

# Thousand Oaks Cooking and Garden Program

## *Visions of Nori Dance in Their Heads*

Over the past six years as the cooking instructor at Thousand Oaks, I have had the most remarkable experience providing tastings of healthy food to students. I began by providing tastings of raw carrots, apples, oranges and other familiar nourishing treats for kids. When I first handed out nori tastings (a most nutritious sea vegetable), I had only a few takers. They were mostly Asian students who had eaten nori before in traditional dishes at home, familiar with the yummy taste of sea vegetables. Suddenly, to my surprise, students from all ethnic backgrounds started requesting seaweed samplings. They had seen their friends munching on a green square, wondered what it was, and wanted to sample some too! I explained that nori was not really a weed, but a mineral rich vegetable that grows in the sheltered inlets of the sea. I told them it was most delicious to boot. Some chose to roll a piece of carrot inside and called it raw sushi! Soon after, when asked if we could use it in cooking class, I knew I was on to something big. So, we made rice balls, rolled them in roasted seeds, nuts, and of course... shredded nori. Student-made miso soup was topped with the same. The response was overwhelmingly positive. We have dubbed one young student "The Nori Queen" because of her ongoing enthusiasm. Parents have related stories about visions of Nori dancing in their children's heads as they sleep.

*Michael Bauce, TO Cooking Instructor*



## **Kids Say the Darndest Things: Cooking Class Quotes from TO Students**

*"I want these won-tons for my birthday party instead of cake, and I want pumpkin muffins for dessert."*

*"I don't like this, I love it!"*

*"I'm going to die if I can't have another rice ball."*

*"I love everything we make here."*

*"Got any healthy snacks to give out?"*

*"More collards please."*

*"My mom and I make every recipe from here at home."*

*"I'm going to be a chef when I grow up, so this class is good for me."*