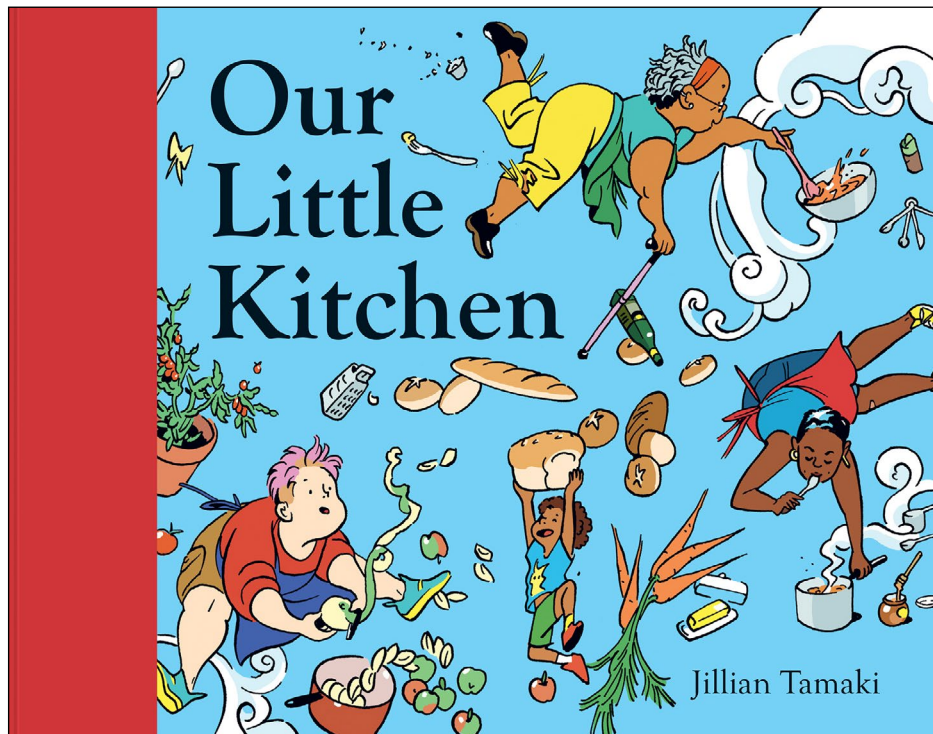




GROUNDWOOD STUDY GUIDES

Our Little Kitchen

Written and illustrated by Jillian Tamaki



A picture book about a lively evening in a community kitchen from Governor General's Award–winning author and illustrator Jillian Tamaki.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

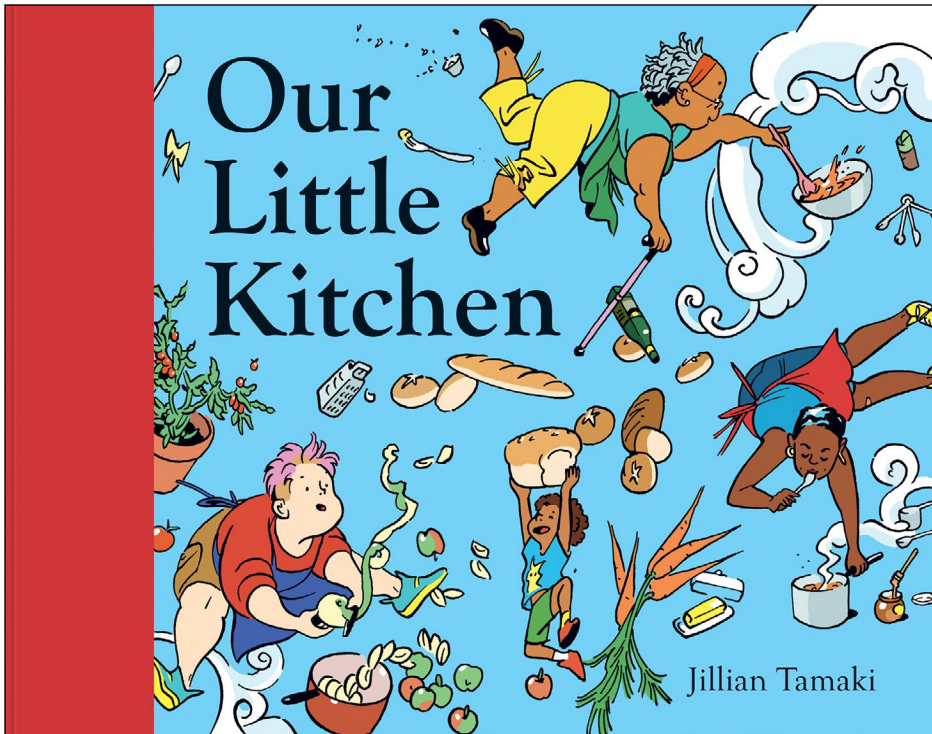
Ages 4 to 8 / Grades K to 3

JUVENILE FICTION / Cooking & Food / Stories in Verse / Social Themes /
Homelessness & Poverty

Full-color illustrations / 8 x 10 / 40 pages

Hardcover with jacket / \$19.95 / 978-1-77306-262-4 / Ebook / 978-1-77306-263-1

groundwoodbooks.com



BOOK DESCRIPTION

In this lively, rousing picture book from Caldecott Honoree Jillian Tamaki, a crew of resourceful neighbours come together to prepare a meal for their community. With a garden full of produce, a joyfully chaotic kitchen and a friendly meal shared at the table, *Our Little Kitchen* is a celebration of full bellies and people looking out for one another.

Includes two recipes and an author's note about the volunteering experience that inspired the book.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

What do you think of when you hear the title *Our Little Kitchen*? Close your eyes and think of the sights, sounds and smells of a kitchen.

What is the kitchen like where you live? Is it small or large? What kinds of foods are made there? Who does the cooking in your family? What other kitchens have you seen in your life or helped prepare food in? What is the smallest kitchen you have ever been in?

What do you see on the cover of the book? Who do you think the story will be about? What do you notice about the people on the cover? How do you think they know each other? What is your favourite item of food found on the cover?



POST-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

COMMUNITY, CONFLICT AND RESOLUTION

We don't learn the names of any characters in *Our Little Kitchen*. Instead, the emphasis is on the community as a whole and how each member works together as one team. What is the main problem the community is trying to overcome in this story? How do they work together to resolve it? Is the problem resolved by the end of the book? How do you know?

Think about a difficult problem you are facing in your own life. Can you apply the concept of working together to give you any new perspectives?

VEGETABLE SOUP

In the first pages of this book, there is a picture-based recipe for vegetable soup. Ask an adult for help to make the soup using vegetables you already have at home. Look for ingredients in the same places that characters in the book searched, like the cupboards, the refrigerator and the garden.

How does the soup taste? What was harder than expected about making it? What was easier than expected?

How did preparing a dish using items already available rather than going to the store to pick out specific ingredients change your experience of making the soup? What did it make you pay attention to that you may not have otherwise noticed or thought about?



WHERE DOES OUR FOOD COME FROM?

Most people in North America today obtain the majority of their food from grocery stores. That means we don't see where our food comes from, including how produce is grown, what country it originates in or how processed foods are prepared. Pick one kind of fruit or vegetable you eat regularly and learn everything you can about where it comes from before it arrives at the grocery store. (You can start by finding the sticker or price tag on the item and searching for the company online.) What season does this piece of produce usually grow in? What does the full plant look like? What country was it grown in? How far did it travel to get to your grocery store? What are the working and living conditions of the people who help harvest it?

How does learning all this information change your perspective of this fruit or vegetable?

COMMUNITY KITCHENS

The author of *Our Little Kitchen*, Jillian Tamaki, was inspired to create *Our Little Kitchen* based on her experience helping out at a community kitchen in New York once a week for many years (read the "Author's Note" at the end of the book for more on her experience). Ask an adult to help you find a community kitchen in your area where you could volunteer, visit or donate food. Maybe you will even find yourself in a small kitchen trying to come up with a creative way to use the food that's available! As Jillian says, "our little kitchen was not a solution to our problems of food, housing and economic insecurity — it merely provided one meal on Wednesday nights. Still, we kept showing up." Sometimes life, and being part of a community, is simply about showing up in whatever way we can.

SEASONAL FOOD

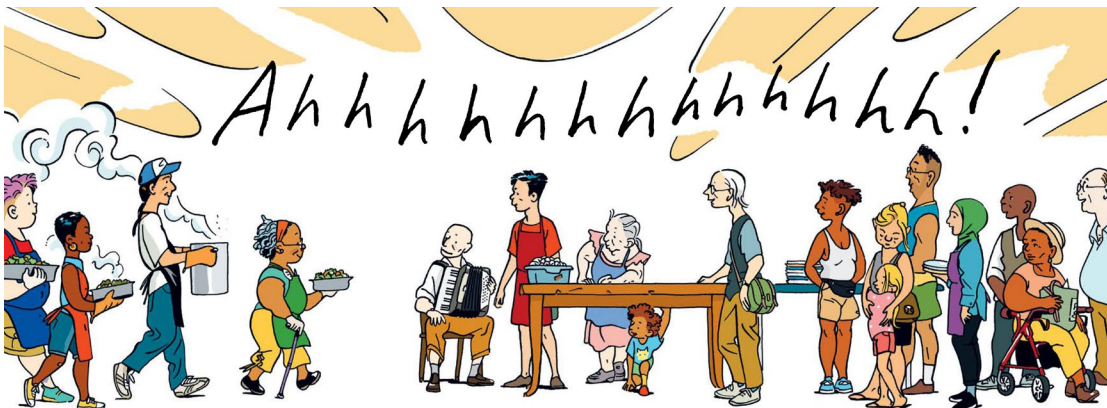
A garden serves as one source of food for those helping to make the meal in *Our Little Kitchen*. Even if you don't have a garden, or even if it is a time of year when garden food is not plentiful in your area, one way to be a conscious consumer is to eat food that is in season and grows locally. Do you know what fruits and vegetables grow in each season where you live? Make a list of five or more fruits or vegetables that grow in each season in your area. How would eating only these foods when they are in season be different from the way you normally eat? What would you enjoy about eating seasonally and locally? What would you not enjoy?

If only certain foods grow at certain times and in certain places, why do you think grocery stores seem to always have a large variety of fruits and vegetables?

THROW A SOUP PARTY

So much of food is about the sense of community it creates. Throw a soup party by asking each guest to bring an item that could go into a soup, then make the soup together. Some guests could wash and cut the vegetables, some could measure out the spices and some could stir it on the stove. To make it into a full meal, serve bread, crackers, cheese or other small dishes on the side. For dessert, you might make the apple crumble recipe in the back of the book.

This may not end up being the best soup you've ever tasted, but there is something special about creating something from everyone's contributions.



AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR BIOGRAPHIES



JILLIAN TAMAKI is a cartoonist and illustrator from Calgary, Alberta, who now lives in Toronto, Ontario. Her first picture book, *They Say Blue*, won the Governor General’s Literary Award and the Boston Globe–Horn Book Award, among many other accolades. She co-created the highly acclaimed graphic novels *Skim* and *This One Summer* with Mariko Tamaki, and she is the creator of the webcomic *SuperMutant Magic Academy*, and *Boundless*, a collection of short comics for adults. She has won many awards for her work, including a Caldecott Honor, a Printz Honor, the Eisner Award, the Doug Wright Award and the Ignatz Award. Her work has also been named to the list of *New York Times* Best Illustrated Children’s Books.