

Encouraging home meal preparation with a focus on nutrient density

AT A GLANCE

In the day of readily available convenience foods, home cooking is not always prioritized in American homes. Budget, time and cooking skills are a few of the common barriers to preparing home meals.

The Situation

According to the National Institute of Health, the percentage of adults preparing meals at home has increased from the years 2003 to 2023. Females cooking at home increased from 69% to 72%, while males increased from 36% to 52%. However, despite this positive trend, barriers remain to consistent nutrient dense home meal preparation.

Our Response

University of Idaho Extension family and consumer sciences associate educator Leslee Blanch provided a variety of cooking demonstrations with emphasis on simple, nutrient dense recipes containing readily available ingredients. Different dishes were highlighted throughout the year, including appetizers, main dishes, creative salad variations and a unique flavored beverage option. Cooking demonstrations were offered at a local hospital, health club and the local University of Idaho Extension office. Additionally, recipe taste testing was provided to juvenile detention youth, free lunch recipients and food pantry clientele.



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Program Outcomes

Of 131 cooking demonstration participants, 91 completed written surveys. Of those who responded, 89% stated they had gained new knowledge and 97% stated an intent to implement a behavior change based on the cooking demonstration information. Many indicated an intent to cook with quinoa, a new ingredient to several participants. Participants also expressed gaining new knowledge regarding the color of fruits and vegetables being influenced by phytonutrient content. Several participants expressed appreciation for new recipes to try and for the education they received on the nutrient pro-file of recipe ingredients and how they are beneficial to health.

impact University of Idaho Extension

In addition to the above noted participants, 381 clients were offered recipes with sample dishes to taste (without cooking demonstration). Although these participants were not surveyed for written feedback, the majority expressed appreciation for the recipes and liked the taste of the dishes offered.

The Future

This educator will continue to provide local cooking demonstrations in a variety of settings, including opportunities for low-income and incarcerated individuals. An expansion of outreach will include those on parole with the Idaho Department of Corrections.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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