

CalFresh Healthy Living, UCCE Promotes Community Health with Teens Love Cooking

Completed 

Reporting Periods

SNAP-Ed 2022 (October 1, 2021 - September 30, 2022)

Site

Minami Community Center

Unit

Santa Barbara (County)

COVID-19 Impact

Modified due to COVID-19

Program Activity

[YE-staff-teens.love.cooking.smparks.F22](#)

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Positive Youth Development

Uploads

[IMG_6544 \(1\).jpg](#)

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Has Photo Releases

Yes

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Story

Background

CalFresh Healthy Living, UCCE (CFHL, UCCE) in Santa Barbara County partnered with Santa Maria Recreation and Parks (SM R&P) to promote healthy eating and teach basic culinary skills to middle and high school youth over the summer. Unlike the past year, which included an adapted online version of the class, this year CFHL, UCCE staff were able to meet with 18 teens in-person to conduct classes and cook together. Through a 6-lesson series, *Teens Love Cooking*, using the Cooking for Health Academy curriculum, participants completed lessons consisting of four components including nutrition education, food safety, culinary skill techniques, and recipe tastings.

The Issue

Collectively, Santa Maria-Bonita (SMBSD) and Santa Maria Joint Union High (SMJUHS) school districts serve over 25,600 students with more than half of the students qualifying for free or reduced-price school meals at either site.[1] While schools may provide nutritious meals for students, teens, in particular, purchase fast food during non-mealtimes such as after school. Fast food meals are heavily targeted towards youth living in low-income neighborhoods and are typically high calorie foods that contain added sugars, saturated fats, and sodium. [2,3] Furthermore, 52.1% of youth in Santa Barbara County reported eating fast food two or more times a week [4]. Children and adolescents who learn how to cook at a young age are more likely to adopt healthier eating practices later into adulthood. [5,6] Eating a healthy diet and getting regular exercise can help reduce the risk of diseases related to poor nutrition and weight management such as high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke. [7]

[1] EdData. *Free and Reduced-Priced Meals in Santa Maria-Bonita and Santa Maria Joint Union (2020-2021)*. Retrieved August 4, 2022, from <http://www.ed-data.org/district/Santa-Barbara/Santa-Maria-Bonita>

[2] Harris, Jennifer L., Marlene B. Schwartz, and Kelly D. Brownell. "Evaluating fast food nutrition and marketing to youth." *New Haven, CT: Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity* (2010).

[3] Fleischhacker, S. E., Evenson, K. R., Rodriguez, D. A., & Ammerman, A. S. (2010). A systematic review of Fast Food Access Studies. *Obesity Reviews*, 12(5).
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-789x.2010.00715.x>

[4] UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, California Health Interview Survey (Mar. 2018). (n.d.). *Children eating fast food two or more times in the past week, by age group*. Retrieved August 4, 2022, from [Kidsdata.org](http://kidsdata.org)

[5] Hersch D, Perdue L, Ambroz T, Boucher JL. Peer Reviewed: The Impact of Cooking Classes on Food-Related Preferences, Attitudes, and Behaviors of School-Aged Children: A Systematic Review of the Evidence, 2003–2014. *Prev Chronic Dis*. 2014. doi:[10.5888/pcd11.140267](https://doi.org/10.5888/pcd11.140267).

[6] Utter J, Larson N, Laska MN, Winkler M, Neumark-Sztainer D. Self-Perceived Cooking Skills in Emerging Adulthood Predict Better Dietary Behaviors and Intake 10 Years Later: A Longitudinal Study. *J Nutr Educ Behav*. 2018 May;50(5):494-500. doi: 10.1016/j.jneb.2018.01.021. Epub 2018 Mar 7. PMID: 29525525; PMCID: PMC6086120.

[7] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2018, February). *Health Risks of Overweight & Obesity*. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. Retrieved August 4, 2022, from <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/weight-management/adult-overweight-obesity/health-risks>

Story Narrative

How UC Delivers

To address this need, CFHL, UCCE partnered with SM R&P to promote *Teens Love Cooking* to middle school and high school-aged youth throughout the city of Santa Maria. Additionally, SM R&P provided access to a full commercial kitchen, kitchenware, and storage space for program materials. With the support of a SM R&P staff member, CFHL, UCCE staff met with students twice a week over 3 weeks for 2 hours at Minami Community Center, to teach on various topics, including MyPlate foods groups, cutting and knife safety, and cooking and measuring techniques. After each lesson students put into practice what they had just learned by preparing recipes sourced from the Cooking for Health Academy curriculum, eatfresh.org, and foodhero.org. Some recipes were supplemented from the original curriculum to accommodate current COVID-19 protocols when cooking in large groups to ensure participants and staff were safe. Although some of the recipes needed to be simplified, each participant was provided ample opportunity to practice and grow their food safety and cooking skills. Lastly, every student was given lesson handouts and recipes to take home and share with their family.

The Impact

Teens Love Cooking participants practiced new skills such as knife safety and how to cook a healthy meal using MyPlate as a

guide. Additionally, they had the opportunity to try new foods with a healthy twist. For example, they made a pizza using a whole wheat tortilla as the crust to add more whole grains to their meal. At the end of each session, youth were asked to complete the Teacher Tasting Tool, which seeks feedback from youth if they would try that food again. Out of 10 participants, 80% reported that they were willing to eat the pizza again. Additionally, out of 18 participants, 83% that tried jicama in a fruit salad were willing to eat it again and ask for it at home. At the end of the class series, youth were asked to complete the “What Did You Learn” survey which collects information about any changes in dietary knowledge and behaviors from youth. All 10 participants completed the survey and 60% reported they learned how to safely use a knife and practice different cutting techniques. Other responses from the survey included that they learned about nutrition and how to prepare healthy recipes. When teens are confident in their culinary and nutrition skills, they are more likely to make healthier food choices. Overall, participants gained valuable life skills in culinary, food safety, and nutrition that equips them to live healthier lives.

Favorite Quote

“I really liked the Oatmeal Bites, so I made them at home for my family to taste”. - Highschool student

SNAP-Ed Custom Data

Related Framework Indicators

Healthy Eating (ST1)
 Food Resource Management (ST2)
 Healthy Eating Behaviors (MT1)
 Food Resource Management Behaviors (MT2)
 Organizational Partnerships (ST7)
 Fruits and Vegetables (R2)

Socio-Ecological Framework

Individual/Family

Approaches

Individual or group-based nutrition educators (e.g. direct education)
