



Monique Lopez

Monique Lopez | NAYA

I have eight children from one and a half years old to twenty six, and everybody cooks. When we all get together, it's really interesting. Everybody just gets in the kitchen and it's fun and we love it. That's kind of where our life is, it's in the kitchen.

Outside of here I'm a doula and a lactation consultant, and I'm studying to be a midwife.

We make everything from scratch. And mostly what we get is not processed. We try our hardest with finances to get organic or locally grown produce. We try really hard, as much as possible, to get good bread, and we try to get better meats. I feel like that's our expectation: we are not opening up packages and handing it to the kids and that's what they're doing in the schools now. **I think you can taste when there's not love in it.**

I'm Native American and Mexican, so we always had beans, and we always had rice, and we always had homemade tortillas. We're cooking all the time. We always have beans and rice in the fridge, with some tortillas. My kids love soul food. Their father is African American Jamaican. They love grains, and black eyed peas, and rice. A lot of beans and rice, either way.

Virginia Mulbey | MLK Jr. School

The first year I was a rover, and went to different schools.

I've been in a lot of different schools over the years. The job before this, I had dishes every single day and my back would get really sore. And so my job now is much better. **There are**

a lot of different backgrounds that are here at King, and it seems like everyone really gets along. It seems like the kids really accept each other here.

When I was in school, lunches were 25 cents. You only had one choice, and if you didn't eat, you were not allowed to leave and go play. Finally we started packing our lunches, and that way we could avoid things we didn't like.

The kids used to order gingerbread cookies, with the dough and stuff. The kids would decorate them and we would bake them and they would take it home. Then they took it away too. The kids used to love doing these cookies though.

When I go to a picnic people usually ask me to bring my potato salad. I would love to share that with the kids. I have my own grapevine and I make grape juice. I mix half water and half of the grape stuff and drink that.

Laura Booth | NAYA

The lunch ladies smile at the kids, and are helpful to the kids. That's good. Some of these kids need that. I guess we all need that!

Since the dawn of time we have mothers feeding children food, and that is why this is important.

Over the past 20 years I've seen a lot of these kids grow up, and now I know their kids. I see kids coming in now and I've watched their parents grow up. They see me and think "this is my auntie, this is my grandma." It's nice to have such a connection with kids over food. There is something magical about lunch ladies, no matter what the school is and no matter where they are.



Virginia Mulbey



Laura Booth

Any day I can cook is a good day.

We did a food survey and the elders said they wanted more soup. So every Wednesday is soup day, until the weather changes. The weather changed today. It was supposed to be potato corn chowder, and I sent out an email this morning and said, "we're having barbecue chicken sliders and coleslaw." It was a good day for it, and we needed to celebrate spring!

I would like to be able to do more indigenous foods that we don't get to do because of money. Other than because of the costs, there is nothing we can't do.

We deliver baby food at about 8:30 in the morning. Staff eats at 9, kids eat at 10, and then we have to go straight into lunch prep. I try to go leave by 11:30 to go feed the babies. The elders and staff eat at noon and the kids eat at 1.

My vacation every year is to go to camp and feed 250 of my nearest and dearest. For years we only had woodstoves. Now we have propane. It makes it so much easier! Even if we still don't have running water.

Irene Prasad | NAYA

I don't know much about American food. I think the biggest difference between food here and food in Fiji is the spices. Here all of the spice are ground up, and in Fiji we use whole spices because it keeps the flavor. In our country we have very different food.

When I came here the salad types were very surprising. I think of salad as a tomato curry, but here it is so many other things.

My favorite dish is lamb curry. It's my own recipe. I put my own spices and stuff in it. My favorite spice is chili. **Without chili there is no taste in the food.**

In Fiji there is no snow, only sun. So coming here it's sun and rain, and even snow. In Fiji, everyone is able to plant their own food. You can just have a garden in your yard where you can plant your food.

We mostly make desserts like rice and milk. We cook rice with the milk together for a long time, and then it becomes a pudding. Sometimes we put coconut milk and sometimes we put normal milk. We put some nutmeg and you can put raisins. We call it *khir* in Hindi.

Ruby Sims-Suell | MLK Jr. School

My first food memory is a sad one. I lost both my parents at an early age. There's a relative that was staying with us, being our caregiver. I'm the oldest that was left in the house at this particular time, and I had two sisters and a baby brother. Nobody else was home. And we were hungry. I couldn't find any food. I couldn't find anything. But I was the child that always was in the kitchen with my mom and so I always watched her when she made biscuits and stuff. So I pulled a chair up to the stove and I made gravy and I made biscuits. We had flour and we had lard. And I made biscuits and gravy. And we ate. I was seven years old.

I have been in food service pretty much most of my working life. I started out in high school working at a fast food chicken joint. I've always been in the kitchen being the eighth child out of eleven. So everybody had to take their turn cooking. I never even gave a thought to the school district [for a job]. And then



Irene Prasad



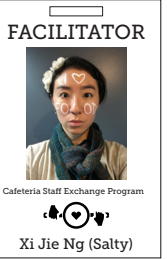
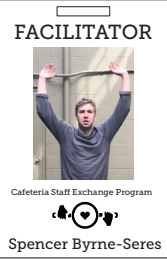
Ruby Sims-Suell

somebody mentioned it to me and said, "you would be perfect." And I checked into it and it actually is the perfect job for me. At lunchtime I serve about 330 students. At this school all the kids eat for free because of the income level of all the students here. Nobody pays, so I have to make sure that I count each and every kid. So I count them after they get a fruit or a vegetable. They have to take at least one item from the salad bar. We always have a salad whether it's a spring mix, or a romaine, or a spinach and romaine. And we have another vegetable- green beans or corn - they love corn - and green chickpeas.

We serve fresh fruits and vegetables. I consider some of the dishes gourmet. We have some awesome salads that we put on our salad bar. We use locally grown products from growers in the Oregon area. It's just awesome.

I'm a bit of a clown, because I have to engage the kids. We have a good time. You know, applesauce day, so it's criss-cross applesauce. I just make it fun as they come through.

My mother saw my interest in food as a young child. At Christmastime our house would be transformed. We would go to bed and the house would be looking normal and when we woke up it would be transformed. I was five years old and she bought me a corningware set. I mean it had the coffee pot, it had everything. It was real corningware but it was miniature. I loved it.



Assembly is a co-authored social practice conference that includes presentations, discussions, interventions, and activities that address topics related to art and social practice. Participants shape the collective experience by contributing to dialogue, group projects, and publications.

Assembly 2017 is hosted by the Art and Social Practice Program at Portland State University, in conjunction with the Oregon Food Bank, Native American Youth and Family Center, and the Martin Luther King Jr. School.

The Cafeteria Staff Exchange Program is a project envisioned as a creative solution to providing lunches for Assembly.

The goal is to bring together cafeteria staff from the Native American Youth and Family Center and Martin Luther King Jr. School in an effort to develop conversation and reflection on nutrition, how to provide meals, high volume cooking, and our relationship to the food sources that surround us. Who are the staff working tirelessly at NAYA and MLK Jr. School? What is their relationship to food? How would they collaboratively design a menu for Assembly? Where do the recipes they use come from, and what might they cook if they could cook anything at work?

Members of the cafeteria staff from both NAYA and MLK Jr. School participated in a summit to develop a menu for Assembly. The project will culminate as lunches prepared for each day of Assembly, inspired by the recipes and ideas generated during the exchange. The project is documented through custom paper place mats that we produce with notes, photographs and images from the project.