Get Cooking

Food for Life Get Togethers are regular community activities that connect people from all ages and backgrounds through food.

Here's how you can Get Cooking and bring people in your community together.

GET TOGETHERS

COMMUNITY FUND

@SAFoodforLife #FFLGetTogethers

www.fflgettogethers.org

Inspired to Get Cooking?

If you are interested in organising or supporting with the planning of group cooking activities, you may want some guidance on health and safety, tips for choosing recipes and information and technical advice for demonstrating cooking skills & managing activities. We are here to support you with these things, through our online training offers, downloadable information sheets, case studies, film snippets and good food recipes.

The Benefits

Food, cooking and eating is something we all have in common that can be used to bring us together for shared experiences. Whatever our ages and backgrounds, we all have something to contribute in group cooking activities: sharing skills, reminiscing about food memories, tasting new foods, creating community meals, learning together. There are benefits at all levels - for individuals taking part in cooking sessions, for households, for community groups and for wider society.

Planning, preparation and organisation

There is lots to think about when planning and organising cooking activities, but worth spending time on. Consider the following:

Venue – where are we going to run the cooking session?

Facilities – what are the essentials for running a safe and effective cooking activity?

Accessibility – is the venue accessible to people with additional needs?

Health and safety – what's the best practice guidance for running cooking activities?

What to cook – what do people want to cook? Is there an event we are cooking for?

Ingredients – how do we source/fund the ingredients and materials?

Equipment – what equipment do we need?

Skills and experience - let's draw on people's knowledge and culture.

Who - shall we target specific groups & individuals, or offer it to everyone?

Time – when is the best time to put on activities? How long will a session be?

Routines – would it be helpful to have some simple routines in place to help activities run smoothly and to time?

What do we mean by good food?

- Food that's good for health: lots of fruit and vegetables, fish and wholegrains, less but better-quality meat, and a lot less processed food. Good food is even better when shared.
- Food that's good for the environment: in season, sustainably produced, low-climate impact, and the highest animal welfare standards.
- Food that's good for the economy: grown by local producers, prepared by skilled and knowledgeable people paid a fair wage, and supporting a thriving economy.
- And remember … good food can mean different things to different people depending on cultural background and age.

Skills and techniques

You may want people to learn something from the cooking activity and certainly be inspired to use their experience in their home situation. So, consider how to pass on skills and knowledge:

- How can you manage the session to meet the needs of all the group –young and old, disabilities, language barriers etc?
- How will you arrange the work area to safely manage cooking in a group?
- What preparation and cooking skills will need explaining/showing?
- How will you work safely with sharp knives?

Recipes, skills and techniques

Choosing suitable recipes and passing on safe and effective cooking techniques are key to helping the cooking activity run smoothly and ensuring people come away with more confidence, skill and knowledge. They'll want to come again!

Recipes

When choosing recipes to cook in a group, think about:

- Food safety and managing risk
- The cultural and dietary needs of everyone
- The availability of ingredients - are they easy to get locally, affordable, in season?
- Access to the equipment required for preparation, cooking and storage
- The time you have available for preparing, cooking and eating
- Scaling-up the recipe for making in larger quantities – will it work?
- Sharing what you make – will it be easy to portion out and serve the dishes made together?

The key to Get Cooking success is planning, preparation, organisation and allowing for a good deal of flexibility!

Managing cooking sessions

It's helpful to establish some simple routines when running cooking activities as you have lots to manage and you will want to make things safe and enjoyable for everyone. If you are leading the cooking activity, aim to be a good role model.

Getting to know you
Start each session with a quick, fun foodie activity to bond the group

Personal preparation
Be clear about the importance of hand washing and other personal preparation such as wearing aprons and tying up or covering loose hair. Identify those with food allergies.

Room preparation
Ensure clear access for all, identify work areas to suit the size and make-up of group, clarify fire-safety procedure, check toilet facilities

Tidy up routines
Involve everyone, e.g. stack dishes/wash/dry/put away, empty bins, check fridge, leave work area as you'd expect to find it!

Ingredient preparation
– create shopping lists, order/shop for materials, find out what's available in the community garden, store food safely, portion ingredients, prepare set-outs, wash fruit and veg, highlight allergens in ingredients

Work routines
Communicate how everyone is expected to work, e.g. tidying as you go, following knife safety and food safety procedures, sharing and being respectful towards others, keeping an eye on the clock

COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

Although there can be significant benefits from connecting through good food it is important to consider any current local restrictions linked to the coronavirus. Many activities may still be possible with additional safety measures such as distancing and masks or adaptations such as using video technology or being outdoors. As with all safety considerations when organising activities and events, it is vital to assess and manage the risk appropriately for whoever is attending.