

IMPACT

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Mealtime Inspirations – Holiday Edition increases visibility of FCS Extension

The Situation

Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Extension Educators provide education to improve the lives of their clientele. They assess stakeholder needs then develop educational programs to solve problems and meet those needs. Funders are increasingly scrutinizing the impact of Extension programs. In Idaho, Agricultural Extension Educators have had a lot of success with specialty schools, such as potato, cereal, and beef schools. They attract large audiences of producers and industry representatives, provide education, and offer an opportunity for networking. When there has been the threat of decreased funding for agriculture programs, both producers and industry have appealed to decision-makers to maintain current programs. There has been some concern voiced that FCS Extension Educators are not as visible; that they are working locally rather than regionally; and that they are reaching more youth than adults.

Our Response

One effort to make FCS Extension more visible was to develop and present *Mealtime Inspirations – Holiday Edition*, a program designed to increase participants' knowledge of University of Idaho (UI) Extension and to teach participants the importance of family mealtimes, the benefits of cooking with children, how to prepare several holiday-themed foods, and how to spend less during the holidays. A team of ten FCS Extension Educators developed and presented cooking demonstrations, educational presentations, Extension-produced videos and evaluation questions using a remote student response system.

Our primary target audience was the general public, particularly adults who prepare meals. We decided not to target a specific audience such as those with a chronic disease or those that were low income.



Char Byington demonstrates quinoa pilaf preparations. Photo by Marnie Spencer.

However, almost all of our cooking demonstration segments included foods that would be appropriate for someone on a restricted diet and registration scholarships were available to anyone with financial need.

Program Outcomes

Fifty-nine people attended *Mealtime Inspirations – Holiday Edition* and it is anticipated that interest in the program will grow as future events are held. Participants used a remote student response system to answer questions throughout the program. As noted in the table, not all participants answered every question and some participants chose not to answer any questions. Questions were approved by UI Institutional Review Board. The percentage of participants that responded affirmatively to the following statements were as follows:

Statement	Percent	n
I learned something about cooking with children	100%	39
I plan to cook with children over the holidays	73%	15
I felt family mealtimes were important before the program	70%	40
I feel that family mealtimes are important after the program	88%	40
I learned something new about knife safety and use	100%	39
I plan to use a new knife safety or knife use tip	62%	39
I learned about the nutritional value of quinoa	78%	40
I plan to use quinoa after learning about it	68%	41
I learned something new about cooking beef	100%	42
I learned to adjust recipes to make them healthier	100%	39
I plan to adjust a recipe to make it healthier	66%	38
I learned that food safety, nutrition and family information was available at my local University of Idaho Extension office	38%	40
I am likely to return to the University of Idaho for future cooking tips	90%	40
I am confident in the quality, safety, and accuracy of the information provided	100%	38

A follow-up survey was done in January of 2012 after participants had the opportunity to use the information and skills they learned from *Mealtime Inspirations – Holiday Edition*. The percentage of participants that responded affirmatively to the following statements were as follows:

Statement	Percent	n
I have used the University of Idaho Extension at least once for food safety, nutrition, financial management, or family information	68%	29
I have prepared at least one of the recipes I learned at Mealtime Inspirations	57%	29
I have used at least one of the skills I learned at Mealtime Inspirations	91%	29

Several questions were asked regarding what the participants were doing before attending the program and after attending the program. The two questions in which respondents answers changed significantly from before to after were: 1) Have you considered less expensive ways to do things such as see a movie?, and 2) Did you spend less money on the holidays?

The results indicate that *Mealtime Inspirations – Holiday Edition* gave the participants the knowledge, skills, and Extension resources to meet their needs.

The Future

Videos produced for this event were formatted and posted on YouTube and other social media sites. University of Idaho Family and Consumer Sciences Educators have scheduled a similar program, *Mealtime Inspirations – Harvest Edition*, for November 2012.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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