

OBAMA FOODORAMA

WHITE HOUSE FOOD INITIATIVES...AND OTHER BIPARTISAN BYTES OF FOOD POLITICS

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First Lady Praises Sam Kass At Chefs Move To Schools Event

From kitchen table convos to national action plan...

During today's launch of Chefs Move To Schools at the White House, First Lady Michelle Obama gave her Food Initiative Coordinator, Sam Kass, a very special shout out, during what was her longest food policy speech to date...

"I think it's just pretty powerful to see what started out as a few conversations in our kitchen on the South Side of Chicago turn into a major initiative that hopefully will change the way we think as a country, not just about the health of our kids but about our health as a nation," Mrs. Obama said, as she thanked Kass, and called him her "partner in crime."

(Above: Mrs. Obama and Kass during Mrs. Obama's remarks).



"He has just been such an important part of promoting healthy eating, not just here at the White House, but helping to shape this initiative," Mrs. Obama said.

Kass, of course, has been the driving force behind many of the components of Mrs. Obama's massive project to change the fabric of America's unhealthy food culture. He's been photographed at the First Lady's side publicly for many of the major events, as well as worked tirelessly behind the scenes (and on his own publicly, for instance with this big speech to supermarket honchos, and with his appearances on TV), but today's shout-out was the first time Mrs. Obama has lauded him so publicly, and referenced the long time frame for the whole food project. (Above: Kass at the February launch of Let's Move! at the White House, where he was "behind the scenes" during the formal event)

"Sam has worked closely with so many staff members on the East Wing and in our kitchen, but we wouldn't be here and we wouldn't have the knowledge and the passion if it weren't for people like Sam who really understand your world; they understand and appreciate the value of cooking," Mrs. Obama said, as she continued to laud Kass, to more applause from the gathered chefs.

Those South Side kitchen table conversations were going on less than two years ago, it should be noted, when President Bush was still in office, and The Senator from Illinois was just emerging onto the national stage. Kass was then working privately with the Obamas, and when they went to the White House, he did too. His position as Food Initiative Coordinator, which combines the duties of policy wonk and chef, is unprecedented for any White House.

It's having major ramifications, obviously. And the distance from the South Side of Chicago to today, as the Let's Move! campaign has been rolled out on a huge national scale, with tremendous bipartisan support, is vast and astonishing. After the launch with the chefs, Mrs. Obama and Kass led a group of local elementary school kids and some of the celeb chefs who showed up to lend their stardom to Chefs Move To Schools in the second Spring Harvest of the Kitchen Garden. The first harvest was on June 16, 2009, and today's event, like that one, also included cooking, too. Above, Mrs. Obama and Kass take a break to discuss the day.