

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

Mealtime Inspirations participants learn food preparation skills in southeast Idaho

AT A GLANCE

Family and consumer sciences University of Idaho Extension educators teach cooking and food preparation skills for community members in Blackfoot.

The Situation

Since COVID-19 restrictions have eased, Americans have shifted towards eating out more and cooking at home less. Eating out more often has been associated with negative health results, including weight gain, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, mood issues and digestive problems. One of the reasons people are eating out more is that many individuals lack cooking skills, especially among the rising generations. Many of them never learned basic cooking skills because their parents never taught them how to cook. Fewer high school students are taking family and consumer sciences (FCS) classes. The decreased interest in FCS classes has led to some schools dropping those classes.

Our Response

The University of Idaho Extension Eastern District FCS educators provided a Mealtime Inspirations community event to share cooking, meal preparation and other presentations. The Mealtime Inspirations program consisted of a night of cooking and educational demonstrations. In 2023, it was held in Blackfoot (Bingham County). The 2023 Mealtime Inspirations theme was Celebration Edition. Eight-minute presentations were given by each of the six Extension educa-



Extension educators teach food preparation skills for Mealtime Inspirations Event in Blackfoot in November 2023.

tors involved in the program on a variety of topics including savory appetizers, mocktails, sugared cranberries, cheese sticks and cream cheese dip. Two minutes were allowed for questions from the community members after each presentation. Door prizes relating to the topics presented were donated by the presenters for those attending. A tasting table was provided at the end of the program.

Program Outcomes

Survey data was collected using a post-pre retrospective format. Questions were asked regarding participant knowledge, beliefs and behaviors. Sixteen participants answered most of the questions.

Table 1. Number and Percentage of Participants Answering Knowledge Questions Correctly

Knowledge Question	Correct
When compared to pork bacon, turkey bacon has...	10 (63%)
What is the chemical compound that makes jalapeno peppers spicy hot?	16 (100%)
What are important flavors to keep in mind when making a refreshing mocktail?	14 (88%)
What health benefit is associated with eating cranberries?	14 (88%)
What other positive results may occur from home decorating?	14 (88%)
Knowledge Question	

Participants indicated behaviors, using a five-point Likert scale. Each point was assigned a number (one=strongly disagree to five=strongly agree). The responses were averaged. A higher average indicated more performance of behaviors previously or more intention to perform behaviors in the future. A t-test was used to compare responses for before and after the program. Most averages of behaviors before the program were significantly lower ($p < 0.05$) or highly significantly lower ($p < 0.01$) than after the program. See Table 2.

Table 2: Average of Participants Agreement with Behavior Statements

Behaviors	Before	After	p-value
I (plan to) include(d) jalapeno peppers in the foods that I ate (eat).	2.56	3.06	0.028
I (plan to) include(d) mocktails in my holiday plans.	1.73	3.4	0.00000581
I (plan to) include(d) my children or grandchildren in the household cooking.	3.25	3.31	0.33461375
I (plan to) include(d) cranberries in the foods that I ate (eat).	2.88	3.44	0.016951796
I (plan to) use(d) artistically folded napkins when decorating a table.	2.31	3.19	0.000290789

Evaluation results indicated that the Mealtimes Inspirations program positively affected the knowledge, beliefs and behaviors of participants in Blackfoot.

The Future

FCS Extension educators plan to continue providing the Mealtimes Inspirations program to community members throughout southeastern Idaho.

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25-24-lsant-mealtime skills • 10/24