

UC CalFresh and 4-H Partner to Serve up an Intensive Hands on Course of Study to Develop a Generation of Student Chefs

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Introduction

- Over the past 20 years, the frequency of family dinners has significantly declined even though research has shown that children who share family dinners three or more times per week are less likely to be overweight and more likely to perform better academically, eat healthier foods, and have better relationships with their parents. Thus, educating students on how to choose, prepare, and cook healthy foods is a priority for the UC CalFresh Nutrition Education Program (NEP) and the 4-H Youth Development Program (YDP) in Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Sutter and Yuba Counties.

Methods

- UC CalFresh partnered with 4-H YDP, Yuba City Unified School District, Wheatland School District, and the Wheatland Union High Culinary Arts Club to implement Cooking Academy, a Teens-as-Teachers (TAT) program. The TAT model provides extended learning opportunities for teens to learn, lead, and serve their community.
- Five teens attended a Statewide TAT training in Davis and seven teens participated in a full-day training hosted locally by UC CalFresh and 4-H. These trainings aimed to educate teens on the basic skills of food preparation, selection, safety, and science, as well as to prepare them to work with elementary school students.
- During the trainings, teens learned culinary techniques, behavior guidance strategies, and how to prepare each recipe featured in the Cooking 101 curriculum.
- Each of the three Cooking Academy sites consisted of seven weeks of cooking and food safety instruction where youth (ages 6-11) had opportunities to learn basic nutrition information, try new foods, and safely prepare meals using recipes that incorporated foods grown in the school's edible garden and the local community.

Results (Teens)

- Teens who participated as TAT in this program increased their overall self-confidence, ability to act as mentors, and ability to speak before a group.
- After participating in the program, 66.7% of TAT strongly agreed and 33.3% agreed that they learned what makes up a balanced diet and which foods they should eat each day.
- Additionally, 66.7% of TAT reported that they eat more fruits and vegetables, drink less soda, and consume more water after participating in the program.
- All teens that participated in the program either strongly agreed (20%) or agreed (80%) that their families have purchased healthier food because of participating in the program.

Results (Youth)

- As a result of participating in the program, youth willingness to try new foods increased.
- When asked how often they tried new foods, 8.3% of youth initially said always, 50% said sometimes, and 29.2% said once in a while. After participating in the program, 26.3% of youth said they always try new foods, 21.1% said often, 36.8% said sometimes, and 29.2% said once in a while.
- Initially, 46% of youth considered themselves to be extremely good cooks and after participating in the program, this increased to 74%, yielding a difference of +28%.
- In addition, 42% of youth initially reported that they were able to chop vegetables extremely well with a knife, which increased to 90% after participating in the program.



Client Testimonial

- "My son Damien is enrolled in the cooking program. He had a wonderful time in this program. It has inspired him to taste new foods and take an interest in cooking. He has come home from the program and explained to me about the food he has made, food preparation and all about cooking! Because of this program, he asked if he could cook our Thanksgiving dinner". -Heather Panteloglou

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- The authors would also like to thank the Wheatland High Culinary Arts Club. The mission of the Culinary Arts club is to increase the skills and knowledge of cooking using fresh ingredients that help maintain a healthy lifestyle. The Culinary Club works in both school and the community to promote healthy cooking using fresh, flavorful and affordable ingredients.