

CHANCELLOR FARIÑA ANNOUNCES NEW YORK THURSDAYS PROGRAM BRINGING LOCALLY SOURCED FOODS TO SCHOOLS

Initiative Celebrates Locally Grown and Manufactured Foods Every Thursday

NEW YORK – Chancellor Carmen Fariña today announced the launch of New York Thursdays, a new approach to school lunches that brings locally grown or produced foods directly to students in all New York City public schools every Thursday.

The program offers valuable benefits to schools, students, family farms and the environment. Part of a nationwide initiative spearheaded by the Urban School Food Alliance, New York Thursdays boosts student health and education, while strengthening the local agricultural economy and cutting carbon emissions.

“The health and wellness of our students is a critical foundation for success in the classroom and beyond, and New York Thursdays will provide students with healthy, locally sourced meals,” said **Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña**. “The program is a great opportunity for us to celebrate locally sourced foods by incorporating them into our menus and brings a teachable moment to our students through meaningful conversations about food and the local economy.”

“As a farmer, it’s exciting for me to see locally sourced foods being incorporated into school menus and to know that students will understand where their food comes from,” said **Richard Ball, New York State Agriculture Commissioner**. “New York State has been working with its partners to promote our the State’s locally grown and produced foods, help our farmers and agribusinesses reach new markets and connect with our schools. The initiative will not only provide healthy lunch options for students, but also serve as a platform to educate students and raise awareness about New York’s agricultural economy.”

Starting in September 2015, all school menus have been modified to incorporate the locally grown and produced foods provided through this initiative. As of November, the average percentage of New York State products offered on Thursdays was 35%, as opposed to almost 20% on other days of the week, and new local product sourcing is in progress to increase the percentage of State products offered on Thursdays. The objective is to reach at least 50% State products on Thursdays by the end of the 2015-16 school year. DOE spending on local procurement of food in 2015 totaled \$33.4 million, making up 17.5% of total food purchase expenditures for SchoolFood.

“I’m thrilled to launch a program that continues our innovative efforts to improve the healthfulness and sustainability of the food offerings provided to students,” said **Deputy Chancellor Elizabeth Rose**. “New York Thursdays encourages students to learn more about local farms and is a



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 17, 2015
N-25, 2015-16

wonderful opportunity for them to connect with the communities around them that play a vital role in producing the food they regularly eat.”

“The modifications to the menu provide healthy food choices for students while continuing to maintain our high nutritional standards,” said **Eric Goldstein, CEO of the Office of School Support Services, which oversees SchoolFood**. “We have seen positive results thus far and hope to continue expanding the program throughout the school year to reach our target goal of having 50% NY State products offered during lunch on Thursdays.”

“New York Thursdays is a strong example of an initiative at the school level that provides the resources to help us achieve one of our key goals – for all New Yorkers to eat nutritious and good food,” said **Barbara Turk, New York City Food Policy Director**. “By sourcing the food locally, the program is also creating a sustainable model for supporting and strengthening farms based in our own backyards.”

“I’ve worked with everyone from local community groups to the Department of Citywide Administrative Services to get more locally-grown food into our communities, so I’m thrilled to see Chancellor Fariña and the Department of Education doing the same in our schools,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. “Agriculture is a \$6 billion industry in New York State – we’re growing fresh, healthy food upstate, on Long Island, and on urban farms right here in the City. Getting more of that food on New York City plates – especially in the form of healthy school meals for our students – is a win-win.”

“Serving locally grown and locally sourced food in school is both environmentally friendly and beneficial to our students’ health,” said **City Council Education Committee Chair Daniel Dromm**. “I thank Chancellor Fariña and the Urban School Food Alliance for launching New York Thursdays and am proud to support this worthy initiative.”

“New York Thursdays is an excellent way to keep our children healthy by providing more access to fresh fruits and vegetables. The program also helps our local family farms, which is a big win by supporting agriculture in our State,” said **Assemblyman Robert Rodriguez**.

Local products already served to students each year include 35 million apples, seven million gallons of milk, three million servings of yogurt, three million pears, three thousand pounds of green cabbage, seven million servings of breadsticks, two million servings of chickpeas, two million servings of black beans, one million servings of Jamaican patties and 800,000 servings of manicotti.

###

Contact: Chancellor’s Press Office (212) 374-5141