

Cooking beef with kids: Learning about beef production and nutrition

AT A GLANCE

As part of a University of Idaho Extension program, youth gain hands-on learning opportunities in beef cattle production, explore the nutritional benefits of beef and learn how to prepare a beef-based meal.

The Situation

Although Idaho County is rooted in agriculture and natural resources, many young people have little awareness of beef cattle production or how their food is produced. Additionally, beef may not always be a main protein source for many families due to various factors including cost, lack of awareness on how to cook the protein and preference of protein type. There are more cattle in Idaho County than people, so while many youths may not come from a beef background it is important that they have the chance to learn about beef production as well as have a positive beef eating experience.

Our Response

To provide opportunities to learn about beef production and cooking beef outside the traditional offerings of 4-H or as part of school supported life skills classes, the local out of school organization was approached with the offer to provide programming as part of their Full Day Fridays. Starting in January, on one Friday a month, attending youth were taught facts about beef cattle production and beef nutrition and then guided through the process of cooking lunch using ground beef and additional ingredients to create a full meal.



Youth decide how they'd like to enjoy their spaghetti and meatballs meal in April.

Program Outcomes

Following securing permission to participate in this program from guardians, one Friday a month along with the meal was identified. Meals were selected based on ease of preparation as well as likeliness youth would enjoy them. Youth were provided with educational materials which included the beef: It's What's for Dinner, Cooking with Beef for Kids pamphlet along with other educational handouts. At the start of each session, time was spent discussing briefly beef production and beef nutrition facts before moving into reviewing the recipe for the day and working as teams to cook the meal.

Youth learned what a serving of beef is as well as how much protein comes from one serving in addition to

other important vitamins and minerals. Youth also learned how integral cattle are to help in the prevention of wildfires. While reviewing the recipe youth learned the importance of reading and following directions. Another beneficial outcome was the experience working as teams and practicing polite communication.

Once the preparation of the meal was completed, youth were invited to consume the meal as a group. At each session, youth were encouraged to try at least one bite of the meal they had prepared with many youths enjoying the offering as their lunch meal for the day. The preschool aged children were also invited to join in the meal though they did not participate in the preparation.

A pre and post quiz was administered to establish an increase in knowledge as well as change in behavior. In the pretest quiz, youth were asked if they get to help decide what is for dinner, if they help cook dinner, if their family eats beef at dinner, if they do how often and if they thought beef was healthy. They were also asked to share some things they knew about cows. There were 17 responses from youth between the age of 6 and 11 summarized below:

- 29% of youth indicated they do help decide what is for dinner, 56% indicated they help decide sometimes, and 12% answered they don't help decide.
- 76% of youth answered they get to help make dinner sometimes.
- All youth indicated that their family eats beef at dinner at least sometimes.
- 100% of youth indicated that beef is healthy to eat.

The quiz was re-administered at the end and expanded to include questions that would reflect knowledge gained. These questions included how many grams of protein are in a serving of beef, what vitamins are provided by beef, how many stomach compartments a cow

has and do cows help reduce forest fires. Youth were also asked to share which of the meals was their favorite.

- 67% of the youth correctly answered that there are 25 grams of protein in a serving of beef.
- 33% of the youth correctly answered that beef provides vitamins B6 and B12.
- 67% of the youth answered correctly that a cow has four stomach compartments.
- 87% of the youth answered correctly that cattle help reduce forest fires.

In comparing pre and post-test responses related to changes in behavior; the results were primarily unchanged except for an 82% increase in indication their family ate beef at least once a week.

The Future

A modified version of this University of Idaho Extension program was offered as a one-day session for enrolled 4-H youth during which they prepared a full meal. In addition to learning about products that come from agriculture production in the region, they learned the importance of eating balanced meals.

In addition to the program being offered again in the upcoming school year, a second site has been identified in a neighboring county. In reviewing answers provided by youth, it will also be necessary to modify the quiz to better capture true change in behaviors. Ultimately, the participating youth enjoyed not only the activity but were able to have a positive beef eating experience.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

Thank you to the Grangeville Kids Klub for providing the location to host this program along with handling the preparation before each session.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Meranda Small, Extension Educator • University of Idaho Extension, Idaho County • 208-983-2667 • msmall@uidaho.edu

19-26-msmall-cooking-beef • 8/26