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Community Cook & Eat Training



NORTH WEST FOOD & HEALTH
TASK FORCE



INVESTING IN
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Connecting **Farming** and **Food** in England's Northwest

How do I get an interested group?

What is community cook and eat training?

The aim of a cook and eat training session is to increase nutritional knowledge and shopping, budgeting and cooking skills of participants in a practical and fun way usually resulting in a communal meal where participants share the food that they have cooked. The cook and eat session aims to change behaviour by demonstrating practical food skills and allowing participants to steadily build up their confidence in cooking as part of a supportive group over several weeks. Sessions will:

- Allow people to try out recipes.
- Reduce the fear of doing something wrong & ruining a meal.
- Reduce any concerns over the difficulty or time required to prepare a meal at home.

What are the costs likely to be?

Funding will be required for the following elements

1. Set up costs – if you have access to a community kitchen you may have all the equipment in place. If not you will need funding for basic equipment (see appendix 1)
2. Staffing costs, childcare and room rental
3. Training for staff – anyone leading a cook and eat session must have a basic food hygiene certificate and skills in running a group as well as basic nutrition/healthy eating knowledge
4. Ingredient cost – all food costs + a basic start up kit of ingredients. Also consider including a take home pack of ingredients for participants to cook the meal again at home.
5. Resources cost – advertising, recipes, training materials etc

How do I get an interested group?

Before starting any group some form of needs assessment should have been done to identify that this type of session is needed. For a group to be successful people need to be ready to change the way they eat. Ideally group members will have requested to come and are not 'nominated' by others. It is important that groups know what to expect of the sessions and they understand that they will be learning practical skills to help them eat in a healthier way.

The cook and eat sessions could develop out of another existing group e.g. a Sure Start group could be interested in cooking for young children, a weight watching group may want to know how to develop healthier recipes. Be careful that the group have requested this type of session and it is not a group leader who felt it would be useful to the group.

Develop posters or information flyers and discuss what you are proposing with other community workers.

Once you have the beginnings of a group check with the group members about what would be a convenient time to meet, how long they could meet and whether they would need child care arrangements.

What Size of Group?

What size of group?

This will depend on what facilities you have available and how many people there are to help run the group. Small groups of up to four to eight people will work well with one group leader.



What facilities will I need?

Ideally you will have access to a community kitchen specially designed and equipped for this purpose. Smaller kitchens may be available in many community venues and sessions can be adapted. Cooking can take place in any venue provided basic food hygiene rules and risk assessments are considered.

You may need to provide child care facilities

What equipment will I need ?

If all of the group are to make complete meals you will need at least one oven and hob for 2-4 people. However you can divide the tasks up so that some participants are preparing food that does not need cooking. (A basic equipment list is included in appendix 1)

What recipes are used?

The types of foods the group wants to learn to cook needs to be discussed and decided within the group. The aim of the sessions is to build up a range of different cooking methods using foods that illustrate the Balance of Good Health food model. (appendix 2)

Recipes are often developed by the group, many from familiar dishes, that have been modified to improve the variety of ingredients and nutritional quality of the recipe e.g. by adding extra vegetables and reducing the amount of fat and salt added to a recipe.

Group members are given new ideas for combining foods to produce a healthy and tasty range of foods using a few core affordable ingredients. Being involved with developing the recipes helps ensure the recipes are seen as being personally relevant to the participants and are more likely to be replicated at home.

Helping the group to understand ways of reducing the cost of meals may be important. Demonstrating the ease, cost and health benefits of preparing a home made meal compared to a take away meal is often included in one session.

Recipes need to be very simple using basic and commonly available ingredients and equipment so that people with little cooking skills can complete them successfully. They need to be prepared quickly if they are to be considered as an alternative to 'fast food'. This increases confidence and makes group members more likely to try further recipes. The group leader should always test out recipes before hand to be confident that the instructions are clear, all ingredients and utensils are available, the cooking times and temperatures are accurate and that the recipe is an appropriate portion size for the group.

Last of all the group leader should check it tastes good!



How do the Sessions Run?

How do the sessions run?

The session leader (community cook/food worker) will usually demonstrate a technique e.g. how to chop onions safely and then the group participants take over. This technique of modelling and copying skills is an effective way of reducing anxiety and embarrassment if participants have little cooking experience.

Evaluation shows that this practical element of the cooking helps in the recall of other advice and information given in the session.

The sessions need to be kept very informal with a lot of discussion between the group. Appropriate nutritional advice should be given to the group in small 'bites' building on key messages.

Providing a take home bag of ingredients, recipe sheets and other resources is important so that the recipe can be repeated at home to improve the learning and to build confidence.

What skills does a group leader need?

Like any group session it is the group leader that is important to its success. The group leader should have sound basic cooking skills and a credible knowledge of the key nutritional messages as well as a basic food hygiene qualification. He/she should be able to buy and confidently prepare the ingredients and check any equipment. Communication and group skills are vital as well as being enthusiastic, flexible, calm, patient and resourceful with a sense of fun.

The group leader needs to be supported by a good line manager who has specialist skills in nutrition and/or cookery skills to help with the group leader's training and personal development and the development of the course and resources.

Food hygiene training is available from local further education colleges or environmental health departments of the local council.

What about groups with differing requirements?

Sessions will need to be tailored to the abilities and requirements of the people attending. This could include running sessions for people from minority ethnic groups or people with learning difficulties or mental health issues. Specialist knowledge and enhanced communication skills may be required for working with such groups. Engaging a support worker familiar with these communities may be essential as support to the group leader.

An alternative model

Cook and eat sessions have been run using the group leader or a local chef to demonstrate preparing a range of healthy meal ideas. In this type of session participants will not have a direct 'hands on' role in the food preparation but will be shown all the skills required, encouraged to sample any food prepared and can be given recipe sheets and a pack of sample ingredients to try the dishes at home.

This type of model can involve a larger group (10-20 + participants) and is useful to promote an event e.g. Stir Fryday (a National annual promotion event in October) or as a 'taster' session to encourage people to attend a more detailed course. Having a portable kitchen (see Appendix 3 for details) allows you to run this session in any venue with adequate space and could be taken into a school classroom, a large community centre or a marquee (with a power source) for large community 'fun' events.

Further Information

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Appendix 1:

Basic resources needed for cook and eat training in a community kitchen

Utensils (depending on group size)

Chopping boards
A range of knives
Plastic/glass bowls
Kettle

Range of pans
Cutlery
Tin opener
Colander
Baking trays
Cooling racks
Baking tins
Wooden spoons
Rolling pin
Whisk
Electric whisk/food processor

Store cupboard items

Salt and pepper
Stock cubes
Herbs (dried/fresh)
Ginger, Garlic and other spices
Soya sauce
Plain flour
Cornflour
Oils – olive oil, vegetable oil

Other items

Aprons
Washing up liquid
Dish cloths, pan scrubs
Tea towels
Hand towels/paper towels

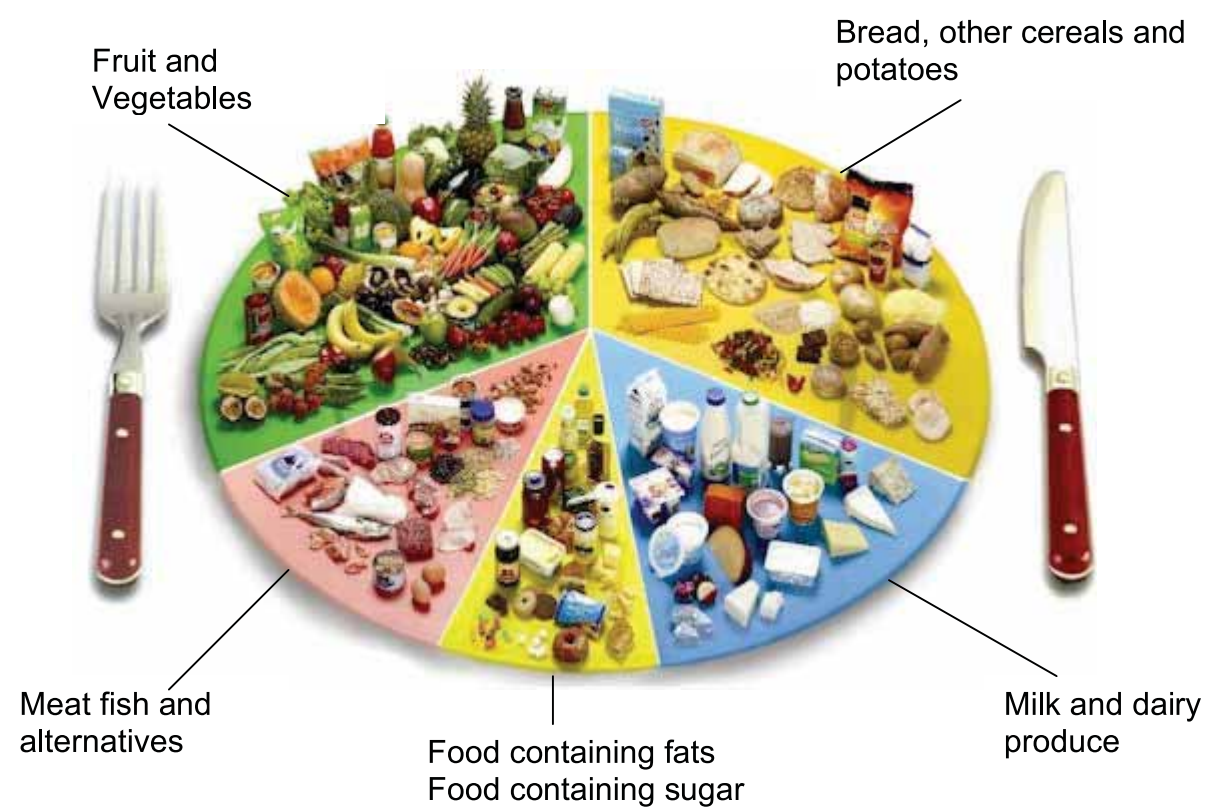


Balance of Good Health Food Model

Appendix 2

Balance of Good Health Food Model
(Published by the Food Standards Agency in consultation with the Department of Health)
For more details see www.food.gov.uk

The Balance of Good Health is a pictorial representation of the recommended balance of foods in the diet, aims to help people understand and enjoy healthy eating.



Basic Ingredients and Utensils

Appendix 3:

Setting up a portable kitchen for Cook and Taste Sessions

Purchase equipment and utensils to create your own portable kitchen which can fit into a car

- smoothie maker
- 2 ring electric 'hob' cooker (portable)
- electric frying pan
- extension lead
- circuit breaker

* Safety – all electrical appliances require PAT (Portable Appliance Testing) approval including any extension leads which should be used with a circuit breaker. Electrical equipment should be away from the group, ideally behind you and with no trailing leads to avoid tripping. Risk assess the process rather than each session if possible, for which a checklist could be drawn up. Make group aware of exits and fire exits.

Store Cupboard Ingredients

- Salt
- Black pepper
- Vegetable stock cubes
- Dried herbs
- French dressing
- Lazy ginger
- Lazy garlic
- Soya sauce
- Stir fry oil

Utensils

- chopping boards
- chopping knives
- plastic bowls
- cutlery
- tin opener
- spoons for serving
- colander
- trays

Disposables (for sampling food cooked)

- paper plates
- handwipes
- spoons/forks
- apron
- paper napkins
- washing-up liquid
- plastic cups for smoothies
- kitchen roll/paper towels
- polystyrene sample pots
- rubbish bags
- take-away foil containers with lids

Packs for attendees

Miscellaneous (group activities)

- supermarket floor plan
- food game
- Provide literature and recipe leaflets to support the session e.g.
 - 5 A DAY literature (see www.5aday.nhs.uk to order literature)
 - locally produced leaflets
 - Food Standards Agency leaflet e.g. Preventing Food Poisoning
 - Recipe leaflets of dishes prepared



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• Growing Fruit and
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Co-operatives • Mobile
Fruit & Vegetable Vans
• Community Cook &
Eat Training • Evaluation



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