

Healthy Cooking Club

Overview

Cooking with kids is a great way to educate them about good nutrition, what's in season, planning and preparing meals, and reading food labels. It can encourage them to eat healthy foods, especially ones they may normally refuse to try. Expand their horizons by getting students in the kitchen through a healthy cooking club!



Take Action

- Discuss with your school administration your ideas for a healthy cooking club. Receive their approval for the club and brainstorm opportunities for funding.
- Host a [healthy fundraiser](#) to raise funds for your healthy cooking club.
- Answer the following *Who, What, Where, When* questions:
 - **Who:** Will the club be open to all grade levels? What about parents? How many students can participate in the club?
 - **What:** What topics will your club focus on? For example, Healthy Cooking During the Holidays, Healthy Breakfast on the Go, Healthy After School Snacks, Healthy & Yummy Desserts, etc. What specific cooking skills will you highlight (i.e. peeling, chopping, proper mixing, etc.)?
 - **Where:** Where will the cooking club will take place? Ideally, there should be enough table space for students to work, as well as access

- to a refrigerator and oven.
- **When:** When will your club meet? After school? In the evening? Once per week for six weeks?
- Take inventory of current cooking equipment, and outline additional supply needs. Consider:
 - Doing a kitchen utensils drive at school to receive donated items. Advertise the drive in the school newsletter, at the library and local gym, in the newspaper and on your school marquee.
 - Asking local restaurants if they would be willing to donate equipment.
 - Checking out garage sales and thrift stores for gently used items.
 - If your school has a school garden, collaborate with the garden club, and use whatever fresh fruits and vegetables are available.
 - Ask local food pantries, grocery stores, bakeries and restaurants if they would be willing to donate groceries or incentives such as gift cards.
 - Partner with growers/sellers at farmers markets to donate what's left over to the cooking club. You might have bruised apples or less than fresh zucchini, but they are still usable and delicious! Apples can be made into applesauce and zucchini into zucchini bread.
 - Don't have access to a kitchen? Start a [Food Art Cooking Club!](#)

Social Emotional Health Highlights

Activities such as these help students explore...

Self-Management: Cooking with children can be a fantastic way for children to explore their senses while working towards a goal. Whether a child is chopping vegetables, tasting sauce, or smelling spices, children must stay organized, stay motivated when things don't go as planned.

Social Awareness and Relationship Skills: Teaming up to create a delicious dish is an opportunity for children to develop skills in communication and teamwork. Use cooking as a way to explore culinary roots across different cultures and help children

practice perspective talking. Cooking allows children to get creative while working with a partner (or group) to create something rewarding and delicious!

Tips

-  If working with younger students, ask high school students to volunteer for service learning credits. This is a great way for high school students to give back and be role models for healthy eating.
-  Review food safety guidelines, and take note of participant food allergies to ensure a safe cooking environment.
-  Keep recipes simple. Cooking usually takes longer with kids since they need clear instructions and assistance.
-  Incorporate field trips; in lieu of a cooking session, take a tour of a professional kitchen and ask if a chef demo is available.
-  Ask parents and chefs to come in to host a session. Topics could include focusing on a particular ethnic food or sharing their favorite healthy recipe.
-  If working with older students, incorporate concepts of how to prepare meals on a budget. Review how to shop sales, use coupons, etc.
-  Engage volunteers by asking them to lead and supervise the cooking club or ask for donations of equipment and/or food from local restaurants, food pantries, grocery stores and bakeries.
-  Host a cooking competition. If possible, split the group into at least two teams and have a cook-off.

For more activities and ideas like this one, be sure to [sign up for our news and updates](#). And if you like what you see, please [donate to support our work](#) creating

more ways to help build a healthier future for kids.

Additional Resources

[Healthy Cooking with your Kids \(Fruits and Veggies More Matters\)](#)

[How to Set-up Your Kids' Cooking Club \(Kids in the Kitchen\)](#)

[Healthy Eating and Cookery Club Toolkit for Primary Schools and Parents \(The Great Grub Club\)](#)

[The Chef in You: A Cooking Competition \(United States Department of Agriculture\)](#)

Related Activities

April Showers Bring May Veggies

School gardens are a fantastic way to transition a more traditional classroom to an outdoor, experiential learning opportunity centered on student engagement and critical thinking.

Intramural Programs & Activity Clubs

Intramural programs and activity clubs allow students to experience a variety of physical activity and games that will contribute to an active and healthy lifestyle without the competitiveness that comes with traditional team sports.

Smart Snacks Standards

Is your school smart snack savvy? The "Smart Snacks in School" rule set standards for all foods and

Student Wellness Team

If you are trying to improve your school's wellness, engaging students is key! Students are your

beverages sold in schools that participate in the national school meal program.

voice to knowing what is most important to them, and it can drive more meaningful impact for your school.