

My Experience with KERI Mini Grant

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Argentina, Latin America, 2019

I chose to translate *From the Ground Up*, a presentation directed to elementary students which goals are for kids to identify at least 2 plant foods, learn their benefits, and fun ways to eat them.

When I first heard about this opportunity I didn't think twice about applying. And this was for a number of reasons. First of all, children. I work mostly with adults, but the value of learning to make healthy choices from an early time in life cannot be overstated. The average diet in Buenos Aires consists of a very high intake of refined carbs, high intake of meats, mainly red, low intake and very low variety of fruits and vegetables and very low intake of dairy products, most of them even low in nutrients. Raising awareness of the importance of high-quality plant food in every day diet is a must. Another reason I applied is I think highly of the way messages are communicated in America in speeches, books, classes, etc. Great organization and excellent content are found thanks to the rigorous research done, different professionals and departments involved in the assembly, the guidelines established, editions, etc. This being said, a class, book, presentation provided by the American Dietetic Association simply has high quality stamp. And I love to be able to expand this to the community where I live in.

Even though, I am bilingual because I was raised, educated, and worked both in United States and Argentina and translating has always been a part of my life, it is always a challenge. The first thing I did was translate everything without paying much attention to how it sounded, if it was natural or not, but making sure I was taking the exact core message from the source language to the target language and giving it the same grade of importance. Then, I went back and adapted it using "Argentinean" words, phrases, and idioms. This step I repeated various times. Stepping away from my work, letting my mind disconnect completely from the translation done, and then rereading it when enough time has passed is crucial, because it allows me to read it as an outsider, not as the actor, bringing more objectivity to my perspective.

Some things, like the title had to be completely redone, so creativity is crucial and for it to happen, we need space and time, it can't be forced. The original title *From the Ground Up* is simply amazing, it's captivating, it incites curiosity, it relates profoundly to the speech in many ways; the plant food coming from the ground, being picked up and brought to our table, it refers also to the habits being cultivated from the time the person is very little up to when they grow up to be adults. This cannot be translated word for word to Spanish because it would not make sense. And to baptize the speech with a title that literally synthesizes its message would more than likely not attract children's interest. So this was something that took some time until, after a lot of brainstorming, I was enlightened with the title *Plantas en el Plato*, which is catchy, it rhymes, it's short, it's easy to remember, it definitely states clearly what the talk is about and you could infer it's directed to a younger audience.

Another challenge I found has to do with a slight inconsistency in the food group classification between both countries. The original presentation states there are plant foods in all food groups, and there is no discussion here, since this classification contemplates not only origin, but also nutrient profile leaving space in all groups for plant foods rich in the nutrient prominent of

each category. The food group classification used in Argentina is practically all about origin, therefore technically there are two food groups where no plant foods are found; meat and dairy. But still, in practice this classification isn't strictly followed. By this I mean, some dietitians classify, for instance almond milk under dairy, obviously not because it is made from milk nor is it rich in Calcium or protein, but because it can replace regular milk due to its sensory qualities. I decided to be loyal to the translation in the script, but more flexible on the speech to be consistent with the current official local guidelines.

Regarding the food itself, there was not a great need to make changes. Argentinean and American food is different, but not that much. Especially when we talk about food and not dishes. When we went through the different plant foods, there was barely a handful that most may not recognize. But, still, I left them in. Firstly, to foster curiosity. Secondly, they actually can be found in the market. Thirdly, because society is changing, and if I would have given this presentation twenty years ago in Argentina, I would have probably left out the unknown, because in general, people were not open to it. Contrary to United States, Argentina has not been exposed to many different cultures throughout history. Consequently, its cuisine has remained pretty stable and monotonous consisting basically on a mix of Italian, Spanish and some local recipes like asado -barbeque meat-, empanadas -meat pastries-, milanesas -breaded meat- and facturas -danish-. United States on the other hand has a great advantage, its diverse culture built through years and years of receiving migration from all corners of the world has unfolded into a rich, diverse, and heterogeneous culinary culture. Back to Argentina, in the past two or three decades, a good part of the population has traveled abroad as well as a variety of new immigrants from different countries have begun to settle in, so locals are less resistant and even drawn to exploring unfamiliar territory and flavors. Peanut butter, for example, a staple of children's lunches and snacks in the United States was something seen only in Hollywood films and series in Argentina, but it is slowly growing in the market, thanks to foodies, Instagram recipe influencers, and soon enough it's going to find its own place in a nice amount of kitchen pantries and fridges across the homes of Buenos Aires and eventually the country. It is one of the many foods I am eager to see being naturalized, especially as part of the breakfast menu, since the majority of locals eat toast with butter or spreadable white cheese and jam everyday of their lives for breakfast. This way, butter and spreadable white cheese, none of them packed with healthy nutrients could be replaced at times with peanut butter, therefore adding fiber, unsaturated fats, B complex vitamins, Manganese and other nutrients into a regular diet.

I was really surprised and happy to see there was interest in the black bean salsa since the intake of legumes is very low in Argentina, despite the high availability. They even asked for the recipe, as well as for the hummus recipe. Another good inquiry that came up was why the wheat grains are stripped from their most valuable assets, the bran and germ.

Children participated a lot, which was very motivating and fun. Going back to the translation process, as I went through it, I remember thinking, "What a whole lot of questions! Practically in every slide! Isn't that too many?" But really, that is what got the presentation rolling and the kids on their feet, they simply die to participate. I found one of the activities to have really taken the presentation to the next level; some of the attendees had their camera off. Right after the presentation comes an activity where they have to run in their place to answer yes and stay still to answer no to a series of questions. When this was explained, all the cameras were automatically turned on and all kids ready on their feet to compete!

Another great take from the American presentation brought to Argentine culture is goal setting. This is a magnificent virtue and an everyday habit which in Latin America is not as usual. The

speech ends with a great call to action; inviting kids to blend the knowledge acquired and make a personalized goal to increase the intake of plant foods.

Personally, my biggest takeaway from this work is the fulfilling experience it was to connect with children in an educating and fun way, which I found I would love to make this a part of my regular schedule. Maybe once a month maybe give a presentation, workshop, or something of the like to kids with the mission of fostering healthy eating habits.

I am immensely grateful for having participated in this opportunity.