk (optional, for creaminess)

Instructions

1. **Sauté the aromatics:** Heat olive oil or butter in a large pot over medium heat. Add onion and cook until soft, about 5 minutes. Stir in garlic and cook for 30 seconds.
2. **Add the squash:** Add cubed squash, salt, pepper, and spices (if using). Stir to coat.
3. **Simmer:** Pour in broth until squash is just covered. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 20–25 minutes, or until squash is very tender.
4. **Blend:** Use an immersion blender (or carefully transfer to a blender) and blend until smooth.
5. **Finish:** Stir in milk or cream if using. Taste and adjust seasoning.

6. Serve warm: Garnish with roasted seeds, a drizzle of olive oil, or fresh herbs if desired.

Serving Ideas

- **Serve with crusty bread or a grilled cheese sandwich**
- **Top with toasted pumpkin seeds or croutons**
- **Add a swirl of heavy cream for extra richness**

Tip: This soup freezes well—make a big batch and save some for later!



Farmer's Notes

***By James Koval,
Farm Manager***

January is a strange time for the farm. As I write this, we are two days away from potential double digits of snowfall. We have to prep the farm and barn for such a significant weather event. I'll be curious to see how the goats like it! They often try to walk as fast through snow as possible and linger inside the barn as much as they can. However, as we prepare for this weekend, we are also focusing on the months ahead.

We just finished our very first round of 2026 seeding. While it seems so early, it is all on track for nice-sized seedlings ready for planting in mid to late March. Plants like broccoli, cabbage, spinach, and kale are able to withstand some colder temperatures. It would be way too early for tomatoes and cucumbers. But not too early for everything!

Right now is a weird balance of living in the moment and planning for the future. The variety of work always makes this job so interesting!



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The Great Kids Farm Beet

NEW: African American Foodways Summit on 2/20/26 (snow date 2/27/26) - APPLICATION OPEN NOW, due 1/23: At this event, high schoolers will meet and learn from African-American leaders, entrepreneurs, artists and experts in all that is African-American+food+culture. Through a reverse panel and hands-on workshops, they'll explore the Baltimore-based and global reaching eco-systems of food, land, health, culture, science, culinary arts, and humanity by which we're interconnected.

If you are not interested in/eligible for the February summit, save the date for our last summit of the year, the **Spring Garden Club Summit (gr 3-5) on 4/17/26**. Applications open 1-2 months before each summit, but our [Summit Interest Form](#) is always live for teachers interested in updates for future summits.

IN-PERSON PROGRAMS

- SPRING 2026 [Field trips to Great Kids Farm](#) (K-5): *Sign up ASAP so that we can host EVERY school this year!* Free (including buses) curriculum-aligned, hands-on learning with plants, animals, and land at the farm - 1 per school per year.
- AVAILABLE ALL WINTER-SPRING: [Farm to Classroom Experiences](#) (PreK-12): Staff bring the farm to your school (classroom or club) to lead lessons on animals, planting, food waste, and/or farm-fresh cooking.
- High school internship program & service-learning opportunities, including Garden Crew Volunteer Hours @ GKF: [email us](#).

VIRTUAL & MATERIALS-BASED PROGRAMS

- [Ag-tivity Kits](#) (PreK-12): See blurb in "Training and Professional Development" section above to order FREE kits for your classrooms.
- [Facetime the Farmer](#) (PreK-12): Live (virtual) visit to GKF tailored by age group and focus area
- [Video Resources: Science-curriculum-aligned videos](#) and [introductory farm clips](#)
- [Virtual Field Trip](#) (target audience: K-5): Students explore GKF at their own pace with this digital experience designed for the virtual classroom

SCHOOL GARDEN SUPPORT

- Complete [this form](#) if you'd like support for your school garden, and/or check out our [School Garden Toolkit](#) for resources and tips.

For guidance on outdoor learning and food education, review the below and email us with additional questions.

- [Outdoor Learning Toolkit](#)
- [Classroom Cooking Toolkit](#)

All Farm to School offerings are listed at www.baltimorecityschools.org/page/farm-school. General Farm to School email is farms@bcps.k12.md.us.

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