

AUGUST 2022

YESS NEWSLETTER

MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR OF PROGRAM INNOVATION



Popsicles, patios, BBQ's...oh my! Summer is here and outdoor eating is in full swing! And boy does it feel good to be celebrating, connecting with our family and friends, and laughing around good summer eats again after two years apart! At YESS, we are also celebrating food and its positive impacts on youth

and our community. Now is the time when we can host community BBQ's and bring together the youth, our neighbours, our supporters, and local businesses to create those positive memories associated with summer eating! When youth experience survival mode and have trauma around trusting when or where their next meal will be or if it will sustain them for the day, it is a slow process for them to believe they are deserving of food, that food is available for them, or that it will be there when they are hungry for it. We work tirelessly with our onsite kitchen staff and youth workers to be consistent, predictable,

and transparent with our three daily meals for youth and where our food is from and build up trust that this food IS for them. This doesn't mean we don't take every opportunity to balance the serious with the light and positive, and whether it's local food trucks stopping by with popsicles or burgers, or we're hosting hotdogs and pop in our parking lot, one thing is certain: we all deserve the connection and health and community that food brings!

In this issue we want to share our gratitude for all those partners and supporters who ensure our kitchen continues to be stocked and organized, and we shine a spotlight on some of our food heroes like our friends at D'Arcy's Meat Market and our very own kitchen staff!

Happy Summer,

Jessica Day
 Director of Program Innovation
 Youth Empowerment and Support Services

D'ARCY'S MEAT MARKET SHARES THE LOVE WITH THE YESS KITCHEN

We want to give a huge thanks to D'Arcy's Meat Market for supporting youth in their community amidst all their other giving initiatives!

The partnership we have built with them continues to support our kitchen and provides nutrition for youth who access our programs. We talked to Kyle Iseke, owner of D'Arcy's Meat Market, about why their team chose to give to YESS.

We had been looking for a few places that we could donate some meats as we had been very busy during this pandemic. Our team was staying safe and customers were very supportive. Earlier in the year we had donated a large order of ground beef to the St. Albert Food Bank and thought about finding a different place to send some meats



D'Arcy's Meat Market team after they won the best sausage in Edmonton award / Photo courtesy of Kyle Iseke



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and sort of spread the love around, especially because we have a location in Edmonton. When we started looking for a place, we found some were not accepting donations because of the pandemic. It was around this time YESS had reached out to us looking for help getting proteins and obviously the timing was great, but also YESS does wonderful work and has a great reputation for making a difference, so it was an easy choice to get on board.

I think in general D'Arcy's Meat Market is giving back to the community by serving as a bridge between local livestock producers and consumers looking to purchase local meat. So much of what we consume these days comes from so far away and we believe that simply by using the amazing agriculture we have in this province we

can support our economy, improve our food security, lessens the environmental strain caused by long haul trucking or flying in foods, and provide a more natural product that undergoes less processing. Of course, we also try to support causes like YESS, the Food Bank, SAIF (Stop Abuse in Families Society in St. Albert), and as many shelters, sports organizations, and silent auctions that we can afford.

Giving back to the community is very important because when we have a strong and well-supported society, I believe my business thrives. I also have two young children and I'd like to set a good example for them that, when possible, taking care of your neighbours is an important thing to do.

Thank you to all our food donors who support our kitchens!

COBS Rutherford	Alberta Milk	McDonald's
D'Arcy's Meat Market	Boston Pizza	Octave 40 Ranch
Edmonton Foodbank	Capital Fine Meats	Oodle Noodle
Leftovers	Food Rescue	Right Choice Camps & Catering
Popeye's Louisiana Kitchen (Tamarack)	The Little Potato Company	Soup Sisters
Strathcona Foodbank		

RECIPE FOR A LEGACY: FIND YOUR PASSION, SHARE WHAT YOU LOVE, ENRICH A LIFE

Captured in the rhythm and warmth of the YESS kitchen is the heart and soul of a wholly talented and imaginative culinary team focused on the delivery of daily healthy meals for young people seeking respite and comfort.

Moments of gentle conversation and spontaneous laughter mingle together with the many sounds and nuances of this hub of activity: the rhythmic whisk and crunch of vegetables being peeled and

chopped; the tap-tap-tap of aromatic herbs being minced; bubbling pots; the sizzle and bounce of oil on the grill; the clinking of cutlery and gentle clatter of dishes.

A beautiful medley of old, new, and shared experiences, mingle together to craft a beautifully delicious legacy of food, nutriment, and welcome.

Meet The Kitchen Team!

"Legacy is defined as 'something that is left or handed down by a predecessor.' And so, what knowledge has been passed on to me that I am now bringing to YESS? Hello, I'm Ryan Little and I have been with YESS since January 2021. This past March, I assumed the role of Kitchen Team Supervisor. This is the story of my legacy and how I've applied it during my time at YESS."

As a child, I was gifted with a love for cooking from my dad. He was always willing to try something new and recreate the meals that he had seen on one of his cooking shows. He loved sharing with others what he thought was good. I can remember big family meals that he had cooked for everyone, and it brought us together regularly. These values were ingrained in me from early on. When I started to help him, he would encourage me to "play with flavours" and "try everything at least once". You never know that you do or do not like something unless you try it. It is a standard that I hold many people to, even to this day. Growing up in a rural Manitoba community allowed me to also

learn a wide range of cultural foods from our neighbours. We would have perogy and cabbage roll making parties; we would share the Bannock that we made with others; and our community potlucks were another staple that grew my passion for food and cooking.

That is where it all started for me. Then, as a teen, I took a job in the kitchen at our local small-town diner and that passion continued. In my early 20's, I went to culinary school and further refined my skills, focusing on flavours and playing with new and existing cuisines. Once I had finished there, I worked in steak houses, catering, hotels, Mexican, southern, east coast, fine dining... You name it. I have done it. All of this expanded my knowledge



Ryan Little, Kitchen Supervisor; George Richter, Kitchen Team Member; Damodar "Reddy" Manikyala, RSE, Kitchen Team Member

and continuously kept me passionate about my job. With the pandemic, I found myself – along with countless others – looking for a job. Then, YESS came along.

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YESS has been a great learning experience for me. I have gotten to share my knowledge of food with the youth. I've even gotten to experiment with foods and flavours that I have not had the opportunity to work with before. In the kitchen, the food pantry is donation based, and we plan our menus according to what donations we have. We do purchase small amounts of food to supplement what we need to finesse the meals. We are open to all feedback, and regularly get feedback from the youth in attendance. There are times the youth do

not love the food we offer, and that is okay. For me, the takeaway is that they tried it! We have also been able to do special requests for birthdays and other celebrations, and that allows us to get to play with food that we would not otherwise cook.

The legacy I bring to YESS is my knowledge of the different styles of cooking that I have done; the home recipes that my dad taught me; and the dishes taught to me by neighbours. I want to share all of that, and I want the youth to get to enjoy the foods

I love. I want them to talk about the meals that we make, and for them to give us their opinions. Their opinions are very important to me and help me to continuously grow as a chef.

When the youth or I move on from YESS, I want my legacy to simply be that I shared what I loved. My hope is that the youth loved it as well and want to share it with others.

Greetings! I'm George Richter and I have been a YESS Kitchen Team Member since September of 2021. I feel that my defining legacy will be found in relationship building. I recall many favourite memories of food experiences that I have woven into meal preparation and cooking, so that it becomes one full experience for the youth.

Just recently, I had a steak dinner with my friends to celebrate a success with his work. There were laughs, smiles and great times. There are also those times where food is associated with bad memories. Memories of making ends meet, struggling with isolation, fearful of change or new experiences.

I think that our job as cooks is to create a positive space where the youth can be themselves and be able to get the essentials that they need to thrive as human beings.

Some foods may be triggering to youth or may be off limits with religious or dietary restrictions. We must face those challenges and be prepared for all kinds of curveballs we might face.

A personal story, linked to food, was when I first came to Edmonton. With no social circle and feeling isolated, I got a job at a Mexican restaurant. I made some great friends and learned how to make great tacos, quesadillas, and enchiladas. All those became the foods that brought me comfort.

From that job, I started having a social circle and started thriving more as an individual. I associate the process of my discovery of Mexican cuisine a lot with where my passion began, and I wish that to be my legacy to the youth. It could well be that they experience something similar – an unexpected friendship and connection when in a dark or unfamiliar time – and are able to turn that into the start of something positive.

Outside of food, I foster a culture of collaboration, positivity, and fun – which cannot be said for many places in hospitality. I find that the team we have here supports each other well and there is a comradery that I have not seen before joining YESS. It is my wish that this culture continues even after any of the kitchen team moves on and that we continue to strive for creating an inclusive space where we encourage everyone to do their best every day.

Hello, I am Damodar Manikyala, known as Reddy by everyone. I have been at YESS for the last three and a half years as a kitchen team member. Before joining YESS, I worked with many hotels, and restaurants, in addition to 10 years on cruise ships. Altogether, I have almost 20 years of cooking experience ranging from fine dining to batch style cooking.

My passion is cooking. I enjoy cooking food for others and playing with flavours, while at the same time, making nutritious food to keep us healthy. I believe in eating healthy food rather than spending money on medicine when we get sick.

Legacy for me is taking what I have learned through my experiences and sharing them with my colleagues. Teaching them the simple and easy methods of cooking that save time and energy while at the same time being delicious to eat.

Though we never get to meet youth directly, our prepared meals will make them talk about our food and the passion that we show towards the food to keep everyone healthy. That is the legacy I want to leave for them.

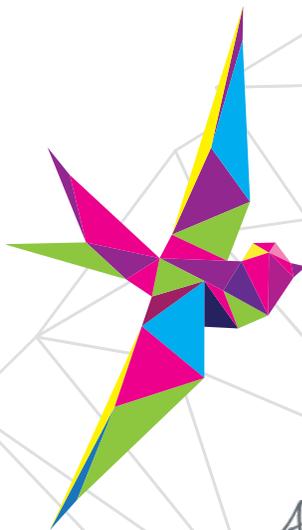


COOKING WITH YESS CHEF TIFFANY!



Work alongside YESS Chef Tiffany on any number of recipes she has shared! Be a hit at your next summer BBQ with panzanella salad or fried broccoli mac n' cheese bites, or get your day started with a homemade Frappuccino! Or maybe you want to celebrate Potato Day and National Bacon Lover's Day in August with Tiffany's potato bacon soup!

Program Kitchen Coordinator and YESS Chef Tiffany Sorensen hosts a program teaching youth essential life skills, like how to cook and nourish themselves as part of our Youth Education and Employment Program, as well as in our Supportive Housing Programs to ensure the youth have a more successful transition into independent living. Through the past couple of years, she has been making instructional cooking videos to share with youth virtually as well. Tiffany loves to share knowledge about food and sustainability.



Illustrations by Jonathan Busch

