



**UNIT 3:
FOOD AND POWER**

L.32

URBAN FARMING

Note to Teachers

Urban farming offers a solution to support both the future of food and underutilized urban spaces. Some scholars, like Dickson Despommiers, think of urban farming as the solution for feeding the world (and taking pressure off abused farm land) by creating skyscraper farms. Activists like Karen Washington see urban farms as a key to healthy community development, through empowerment and access. Lesson 32 explores how Washington makes that case.

Like the protection of seeds and the recognition of the value of native foods, urban farming represents an important expression of power: a democratic movement of individuals and groups seeking to map their own destiny, even in the face of powerful corporate or government policies. Lesson 32 addresses this question of democracy through the idea of social justice.

Goals *In this lesson, students will*

- understand that urban farming can provide effective local access to high-quality foods, particularly in underserved areas.
- learn that urban farming fosters both individual and community health.
- understand that urban farming is a deeply political act.

Objectives

- Students will use a short writing prompt to define the idea of social justice and use that idea to frame a discussion of urban farming.
- Students will use a short video and text to understand what urban farming means to Karen Washington and her community in the Bronx.



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Please use this margin to notate how to best adapt this curriculum to your students.

Materials

- Technology to screen a short video
- Reading

Instructions

Part I: Introduction

In this last part of the class, we want to explore an example of social advocacy and that power that people have to change their communities from within. This example is set in the New York City borough of the Bronx.

1. **FOCUSED FREE WRITE:** What does the idea of food justice mean to you?
2. **FOCUSED FREE WRITE:** Who can create food justice?
3. Share ideas in discussion

Part II: Introduce Karen Washington

1. Screen the short introduction at <http://nationswell.com/karen-washington-urban-farm-advocate/>

Ask students to watch and listen closely

(Notice her t-shirt. And her statement: What is social justice to you? What have you done to make it happen?)

2. Ask students to share their thoughts on what you have just seen.

Part III: Daphne Miller on Karen Washington

1. Remind students that they have encountered Daphne Miller before, in the lesson on soil health and human health.
2. Read first paragraph aloud together, then ask a student or two to summarize what they heard.
3. What is it that community gardens offer? The rest of the reading explores this question.

The rest of the handout is organized by bullet points. Each of the bullets offers a different piece of evidence for HOW community gardens offer community medicine.

Read around or ask a few students to rotate between themselves. Have a student read an entire bullet point.

Other students should follow along and underline important words or phrases.

Feel free to stop between bullet points to ask if students have questions about what they just heard/read.

4. Divide students into five groups and give them this challenge:

Each bullet point addresses a distinct benefit that comes from urban gardening.

Assign one bullet point to each group, and ask them to name that benefit.



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Remind them that they are looking for what distinguishes this bullet point from the others, what distinct theme it addresses.

(Students may need 5-15 minutes. They may need to read the passage again first.)

5. Share the benefit they have defined, and ask students to write the names onto the empty lines that precede the text.

They should look something like this:

- Community bonds
- Healthy food access
- Introducing young people to gardening and delicious food
- Crime reduction
- Encouraging people to cook more of their food and tying people back to their histories

6. Open the floor for students' thoughts and comments.

7. Final **FOCUSED FREE WRITE**: If you were to answer the question "what have you done to create food justice," what might you say? What *can* you do to create food justice?

Part IV: Cooking Lab

Community gardens often begin in vacant lots, many of which have soil that may be depleted of nutrients or damaged in other ways. Cultivating local, nutritious and delicious food is a key focus of community gardens. Kale is one example of a vegetable that can be grown in a variety of spaces and has thrived within many community gardens.

You'll experiment with this local crop today during the lab. The recipe is kale ravioli, which are fun to make, perfect for a group, and delicious. The kale is packed with nutrition and flavor and packaged in delicious ravioli.



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KALE RAVIOLI

16 students

Each student should assemble their own ravioli and then assist with cleanup while a few students work on cooking them.

Equipment List

- 12 cutting boards
- 12 knives
- Compost bowl
- 2 medium mixing bowls
- 2 burners
- Trivet
- 2 mixing spoons
- Tongs
- 10 small bowls, for water and filling
- 16 teaspoons, to scoop filling to wrapper
- Medium pot with lid
- Slotted spoon
- Straight-walled skillet
- Microplane
- 1-tsp measuring spoon
- 1-cup dry measuring cup

Food Items

- 2 bunches fresh kale
- 1 clove garlic
- Olive oil
- 1 pound whole milk ricotta cheese
- Lemon
- 1 cup parmesan cheese
- 1 large egg
- Salt
- Pepper
- 1 package wonton wrappers



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she'd never learned Spanish and knew little about her family's culture. By spending time with other market volunteers and customers, she'd become conversant in Spanish and had picked up some traditional Puerto Rican recipes" (178).

As Shirley explained the food subsidy vouchers accepted at the market, "a teenage couple appeared, pushing a stroller toward the stand. . . [The mother] began to examine the frost-damaged skins of the tomatoes with some consternation. . . 'They're perfect for salsa, said Victoria in Spanish. She was standing nearby, arranging the cilantro, and I could see that she'd been keeping a maternal eye on the couple ever since they'd approached the market. Victoria told the mother that the tomatoes were from her plot and then she shared her favorite salsa recipe. The young mother listened intently, asking a few questions. Finally the couple chose four of the better-looking tomatoes and put them aside. Next they turned their attention to a basket of pearl-sized champagne grapes. These looked perfect, so neither hesitated to add them to the pile. They selected two heads of romaine lettuce, one bunch of cilantro, one onion (for the salsa), five Macintosh apples, a couple of beets, a pound of potatoes, and then they handed their food vouchers to Victoria. After the Health Dollars and the farmers' market coupon, they owed only \$5. Not bad for all that bounty! The couple, looking pleased, loaded their purchases into the stroller and headed up the street. . .

Based on what I had just seen, it was easy to imagine how a farmers' market might inspire more vegetable eating than a supermarket. In a regular market, WIC dollars could be spent on sugared cereal and processed cheese just as easily as they could be put toward a head of broccoli. . . The La Familia Verde stand was also more accessible than your average supermarket. Located on the sidewalk in the heart of the mid-Bronx, one could casually shop here en route to the nearby bank, Tremont Park, the neighborhood school, or the Mary Mitchell community center. Studies. . . show that people are more likely to buy vegetables if they can do it in passing. A meaningful social exchange, like the one I just witnessed between Victoria and the young mother, makes the transaction even more appealing" (178-179).

- Dr. Miller also highlighted two other images: school-aged boys off school on Election Day who came in to help weed the garden; and the gift of three apples to the children of a customer. "The look of sheer pleasure registered by the apple-munching children and by this boy hoeing the Tremont plot made me think I was witnessing an 'infectious' moment. For these children, the sensual experience of eating an extra tasty piece of produce would translate into a lifetime of more vegetable eating, and the act of growing that produce only increases the likelihood that this will happen. One study from the south Bronx and central Harlem showed that children who ate from local farm stands were more likely to eat fruits and vegetables with every meal. Participating in a school or community gardening project had an equally positive effect, especially when it came to developing a child's appreciation for 'difficult' vegetables, such as spinach, beets, and squash. These studies also showed that adults increase their vegetable intake by virtue of their contact with these young gardeners and vegetable lovers. Just like a virus spreads throughout the community, so does the tendency to eat fresh fruits and vegetables. Now here's an epidemic that any public health worker would celebrate" (182)!



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KALE RAVIOLI

YIELD: about 4 servings

*Adapted from Epicurious,
Ricotta-filled ravioli by Gianni Scappin*

Ingredients

- 2 bunches fresh kale
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- Olive oil
- 1 pound whole milk ricotta
- 1 teaspoon freshly grated lemon zest
- 1 cup parmesan cheese
- 1 large egg
- salt and pepper
- 1 package wonton wrappers

Directions

1. Chop kale into ribbons and sauté with garlic and oil.
2. Once kale is wilted, place it on cutting board and finely chop.
3. Prepare the cheese mixture by mixing together the ricotta, lemon zest, parmesan cheese, egg, salt and pepper. Once kale is chopped, mix it into the cheese.
4. To assemble the ravioli, lay the wonton wrapper on a flat surface and cover the edges with water by dipping your finger into water and tracing the edges. Spoon a dollop of kale cheese mixture, about a teaspoon, into the middle of the wrapper. Fold it in half diagonally, careful not to press the center of it. Use your fingers or a fork to push and seal the edges together.
5. In a pot of boiling water, cook ravioli for 3-5 minutes and remove with slotted spoon.
6. In a pan, melt several tablespoons of butter and add the cooked ravioli. Gently toss the ravioli so they are coated in butter and serve right away. Top with a sprinkle of parmesan cheese.

