

Healthalicious Cooking

(Practice-tested)

Summary of Evaluation Methods

Healthalicious Cooking was evaluated in eight groups in Contra Costa County (urban) and Amador County (rural). Each group was randomly assigned as youth and adult or youth only. Participants were recruited through the 4-H Youth Development Program, schools, community organizations and newspaper announcements. The study included children aged 6 to 14 years old along with their parent or guardian (youth/adult group only). Healthalicious Cooking consisted of six weekly sessions with each class lasting two hours. Each session included a physical activity game, hands-on cooking, shared mealtime, a nutrition activity and a Quick Write (QW) reflection. Three evaluation approaches were used to capture youth outcomes. First, a pre/post survey on nutrition behavior was administered to participants (n=82) with a subset of youth (n=43) also completing a set of knowledge questions. Nutrition behavior was measured by 4 items (milk, vegetables, fruit, soda/Gatorade) on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”); the five knowledge questions were coded as 1 “correct” or 0 “incorrect”. Lastly, they were asked to complete a QW reflection listing five things they liked, learned and/or noticed during the session.

Evaluation Audience

Eight groups of participants from the 4-H Youth Development Program and their parent/guardian participated in the classes. Youth participants’ ages ranged from 6 to 14 years old. They primarily reported being White (65%) or Hispanic (13%) with a large majority of participating youth being female (74%).

Curriculum Audience

Healthalicious Cooking is a family-centered nutrition curriculum focused on hands-on cooking and physical activities to promote healthy lifestyles. It can be used in after school settings for students, grades 4 to 6, and with adults in programs such as 4-H.

Summary of Evaluation Results

In total, 82 youth participated in the study, 38 in the youth/adult group and 44 in the youth only group. There were no notable differences in knowledge and behavior between the youth/adult and youth only groups at baseline, so the data for the two groups were combined in the analysis. Overall, youth reported significant pre to post improvements in their ability to identify whole grains correctly (+0.53 points, p=0.001) and the consumption of soda or Gatorade (+0.25 points, p=0.03)..

Youth provided valuable qualitative feedback through the QW. Participants shared how they learned about hand washing, how much they liked cooking, learned about how to

cook and physical activities, and an interest in trying new foods and practicing skills at home.

- *I learned that germs are very hard to get off and that cooking takes a lot of responsibility. Now I can cook with my Mom and Grandma. I was very proud of my cheesy pizza.*
- *I saw people putting zucchini on their pizza I thought that was weird, but they told me to try it and I did and it was really good.*

Many youths commented on how much they enjoyed interacting (cooking, playing, learning, being together) with other youth in the class and how they gained confidence in their ability to cook and be physically active.

- *It was fun chopping mushrooms.*
- *The badminton was hard at first, but I got a whole lot better.*

References

Matthiessen, T, Horowitz, M, Neelon, M, Smith, D, Kaiser, L. Insights from an Evaluation of a Healthy Living Project. *Youth Development* 2011; 61.

Neelon, M. 2015. 4-H youth practice healthy living. *UC Delivers*.