

# impact

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

## Cooking skills for youth can have lifelong health impacts

### AT A GLANCE

Cooking clubs provide youth a practical approach to enhance the development of necessary culinary skills, self-efficacy, nutrition knowledge and family involvement that can lead to lifelong health.

### The Situation

Studies indicated for many years that people are eating out more and spending less time preparing meals at home. Meals prepared away from home are typically higher in calories, fat and sugar. Diets of individuals who prepare their own meals are generally healthier. Studies show that most Americans are willing to spend no more than one hour a day on cooking. Parents would like to have their children participate in meal preparation but often avoid engaging them because of time constraints and possible messiness involved.

### Our Response

As a way to provide opportunities for youth to gain cooking skills and learn about nutrition, three counties in central Idaho formed county 4-H cooking clubs.

Each county reaches a different audience and each club program is structured to represent the needs of that group. There have been cooking clubs in UI Extension offices, afterschool programs, migrant summer school programs and alternative high schools. Each class consists of a how-to lesson focusing on basic cooking skills and nutrition information. Youth complete at least one hands on cooking experience. By the end of the program each youth will have prepared



Youth in the Cassia County 4-H Cooking Club preparing home-made baked French fries.

approximately six recipes from the curriculum, learned many basic cooking skills and completed at least one cooking experiment.

### Program Outcomes

Since 2016 there have been 52 participants in the 4-H Cooking Club — Cooking 101 programs. Post surveys were given to the participants asking what they felt they learned about basic cooking skills through their cooking 101 experience.

Responses to the question “the most important thing I learned is:”

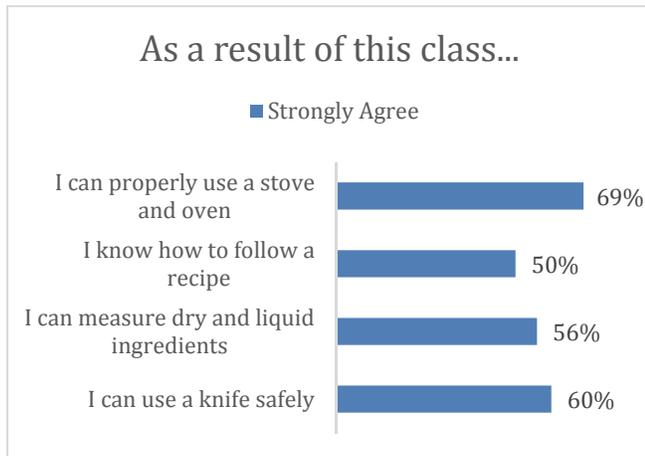
“I know how to use a recipe”

“How to use measuring utensils”

“How to properly hold and use a knife”

“To wash produce before using it in a meal”

Participants were also asked a series of questions responding to the statement “as a result of this class.” Responses were on a Likert scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree. The chart below indicates the percentage of youth who said they strongly agreed with the statement.



These cooking clubs provide practical approaches to enhance the development of necessary culinary skills, self-efficacy, nutrition knowledge and family involvement strategies to create a foundation for children’s lifelong health. A study by John Hopkins University found that people living in households that cook most meals at home tend to follow a healthier diet which has implications for obesity prevention efforts.

### The Future

4-H cooking clubs will continue to be taught in these counties allowing opportunities for youth inside and outside of 4-H to participate. The team will also look at developing programs that are for adults and adult/child teams. The more opportunities offered for families to increase their skills in the kitchen improves nutrition for family members.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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