

The Farmworkers Table:

A Celebration of Food and Community



A community impact report
highlighting our nutrition
education work with farmworkers



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**Throughout this report, the terms 'campesino,' 'farmworkers' and 'workshop participants' are used interchangeably to refer to the individuals involved in the nutrition workshop.*





Photo by Sebastian Mino-Bucheli

Introduction

Nourishing our communities goes beyond providing access to food — it also encompasses supporting our neighbors' emotional, cultural and social well-being. The Community Nutrition Education Department at Second Harvest of Silicon Valley is centered around showing up to listen, learn and uplift the communities we serve. Our goal is to foster positive health outcomes to help create resilient, thriving communities — especially for underserved, underrepresented individuals. Showing up for our neighbors and addressing their individual needs allows us to provide essential food and nutrition resources rooted in cultural traditions by understanding our clients' food preferences and seeing health through a holistic lens — where food, movement and joy all have a place at the table. Our nutrition and culinary education classes were created to inspire thoughtful conversations and inspire joy in cooking with foods our clients know and love.

Our inspiration for creating this report was to share learnings from a pilot program we launched in partnership with Ayudando Latinos a Soñar (ALAS) to provide nutrition resources for farmworkers. Uplifting stories of trust, hope and newfound friendships emerged along the journey of building deeper connections with our local farmworkers. We hope this report inspires your organization to learn more about your neighbors, and in particular local farmworkers in your area who are vital to our food system, working tirelessly to put an abundance of fresh and vibrant produce on our tables.

Building Stronger Partnerships for Greater Impact

Addressing food insecurity and health inequity in our community requires strong, ongoing partnerships. ALAS, a trusted organization serving the coastal community of Half Moon Bay since 2011, is dedicated to fostering social wellness and advocating for their community's well-being, including supporting farmworkers on the coast.

Many of the farmworkers reside on the farms where they work and face limited transportation options, harsh elements and less than ideal living conditions. ALAS provides resources to foster a sense of support and dignity among farmworkers, actively seeking partnerships to enhance farmworker safety, recognition and

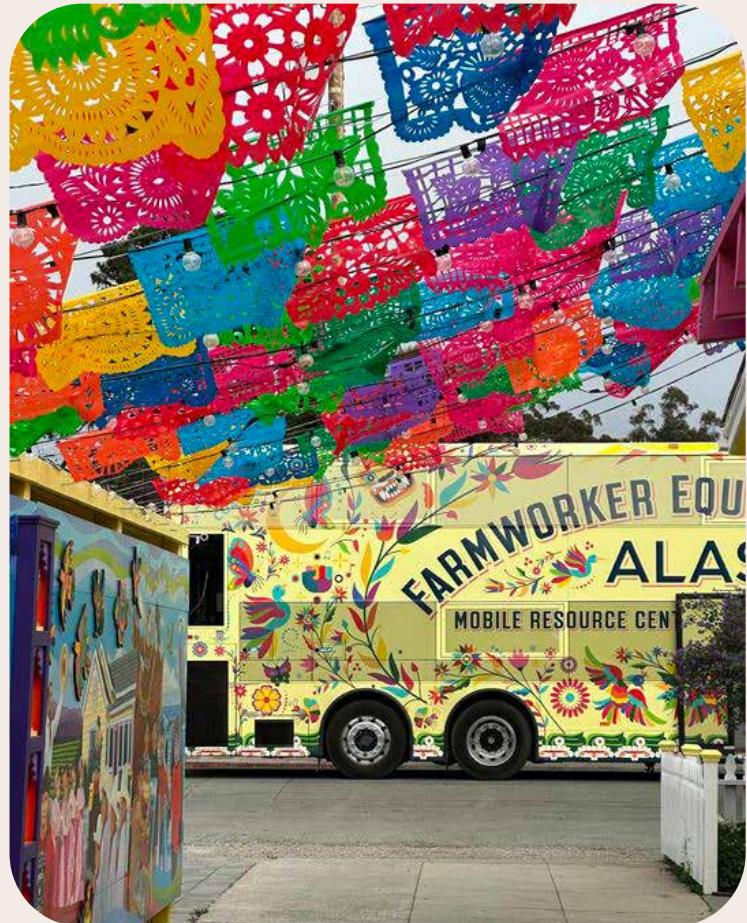
community integration. ALAS collaborates with approximately 560 farmers across 27 farms.

In 2022, ALAS recognized a need for additional food resources in its community and launched a food pantry in partnership with Second Harvest. Second Harvest and ALAS soon began exploring how we could continue deepening our commitment to the community. Through collaborative discussions focused on enhancing the farmworkers' experience, we identified another crucial need: culinary and nutrition education to guide individuals toward making nutritious meals while creating community around the cultural foods with which they identify.



The campesinos at the center of this work are often part of underrepresented and underserved communities. ALAS and Second Harvest decided to partner on a series of classes to create a safe space where we could learn from farmworkers while sharing meals to elevate meaningful conversations and lasting friendships, break down barriers and power dynamics, and recognize that our shared humanity is at the heart of each interaction.

ALAS and Second Harvest's vision was to support the campesinos in making informed food choices, improve self-care through nutrition and lifestyle habits, and create nutritious dishes for all to enjoy. Additionally, we aimed to introduce affordable, easily prepared options suitable for farmworkers' demanding schedules. We envision an even stronger farmworker community, where everyone celebrates their identity, culture and strong will to thrive.



“We are so grateful to partner with ALAS, an organization that addresses the root causes of poverty and food insecurity by providing services that increase the physical, emotional and psychological well-being of the people in our community.

Our mission at Second Harvest of Silicon Valley is to end hunger in our community. To achieve this, we have to provide food today and look for ways to create a more equitable food system. One important step toward that is to ensure that the people who grow and process our food have enough to nourish themselves and their families.

Participating in programming that centers our local farmworkers is especially meaningful. I feel such personal gratitude for the very physically and psychologically challenging work of these men who often leave their families behind so that they can grow, pick and process the food we have on our tables.”

– Olivia Teter, former staff member, Second Harvest of Silicon Valley

Nutrition Workshop Project

To address the lack of health and nutrition care for farmworkers, we created an on-site culinary and nutrition education program. The ALAS Farmworker Health Equity Express Bus allowed us to be on site and meet the farmworkers in a space already familiar to them, eliminating the barriers of time and transportation. The unique challenges campesinos face, including isolation, limited transportation and scarce resources, meant a one-size-fits-all approach to nutrition would be ineffective. We tailored our workshop to their specific circumstances by meeting with them where they work and addressing their specific needs. We focused on health and wellness topics, including community integration and the demanding physical and emotional realities of their work, emphasizing self-care through food choices and companionship.

Guisti Farms was selected as the pilot site due to a strong existing relationship between the farm and ALAS, along with the eager interest of the farmworkers. To ensure the program aligned with the campesinos' needs and preferences, we conducted a survey to gather input on topics, dates and times for the classes. The survey results highlighted a strong desire for knowledge on chronic condition prevention and management. To address this need, we designed a four-part Spanish-language curriculum focusing on diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, mindful movement and a culminating celebration class — each with a cooking component.



Guisti Farms, Half Moon Bay, CA

We invite you to explore our summary report featuring four classes that place cultural gastronomy and celebration front and center. We hope it inspires you to host your own gatherings, filled with wholesome food, rich culture and the simple pleasure of coming together at the table.

This is dedicated to the campesinos — thank you for welcoming us into your workplace and homes and allowing us to be part of something so meaningful.



Photo by Sebastian Mino-Bucheli

The first class on the Health Equity Express Bus – designed to be a comfortable and welcoming classroom, equipped with screens and a classroom-style layout featuring comfortable chairs and tables, which made it ideal for the classes.

Class 1: Mutual Learning and Community Building

Fifteen farmworkers participated in our first interactive session held inside the ALAS Farmworker Health Equity Express Bus, followed by a cooking demonstration on the farm grounds. We approached this initiative with an open mind, eager to learn from the participants and adapt to their unique learning styles and cultural preferences.

When it came to prevention and managing diet-related conditions, participants had very limited health knowledge. None had received preventative care from a doctor, underscoring the scarcity of health care access for farmworkers. While the food bank assists with food access, other barriers make it difficult to adopt healthy eating behaviors. They include lack of transportation to a grocery store, time constraints and limited cooking skills. Stress and exhaustion from the physical demands of farm jobs, while also being away from family and loved ones, also took a toll on health and nutrition.

One of the most rewarding parts of the class was the outdoor cooking demonstration, which was

held right on the farm grounds. Food became a powerful connector, bringing instructors and participants together and creating a sense of community, even among strangers. The recipe, **quick bean salad**, was a joy for participants to taste, combining simple ingredients to create vibrant flavors. This nutritious and easily replicable recipe utilizes familiar ingredients,

I really liked the recipe that you sampled in the first class. We tried to make it again and somehow the one that we tried here was better, but it was easy to make, so we will keep trying to make it until it turns out really good. I like it because it is a great option to quickly prepare after work or to bring it for lunch.”

– Pedro, Farmworker, workshop participant



Photo by Sebastian Mino-Bucheli

making it both a practical and appealing option. The communal space fostered a festive atmosphere and facilitated meaningful social connections. Participants engaged in lively conversations about food, their experiences, and their lives, creating a relaxed and enjoyable environment that provided a welcome break from their daily routines. It became evident that the farmworkers deeply valued these opportunities for interaction and shared experiences around the table. Their increased willingness to share and participate inspired us to reshape the structure of future classes by emphasizing communal cooking and social interaction.

While the ALAS staff had already built strong relationships with this group, the interaction with the farmworkers and food bank staff was new. We quickly discovered a dynamic of mutual appreciation, as we expressed our sincere gratitude for their hospitality and warm welcome. By the end of the class, we had gained

valuable insights. Participants expressed a desire for more cooking classes, earlier start times, and opportunities to share their own recipes — particularly ceviche.

At the end of class, we were gifted stalks of Brussels sprouts, hand-picked for us as a thank you.



Class 2: Integrating our Nutrition Education Framework

For the second class, we honored the participants' preferences by starting at a more convenient time for them. Held outdoors, the setting offered plenty of space and a relaxed atmosphere. Building on feedback from the previous session, the class was centered around Second Harvest's guiding nutrition education principles — culture-centered, trauma-informed and integrative-focused. The participants welcomed us by sharing their own flavorful dishes, a beautiful testament to the culinary skills passed down through generations and their desire to share their traditional cultural foodways with us.

Our culinary and nutrition framework in action

Culture-Centered: The farmworkers expressed a strong desire to reciprocate by preparing traditional dishes for us, such as ceviche and Mexican deviled shrimp — a gesture of gratitude that was deeply meaningful. They expertly guided the class through the preparation of these dishes, proudly giving us a taste of their hometown of Nayarit, Mexico. We contributed a soothing *apple and orange tea* to warm us up on the cool evening on the coast. We also prepared our *picnic chicken salad* to complement their culinary creations, as this recipe paired well with tostadas. We explored how traditional dishes like ceviche provide essential nutrients and foster a connection to their cultural roots.

Trauma-Informed: We approached these classes as an invitation, ensuring that everyone felt welcome to contribute in the way they wished and enjoy the foods they preferred in a way that felt natural. This fostered a safe space to break from routine and share stories, concerns and experiences while connecting with one another. To better align with participants' learning styles, we recognized we had to shift our way of showing up as well. We thoughtfully initiated informal discussions on diet-related conditions, emphasizing the importance of nutrient-dense foods — carefully considering the many factors that can influence food choices.





Integrative-Focused: Recognizing the impact of the repetitive movement involved in farmwork, we incorporated simple stretching exercises that could easily be integrated into daily routines. There were smiles and giggles throughout as participants followed these intentional movements from head to toe. This led to an openness and conversations ensued about the physical and emotional demands of their daily work on the farm.

ALAS and Second Harvest volunteer support greatly enriched the class experience as volunteers felt empowered to lead discussions. While helping to prepare the recipes, volunteers shared valuable hands-on skills and facilitated meaningful conversations with the participants. These discussions focused on the significance of cultural foods in a person's diet, exploring topics such as preferred foods, culinary traditions and new recipes.

The ceviche and shrimp were delicious and a testament to the farmworkers' culinary skills and desire to share their cultural heritage and welcome us into their space.

“

Through this class I saw how eager and open the farmworkers were to engage in the learning process. They wanted to actively participate and even cooked their own meals to share with us. I think fostering this sense of community was huge in building a trusting relationship.”

– Mariah Diaz, ALAS volunteer



Photo by Jeff Regan

Class 3: A Farm Friendsgiving Celebration

The third class provided a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday and cultivate community spirit by gathering around the table. Kindness and gratitude were the cornerstones that defined this class as we created a warm and welcoming atmosphere. We carefully planned and prepared a full-course menu featuring appetizers, salad, a main course and dessert. Although this required significant effort, it was truly inspiring to witness the farmworkers' reciprocity, having already prepared a delicious meal for us. We were motivated by their generosity, and by the common interest in celebrating in ways that evoke joy.

A taste of gratitude

The menu introduced new recipes that diverged from traditional cultural gastronomy. The dishes utilized readily available and familiar ingredients, encouraging farmworkers to push their culinary boundaries. We arranged the tables to facilitate conversation among everyone, fostering a sense of community. It was a space for cultural exchange, social interaction and shared experiences through the joy of food and human connection.

The evening began with a simple appetizer of sourdough bread and butter. We served a *festive spinach salad* topped with sliced apples, chopped pecans and shredded Parmesan cheese with a zesty vinaigrette of olive oil, lemon juice and apple cider vinegar. The main course featured spaghetti with a rich, homemade Bolognese sauce crafted from ground beef, fresh tomatoes, garlic, basil, cumin, oregano and olive oil. For dessert, we prepared our *no-bake chocolate chip pumpkin balls*, nicknamed “albondigas de calabaza,” or pumpkin meatballs, by the participants.

Festive, bright decorations adorned the dining area to make the meal special. Activities included a round of gratitude, where participants shared what they were grateful for. We engaged in a lively discussion about the meal, exploring perceptions, enjoyment levels and suggestions for personalizing the dishes. The participants were encouraged to explore unfamiliar ingredients, such as basil, which they recalled using for topical medicinal purposes during their childhood. Trying new flavors in the company of others began to feel comforting, safe and a joyful experience for all.

“I’m very grateful for this moment together. I’m grateful that you have brought this program to us so we can learn something new, and we can try different flavors. The food was delicious. Thank you!”

– Farmworker, workshop participant

“I really like this meal; it is very different from what I eat every day. It reminds me of when I used to work on a farm in Montana when the farm owner cooked special dinners for us occasionally.”

– Farmworker, workshop participant

“I work closely with the farmworkers, and I know how important it is to bring variety to their routine. They work really hard on a daily basis, and when they get off from work, they are too tired to do anything fun, so I’m grateful for this opportunity to add positively to their day.”

– Jorge, ALAS Staff

The collaboration between volunteers and staff from both ALAS and Second Harvest in this class highlighted our shared commitment and dedication to serving our community. Volunteers played a key role by preparing dishes using prepped ingredients and recipe instructions. Staff contributed by assisting with recipe preparation, photography, client engagement, setup and decor. This collaborative effort was especially important for the Friendsgiving celebration, where people from both organizations made unique contributions to ensure the event ran smoothly.



Photo by Jeff Regan

“At ALAS, we believe that true equity means meeting our farmworkers where they are — honoring their labor, their culture and their stories. Through this partnership with Second Harvest, we’re not just addressing food insecurity; we’re celebrating our farmworkers as experts of the land, vital members of our community and keepers of rich traditions. Together, we are building a future where their health, pride and well-being are at the heart of everything we do.”

– Sandra Sencion, Farmworker Director, ALAS

Class 4: Reliving Food Memories and the Journey Back Home

Our workshop series concluded with a heartwarming celebration of familiar flavors, food memories and community connection. This final session marked the end of the calendar year and the culmination of classes where we bonded at the farmworkers table through shared meals, uplifting stories and simple, flavorful cooking.

The class was potluck-style, with volunteers and staff from the food bank and ALAS all contributing. We made a warm *cinnamon vanilla atole* that was perfect for the cold weather. It was a flavor very familiar to the participants and one that harkened back to childhood, as it is often shared during times of celebrations or special events in Mexico. Other dishes that adorned the table were a hearty white chili, pomegranate persimmon salad and pasta. For dessert we shared cultural sweet treats such as *postre de manzanas con crema* (apples and cream dessert) and *pan dulce* (Mexican sweet bread).

We started the discussion by inviting everyone to share a joyful food memory, whether from childhood or adulthood. It was heartening to hear from everyone, including typically quieter participants. The prompt evoked memories

tied to their native countries and their family, particularly their mothers and grandmothers. It was a reminder that the food we crave is not always about the food, but rather about the memory it's tied to. One participant recounted how much he had enjoyed the spinach salad from a previous class, expressing surprise at how simple yet delicious and flavorful a salad can be. It was truly rewarding to hear that our recipe had created such a positive and memorable experience.

As the workshop classes came to a close, it was a bittersweet farewell, knowing that in just a week or so, they would leave Half Moon Bay to return home — a place of comfort and familiarity. There, they would be warmly greeted by family and friends who had eagerly awaited their return. As we said our goodbyes and wished them well on their trip, they each received a “goodie bag” for their journey. There was immense appreciation and heartfelt gratitude in the air — a reminder that the bonds forged during these workshops have the power to nourish and heal the soul. “*Nos vemos pronto*,” we said. We’ll see you soon.

I've been coming to the U.S. for the past 20 years — different states at times, harvesting different crops. Never in my 20 years of coming here have I experienced this type of genuine kindness and hospitality. No one has ever done something like this for me. I've never seen anything like this. I really appreciate it.”

— Farmworker, workshop participant



Photo by Jeff Regan

Reflection On Community Impact

This workshop's impact extended far beyond nutrition education. It was about truly seeing and hearing participants, showing up with the intent to learn, actively listening to their stories, and challenging the stigma surrounding the perceived unhealthiness of cultural foods and traditions.

These classes shed light on the power of showing up for your community and creating a space where people feel both physically and psychologically safe to open up and learn. The profound joy and importance of sharing a meal with both familiar faces and new ones cannot be underestimated. We became part of the campesinos community sitting at the farmworker table. We spent time not only sharing food but also hearing about the multifaceted challenges faced by the farmworkers, like many other agricultural workers. It was clear that the classes played a vital role in supporting the overall well-being of the campesinos. They were a break from their daily routine, allowing them to contribute to building positive experiences and meaningful conversations, and a rare opportunity to step away from their demanding schedule, providing a space to be valued and supported.

The immense gratitude expressed by everyone involved underscored the profound and lasting impact that can happen when we make the conscious effort to work more deeply in community.

We are committed to expanding this program with the support of volunteers and trusted community-based organizations in the coastal areas and other parts of Santa Clara and San Mateo counties.

To learn more about this farmworker initiative or our nutrition education framework, you can reach us at nutrition@shfb.org.



Photo by Jeff Regan

“This partnership reflects the shared commitment of both organizations to prioritizing the health and well-being of farmworkers — our neighbors — many of whom face significant barriers to accessing nutrition resources. Coming together on this beautiful farm to share food, stories and experiences was an intangible gift I received and will forever cherish. It stands as a testament to the power and healing of community. As the daughter of a Mexican immigrant who worked as a farmworker during the Bracero Program, this project holds even deeper personal meaning for me. Gracias campesinos — we stand with you.”

– Alejandra ‘Alex’ Navarro, Director of Community Nutrition, Second Harvest of Silicon Valley



“The farming community commented a lot about the dishes that were prepared, that they were simple, healthy and quick to prepare. They also loved the salads. This is a very interesting point since many of them are separated from their families or are alone in this country, so they do not have the necessary knowledge to be able to have a good diet. This project fills that gap in the food issue. It is a success!”

– Jorge, ALAS Staff

Featured Farm Favorite Recipes

We've highlighted some of our favorite dishes and beverages that brought us joy and connection. When choosing the recipes to share, we incorporated familiar traditional flavors and ingredients that were tied to culture, identity and preference. We also carefully considered the items provided by the food distribution to utilize the foods clients received. The recipes highlighted throughout the report are all available to download at our [Nutrition Center](#).



[Quick Bean Salad](#)



[Shrimp Ceviche from Nayarit](#)



[Crisp Apple and Pecan Spinach Salad](#)



[Chipotle Chicken Tinga Tostadas](#)



[Creamy Cinnamon Atole](#)



[Warm Apple Orange Tea](#)



A Heartfelt Thank You

We want to extend our heartfelt thanks to all the volunteers and staff from ALAS and Second Harvest who dedicated their time and energy to making this farmworker project a success. Your commitment was crucial from the very beginning, helping us shape the program with the hopes of replicating it across multiple farms in the future. Your active participation in these classes, along with your support in cooking demonstrations, made a significant difference in the success of this project. We sincerely appreciate all your efforts in bringing this vision to life, making it genuinely impactful for our farmworker community.



About the Author

Diana Garcia has been part of the Community Nutrition department at Second Harvest of Silicon Valley since 2016. She's facilitated over 300 nutrition and wellness classes, helping our neighbors embrace healthier habits and find joy in nutritious eating. Diana led the nutrition workshop for farmworkers in the fall of 2024 and created this report to honor their immense contributions to our community. You can find several of her client stories, along with nourishing recipes from the team, on Second Harvest's online Nutrition Center.

About Second Harvest of Silicon Valley

Founded in 1974, Second Harvest of Silicon Valley is one of the largest food banks in the nation and a trusted nonprofit leader in ending local hunger. The organization distributes nutritious food through a network of more than 400 partners at over 900 sites across Santa Clara and San Mateo counties. Due to the prohibitively expensive cost of living in Silicon Valley and increased prices caused by inflation, Second Harvest is serving an average of about 500,000 people every month. Second Harvest also connects people to federal nutrition programs and other food resources, and advocates for anti-hunger policies on the local, state and national levels. To learn more about how Second Harvest is responding to the incredible amount of need in Silicon Valley, visit shfb.org.