

# THE IMPACT OF COOKING IN A UC CALFRESH (SNAP-Ed) / 4-H AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM

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## Materials:

- 4-H Cooking 101 series curriculum
- Portable cooking equipment
- Dedicated educators
- SNAP-Ed & 4-H funding
- 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grade after school program participants



## Ingredients:

- 7 lessons
- 1 ½- 2 hours each
- 6 healthy recipes
- Focus on cooking skills
- No kitchen required

**Background:** Thirty-three percent of children eat from a fast food restaurant daily, even though research has shown that food prepared at home is usually healthier, more economical and lower calorie. With more than one third of children overweight in the United States, healthy eating habits lower the risk of developing related chronic diseases which impact the physical, social, emotional and financial health of individuals and the country. Lack of cooking skills and confidence are cited as major factors for selecting fast food over home cooked meals.

**Objectives:** To teach students how to choose, prepare, and cook healthy foods, which is a priority for the UC CalFresh (SNAP-Ed) and 4-H Programs in Yolo County.

**Methods:** The UC-CalFresh Nutrition Education Program in Yolo County, California has coordinated with 4-H to lead the Cooking Academy using the 4-H Cooking 101 series curriculum with elementary students from six different, ethnically diverse, low-income sites. The hands-on, experiential, skill-based program includes seven weeks of cooking and food safety instruction centered on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans with an emphasis on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, water, and healthy fats.

**Results:** Trying new foods was evaluated, with 97% of students stating they would eat zucchini again, 73% of students enjoyed whole wheat pasta and 94% enjoyed blackberries, 35% of students increased their liking of tofu. Formative testing showed increases in cooking at home, self-efficacy in trying new foods, washing hands before food preparation, and eating more than one fruit or vegetable at dinner.

**Impact:** These results indicate that children improved towards the goals of both programs. UC CalFresh wants Americans to select and prepare foods consistent with the dietary guidelines. Self-efficacy related to food preparation and trying new foods increased in these young chefs. This is crucial to continued cooking and preparation of healthy meals. Students also stated that they learned and enjoyed working as a team and helping others. These are important constructs in 4-H Youth Development programs whose aim is to help students grow towards caring, confident, connected, competent contributing adults.

“What were 3 things you learned at Cooking Academy?”

- 54% cited how to cook
- 35% cited learning about healthy foods
- 29% cited how to follow directions
- 18% cited how to read a label
- 15% cited teamwork skills

“What were the 3 best things about Cooking Academy?”

- 57% cited making the food
- 27% cited trying new foods
- 24% cited working with others
- 22% cited trying new things
- 14% cited helping

When asked what they would improve about Cooking Academy:

26% stated they wanted it to be longer!

**Chef Quote:**  
What I like best was...  
“...making food and being able to help out”  
-Female, age 9

**Chef Quote:**  
I learned...  
“...how to read if an item is whole grain or how much fiber it has”  
-Male, age 10



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