

Adding food tasting to your nutrition display

Food tastings enhance nutrition education displays by translating the nutrition message to food products, which can be tried on site. Food sampling can increase interest in preparing, buying and enjoying new foods and new recipes.

Offering samples of food at your nutrition education display provides the opportunity to try a new food or recipe before preparing it. This can help participants decide if they want to prepare the recipe at home and may reinforce nutrition education messages.

The Value of a Food Tasting

- Focuses in on food and cooking
- Reaches many people in a short amount of time
- Suits older adults' need for self-directed learning
- Increases the chance that participants will prepare and eat new foods at home

Getting Started

Before deciding on the recipes to be used for the food tasting, the first step is to decide on the topic of the display. Keep your audience in mind as you select a relevant topic. Once you have selected the topic, you can move forward in choosing appropriate recipes and testing them. Testing recipes beforehand takes time so plan well ahead.

Choosing Recipes

Two to three recipes are ideal for tasting at your nutrition education display. It is recommended that the display is staffed with the same number of people as recipes ~ so keep this in mind when deciding how many recipes to use. The recipes you use may

need to be adjusted for differences in a senior's lifestyle. Things that need to be considered are:

- **Smaller household.** Seniors may only be cooking for one or two people, so make sure the recipe yield is appropriate. If the yield is larger, provide directions for storage and freezing.
- **Changing physical abilities.** Seniors may not have the same capacity or interest to finely mince and chop ingredients. Make sure alternative methods, like using a food processor, are included as an option.
- **Simplicity.** Not everyone has the same cooking skills, so make sure the recipe is simple both in the number of steps and the types of cooking knowledge and techniques required. Make sure the recipe is written with user friendly words. If appropriate, include options for how to prepare the recipe using the microwave.
- **Minimal Ingredients.** Try to select a recipe that uses as few ingredients as possible in realistic amounts. Keep in mind the type of recipe, the amount needed of each ingredient, and the size in which each ingredient is purchased when assessing whether each ingredient is appropriate. An ingredient list with many items in small amounts may not be realistic given the number of items needed to buy and the unused portions that will be left over.

Once you have selected the recipes you want to use, be sure to test each one and have representatives from your target audience sample the recipe before finalizing it.

Preparing for the display

Consider the following when preparing for your display:

- **Staff.** The nutrition display should be staffed with the same number of people as recipes. This allows for ideal interaction and informal discussions with the display participants. Keep in mind that volunteers may be asked nutrition and food preparation questions. They need to be educated in advance on specifics relating to the recipe. Consider using students in nutrition programs or Community Food Advisors as volunteer helpers.
- **Location.** The booth should be set up in a busy area at the site where there are plenty of people walking by. This includes near the entrance, the front-desk, and, if available at the cafeteria. If you need to keep food hot, you will need a location with an electrical outlet nearby.

- **Reserving space.** You may need to reserve the location for the tasting in advance. Make sure there is a table arranged for you to use.
- **Time.** Two to three hours is recommended for the tasting activity. Be sure to schedule it during busy times at the facility.

Items needed for setting up the display

Along with a table for your tasting, you will also need the following items at your display:

- Display board focusing on the nutrition topic
- Relevant education handouts
- Copies of all recipes
- Table cloth
- Small napkins
- Serving platters for the samples (one per recipe)
- Serving utensils for portioning out the samples
- Small paper or plastic portion cups
- Plastic cutlery (i.e. spoons or forks) for tasting, if needed
- Signs for each recipes with an allergen alert
- Items to decorate the display table with related to any novel ingredients used
- Matching aprons or outfits for the staff at the display
- Name tags for the staff at the display

A dollar store often carries all these items, and this can help keep your food tasting within budget.

When preparing the recipes for the food tasting, keep in mind the number of participants expected and the size of your sample portions. Only one batch, or even a half batch, of the recipe may be needed. However, it will take a couple displays in order to accurately estimate the number of samples needed.

Food safety guidelines need to be followed during both food preparations as well as during the display. You can refer to your local public health unit for guidelines. Keep prepared recipes at correct temperatures by bringing ice to keep cold recipes cold or a crock pot to keep hot recipes hot. An extension cord may be needed for the crock pot depending on the location of the electrical outlet.

Estimating the cost of implementing a food tasting

The cost of the food tasting can vary depending on the number of recipes being used, the number of recipes tested beforehand, and the number of ingredients needed. It will cost around \$10-\$25 in order to cover the expense of finalizing one recipe and preparing it for the display.

Expect to spend more money when implementing the first few tasting displays in order to cover the cost of items that will be reused such as serving platters, dishes, and containers. Other items that will need to be purchased for each individual display can be seen on the list in the section above.

It is important to consider the staff involved with implementing this program and the amount of time needed from them. To reduce costs, students in nutrition programs or Community Food Advisors can be great resources for researching the theme topic, creating the nutrition display, designing any handouts, testing any recipes, and being present at the display.

Track usage and effectiveness

In order to help you estimate numbers for the next food tasting, keep track of the number of food samples tasted as well as the number of recipe handouts taken once the display has ended.

Display staff should speak with participants to gain feedback on the recipes used and future recipe ideas. A short evaluation form can also help this, and one that can be modified for your specific tasting is provided on the next page.

This document was created by Barbara Manilla in partial fulfillment for a Masters in Applied Human Nutrition degree (2008) granted from the University of Guelph, through the Department of Family Relations and Human Nutrition. Professor Heather Keller RD, PhD, FDC and Margaret Hedley MSc, provided advise on this work.

Sample

Tasting Feedback Form

[Insert Display Topic Here]

[Insert Display Date Here]

1. Which recipe(s) did you taste today? Check all that apply.

[Insert Recipe Name Here]

[Insert Recipe Name Here]

2. Do you plan to: (check all that apply):

prepare one or all of the recipes sampled today

increase/decrease/change my intake relating to [Topic Name] such as

3. Are there any topics or recipes you would like to see at future tasting displays?

4. Please add any other comments about the tasting displays:

Thank you for completing this form. Your feedback is anonymous.

For more help...

1. **Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety**

Website provides information on food safety and preventing food-borne illness.

<http://www.canfightbac.org/en/> From top horizontal bar select “food safety tips”

Comments: Comprehensive food safety tips. Includes excellent resources on handling, preparing, and cooking food as well as cleaning and sanitizing.

2. *Tastes for Life* resources to review are:

Practical Tips: Creating a Display

Practical Tips: Demonstrating Food

Practical Tips: Recipe Readiness