



How We Started

Growing Chefs! was founded by Merri Schwartz, a professional pastry chef in September 2006 in Vancouver B.C.

After having worked in fine dining restaurants for several years, Merri became frustrated with the lack of engagement she saw between chefs--armed with valuable knowledge about food sustainability, nutrition, and local agricultural systems--and the greater community.

She founded *Growing Chefs!* as a tool to connect those chefs and growers to local communities, using a fun, empowering, educational program to do so.

Growing Chefs! is in its third year of operation and has expanded from a small pilot project in one Vancouver school to over fifteen schools in three cities and two provinces.

After getting involved with the program, restaurant manager Andrew Fleet began the pilot for the second chapter of *Growing Chefs!* in London Ontario.

Seeing the impact that *Growing Chefs!* was having in both Vancouver's schools and restaurant communities, Andrew was inspired to bring the program to his home town. *Growing Chefs! Ontario* was launched in the spring of 2008 at Tecumseh Public School.

Growing Chefs! hopes to empower chefs by helping them to share their skills and knowledge in a growing, sustainable city. They use their skills to promote urban agriculture, and to address social issues such as eating locally, nutrition, childhood obesity, and the greening of cities. We believe the chefs in turn, can empower the children by teaching them to grow and cook their own food.