

Grubz Up!

Grubz Up! (RTE, Ireland) is a 6-minute non-fiction program (cf. screenshot 1) about boys and girls having fun with healthy food. They grow plants on an allotment in Ireland as well as cook and eat them to the sound of upbeat folk music. In episode 14, two boys bound into the garden express delight over rhubarb, “Our favorite!” They narrate and dramatize a history in which Romans (cf. screenshot 2) disliked rhubarb and considered it suitable for barbarians (cf. screenshot 3, 4). Children explain that rhubarb is a perennial plant that grows year after year. They offer examples of other perennials such as artichokes and asparagus (cf. screenshot 5), how they grow, and how to eat them. They take viewers step-by-step through a recipe for asparagus soldiers. They line up and roll Parma ham around asparagus stalks (cf. screenshot 6). In the next recipe for rhubarb ripple, children list the ingredients, then cut rhubarb using a knife (cf. screenshot 7) and continue with each step, cooking rhubarb, adding custard, crushing ginger biscuits, and whipping cream. When the sweet treat is ready, it is time for the taste test. Each child takes a big spoonful and pronounces it “delicious”. The boys stretch out on the ground, patting their full tummies while the girls finish the bowl of ripple (cf. screenshot 8). Viewers are directed to the program website at www.rte.ie/grubzup.

Grubz Up! was one of the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2012 finalists in the Up to 6 Non-Fiction category.

International experts’ opinions

International experts shared their opinions about *Grubz Up!* during the discussion sessions at the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2012. Most agreed that *Grubz Up!* presents a good balance of children in action, where they are shown to be making messes and learning, sometimes in a humorous way. Some thought the children’s voices were not as natural as they could have been if the talk were not being led by adults, although others defended the directing perspective in organizing the parts of the program, especially the cooking. Many debated technical and legal approaches, including use of sharp tools such as the knives that children handled in *Grubz Up!*, whether to include this, and how best to depict this safely. Nearly everyone agreed this program felt typical, local, and representative of learning.

“What we saw today was perhaps more a real reflection of what you do see on television for this age group if you went around the world, went to those countries.” (female expert, Australia)

Some experts found the activities in *Grubz Up!* interesting because children were doing activities that could be considered dangerous in some cultures. Some questioned production techniques that could be used to get children together, cutting and cooking and eating, but agreed that *Grubz Up!* is well made because children are doing it rather than adults. Concerns were expressed about children’s television withholding depictions of learning experiences because of fear that parents may become angry or fear of being sued. Experts affirmed *Grubz Up!*’s placement of children at the forefront and recognized the challenge to be more imaginative and naughty in ways that will surprise both children and adults.



Ill. 1: *Grubz Up!* shows children growing, cooking, and enjoying healthy food



Ill. 2: Boys demonstrate how perennial plants like rhubarb are grown and used



Ill. 3: Girls re-enact the Romans' hatred of rhubarb



Ill. 4: Boys demonstrate how barbarians loved rhubarb



Ill. 5: This girl describes asparagus, how it grows, and how to eat it



Ill. 6: Children line up to roll Parma ham around asparagus spears together



Ill. 7: Children demonstrate how to cut rhubarb using a knife



Ill. 8: *Grubz Up!* concludes with a link to the website for more recipes and videos

“To me it was so refreshing, and they’re getting into it and they’re careful. They’re not hurting themselves and they’re just getting into it.” (female expert, Canada)

“It’s just gotten way overly cautious... At what age are you on television allowed to use a knife? I would like to have more research on that assumption because it annoys me.” (female expert, USA)

Experts felt that *Grubz Up!* presented children who are very involved in the process of growing, cooking, and eating products from the garden. Their enjoyment was evident. They felt that it was a good way to connect with the roots of food – where it comes from and its history.

“In our modern world, there are fewer depictions of producing food. And this shows how it looks when it comes out of the garden, the soil and the produce. It’s very, very nice. And necessary, I think.” (female expert, Germany)

“On the Irish show, you actually saw kids doing stuff and to me, that’s much more engaging.” (male expert, Norway)

“It’s nice to get some really great ideas and be inspired and go out into the world.” (female expert, Germany)

Children modeling activities was a common theme expressed among the experts. They felt surprised by the way *Grubz Up!* and other programs in this category fulfilled the festival’s theme: Watch, Learn and Grow with Children’s TV. Children respond well to seeing other children accomplish life skills and they will try to apply what they see on television in their everyday lives.

“Best moments were when we saw children presenting to kids.” (male expert, Germany)

“It’s so empowering for the kids.” (female expert, UK)

Grubz Up! shows the great things children are capable of doing when they have an opportunity.

Elizabeth Spezia (Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, USA)

Screenshots from *Grubz Up!* © RTE, Ireland

Target Audience 7.61	Idea 7.57	Script 7.14	Realization 7.41
Average Score per Category by experts’ voters at PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2012			