

Using Food in the Classroom

Food demonstrations and cooking lessons can be great ways to communicate nutrition information while building skills and confidence. There are many ways to use food in the classroom. This section describes the process of preparing and conducting cooking classes at WIC. The material in this section was adapted from Local Agencies 1 and 42.

As in any lesson, state a general objective for the class. For example, clients will:

- Discuss the advantages of whole grains.
- State at least one new cooking skill.
- Take home at least one meal planning tip, idea or suggestion they can use in their life.

Review Food Safety

Teaching about keeping food safe, as well as making sure the food provided for demonstration and samples is safe, is vital to participants' health. It is suggested that the instructor obtain a Food Handler's permit from the local health department. In addition, please review basic information to ensure that food safety knowledge is up to date.

- See www.fightbac.org for information, fact sheets, and flyers on food safety.
- See www.foodsafety.gov for information on all aspects of food safety; check the section on "Preventing Food Borne Illness."
 - Keep food, hands and kitchen surfaces clean.
 - Cook foods adequately to proper temperature.
 - Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold- above 140° F or below 40° F.
 - Avoid raw eggs and products with raw eggs.
 - Do not give honey to infants under one year of age- it may cause botulism.
 - Cool leftovers immediately by storing in shallow (two inch) containers and refrigerate.

Choose a Recipe

Select a nutritious recipe that includes WIC approved foods (translate the recipe into Spanish) and make it available to participants. Make sure the recipe can be assembled at the WIC clinic within the allotted class time. Most recipes require cooking and preparation the night before to account for class time and ensure that participants have a finished product to see and sample. Be sure to make use of available cooking utensils and supplies or ones that can be easily purchased. The recipe should fit in with a class topic or should be the class topic. For example, if the class is about food safety then choose a recipe that demonstrates the basic food safety principals including preparing, purchasing and storing foods.

Review and Prepare the Class Topic

Review the class's basic learning objectives and discussion questions. Review all available materials that are relevant to the class topic. Be sure to have several discussion questions and talking points prepared in advance to keep the session interactive.

Design the Lesson Plan

Follow the CCNE template for lessons development.

Relevant Icebreaker

Include an icebreaker that is relevant to cooking and preparing foods. See the Icebreakers section earlier in this module for ideas. For example, use the following main icebreaker question "How many people here ate something purple or red yesterday?"

Prepare for Cooking Demonstration

Purchase all food items and supplies needed. If cooking another batch in advance for samples, remember to buy twice the amount of ingredients. Keep food safe: cold foods should be kept below 40°F and hot foods above 140°F. Follow food safety guidelines for all foods. While washing hands is a must, one may choose to use gloves. It is good practice to use a hair net and an apron. Clean all kitchen utensils and surfaces that come in contact with food.

Pre-Preparation (before class):

It is recommended to prepare some of the demonstrated food ahead of time. Sometimes this involves preparation the night before the food demonstration so some clients can sample the food while it is being prepared and others can sample it afterwards. Ingredients for the demonstration should be pre-measured and placed in condiment cups or small bowls to save time during the class. A good idea is to chop vegetables and cook pasta for recipes or food demonstrations in advanced unless they are part of the food demo or class.

Allow time on clinic class schedule for clean up before the next class begins.

Collect the Materials and Supplies You Will Need

Sanitize Food Preparation Areas

Be sure to sanitize all surfaces in and around where participants will be setting out or preparing foods. Make a sanitizing solution fresh every day with $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon plain household bleach mixed in one quart (four cups) water. Put solution in spray bottle and label it; keep away from children. To use, mist surface and let it set for 60 seconds then rinse or wipe off with clean paper towel.

Hand Washing

Washing hands before touching, preparing and eating food is a major step in preventing food borne illnesses- therefore each lesson should revisit this topic. Emphasize the importance of washing hands to

prevent contaminating food with bacteria. Hands need to be washed with soap and warm water before and after handling raw foods such as meat, poultry, fish and eggs.

The recommended method for washing hands is to lather-up both sides of each hand for at least 20 seconds. Scrub vigorously by rubbing hands and paying special attention to cleaning around and under fingernails. Use plenty of water to rinse off soap and bacteria. The water needs to run with enough force to help dislodge bacteria.

If possible, (e.g. hand washing facilities are easy available) have all participants wash their hands before food preparation. If not, at least give them hand sanitizer. Waterless hand washing solutions are popular, but may not be as effective as washing. They contain alcohol that kills bacteria. However, research shows that the alcohol typically kills only the top layer or two of bacteria, leaving underlying layers of bacteria on the hands. If using these waterless solutions, it is best to wash them off with briskly running water to dislodge all layers of bacteria. If no water is available, at least use paper towels to help rub off bacteria.

Food Demonstration/Cooking Demo Tips:

- Always try a recipe before conducting a demonstration.
- Use clear containers so food is visible.
- Reduce “clutter” in an effort to keep the food demo visible without distraction of empty dishes.
- If purchasing a wok, buy an electric one since butane burners can be dangerous and have an unpleasant odor.
- Ask parents first if their children can have a sample and let parents serve their child.
- Ask if anyone has known food allergies before providing samples.
- Put things out of site when finish with them.
- Do all measuring, chopping, etc. ahead of time – unless it is part of the demonstration.
- Use tablecloths or kid friendly decorations to construct pleasant ambience.
- Pull hair back or wear a hat to prevent hair from falling into food.
- Wash hands prior to the demonstration and have hand-sanitizing gel available.
- If the facility does not have an oven, it may be necessary to bake items at home and bring them to the class for tasting. It is not unusual to prep the recipe at home for foods that need more cooking time than the class allows, or that need to marinate, or that need larger portions to serve to the whole class. Cooking at home also serves as good practice for instructors that have never tried the recipe. Determine in advance whether it is necessary to prep all or some of the recipe at home.
- Shop as close to cooking time as possible. Fresh is best! Choose seasonal fruits and vegetables.

Prepare Discussion Questions

Prepare a small list of discussion questions with prompts to perk conversation among clients. Be sure to explain what is (or will be) being demonstrated for them and ask participants how they can use the recipe at home. Include some useful tips for family meals or meal planning.

Sample Questions:

1. What are the benefits of the (fruit and/or vegetable) in the recipe?
2. What are some modifications/substitutions that can be made to make the recipe healthier? This will vary for each recipe but may include:
 - a. Using egg whites instead of whole eggs
 - b. Using canola or olive oil
 - c. Using vegetable spray instead of oil/margarine
 - d. Using lean beef or draining the fat from cooked beef
 - e. Using skim milk or low-fat milk instead of whole milk
 - f. Using white whole-wheat or whole-wheat flour instead of all-purpose flour

A good recipe will also include tips on how to prepare the recipe, cooking and storing the ingredients and finished product and variations for the recipe.

3. What are the benefits to some of the other ingredients and/or substitutions in the recipe? This will vary for each recipe but may include:
 - a. Whole-wheat flour and oatmeal is high in fiber, which can help lower cholesterol, prevent constipation and make people feel fuller.
 - b. Using substitutions with less or no fat is better for heart health.
 - c. Using substitutions with less or no fat can help with weight loss.
 - d. Olive and canola oil contain healthier fats and can lower risk of heart disease.

Other Talking Points:

- Knife safety, kitchen safety, continuous cleaning, be sure to scan recipes and instructions before starting, start kids helping in the kitchen at a young age (putting out napkins, peeling bananas, etc.), encourage kids to say “no thank you” if they do not want food, importance of food safety and hand washing.

Adjust Class for Young Children

Include young children in the class demo. Ask parents if children can taste the food and if the recipe allows for young children to participate, invite them to collaborate with age appropriate tasks, such as counting food items needed in meal preparation.

After Class: Once the demonstration is over, wash all dishes and utensils and put them away. Organize the cooking utensils so that it is easy to find at the next class. Clean the facility and pick up after the class. Return tables and chairs to their original positions if necessary. Make the facility look as though the demonstration never happened.