Youth Cooking 101: How to Implement Cooking Classes for Kids at Your Library

Mary Daniels, MLIS
Maitland Public Library
Introduction

• Mary Daniels
• Been working at Maitland Public Library in Youth Department since 2013
• Got my MLIS from USF in 2017
• Been cooking with kids since I started, and love coming up with new programs
Why Cook With Kids?

- Innovative programming
- Opportunities for community partnership
- Introduces important life skills they will always have
- Exposes them to ingredients they may not otherwise see or try
How We Started

• MPL already had a children’s cooking program in place, called “Cooking Up Culture,” and kids prepared a dish from a different country or nation each month
• Attendance numbers started to flag, and we realized we needed to revitalize the program
• Winter Park Health Foundation and Healthy Central Florida put out a call for grant applications that would encourage healthy eating and exercise in the Central Florida area
• We applied for and received the grant
Healthy Central Florida Grant

- Grant was two parts: a cooking class and an onsite vegetable/herb garden
- The cooking class has worked out great!
- City landscaping and lack of irrigation prevented plotting our garden in the back of the Library, as we had originally intended
- Because success was uncertain, we did not want to invest much money into plotted gardening container gardening (such as Farm Daddy, etc.)
- As a compromise, we set up an inexpensive potted garden on our patio, where we grew lettuce, basil, tomatoes, Swiss chard, and more
Fresh for Kids

• In this way, Fresh for Kids was born
• FFK is a monthly, hands-on, children’s cooking class, lasting approximately one hour and focusing on a different ingredient each session
• Ages range widely from toddlers to middle schoolers
• Attendance averages 20-100 people per session
Most Popular Recipes

• Veggie dips
• Eggs
• Cake decorating
• Sandwiches
• Breakfast foods
• Smoothies

• Watermelons
• Pineapples
• Homemade ice cream
• Holiday foods
• Salads
• Salads
Things We’ve Learned

• Sign up is a MUST for planning

• Be stricter on your age limits than we were. The point is cooking, not glorified snack time

• Sometimes going outside is best...

• Play with setup.
  • We set up stations with 3-4 recipes, one per table, and the kids travel from table to table.
  • We’ve done it as a group and also just let them move themselves from station to station.
  • Experiment and find what works best for you

• USE VOLUNTEERS!
Other Cooking Programs

• Middle School Cooking series, including holiday food, microwave meals, and special dietary needs (dairy free, vegetarian, and gluten-free)
  • ALWAYS use a disclaimer when doing allergen-specific foods

• Never had luck with high schoolers, but we did plan a good “Dorm Cooking 101” class!

• FFK remains our most popular and successful youth cooking class
Things to Consider When Planning

Space:

• MPL hosts the class in its large community room

• This works well, except when we made ice cream (going outside may have worked better)

Supplies:

• We purchased a set of plastic measuring spoons and cups, and nylon “kid safe” knives expressly for the Fresh for Kids Class

• Otherwise, we use the same equipment as our adult classes
Things to Consider When Planning

**Cost:**
- Project started with grant money, but continued by factoring into our programming budget
- Factor in plates, napkins, utensils, etc.
- Aside from ingredients, this is essentially a cost-free program for us to hold!

**Ingredients:**
- Spend $50 or less per month on average
- Buy in bulk from places like Sam’s Club and Costco
- Ask for donations from community partners.
- We already own many ingredients (spices, olive oil, honey, etc.).
No kitchen? No problem!

• In 2016, MPL opened a full demonstration kitchen, funded with a local grant
• However, we’d been successfully running cooking programs for years before that!
• Best tip: make friends with your Fire Marshal.
Facilities - The Basics

• Sink
• Fire extinguisher
• Tables
  • 6’ adjustable high strength plastic table
Equipment

Single induction burner
Other Useful Appliances

- Electric wok
- Electric skillet
- Crock-pot
- Microwave
- Toaster oven
- No deep fryer!
Kitchen Gadgets You’ll Want

• Spatulas (4/$9 Amazon; 4/$5 HomeGoods)
• Measuring cups & spoons (we got ours from the $1 store and they’re still holding up!)
• Can opener
• Big spoons
• Strainer/colander
• Decent knives and kid-safe knives
Where To Buy Equipment

- Amazon is easy, not always cheap
- Wayfair (call them to get a dedicated buyer)
- Old Time Pottery
- Discount stores (Christmas Tree Shop, HomeGoods, etc.)
- Dollar Tree
- IKEA
- Restaurant supply store
- Big boxes: Wal-Mart, Target, BB&B
Fire & Safety

• The National Fire Prevention Code defines most libraries as Assembly Occupancies
  • Prohibits open flames
  • Requires additional care for grease-laden vapors
• Code can be contradictory and hard to understand. Talk to your friend, the Fire Marshal!
Fire & Safety

• Ask *how* you can do cooking demos (not if!)

• Our Marshal’s answer: our quantities and frequency are small so

  • No open flames
  • Household electrics ok
  • Have fire extinguisher handy
  • No deep frying; no light frying without lid
Hygiene Standards

• Talk to your local inspector or Risk Manager before starting
• Even if you’re not subject to inspection, practice good hygiene!
  • Boiling water and disinfectant soap for dishes
  • Especially with kids, have them wash hands BEFORE starting
How to Get Money

Regional Health Organizations:

- Winter Park Health Foundation
- Health Foundation of South Florida (Miami)
- Quantum Foundation (West Palm Beach)
- Palm Healthcare Foundation (West Palm Beach)
- Allegheny Franciscan Ministries (Tampa, Palm Beach, Broward, Dade)
- Gulf Coast Community Foundation (Venice)
- Blue Foundation (Blue Cross Blue Shield)
How to Get Money

Local clubs:
• Rotary
• Women’s Club
• Kiwanis
• Other civic organizations
Partner With Your Community!

- We’ve gotten donations of ingredients, teachers, recipes, and special visitors by reaching out to the community
- Most people are excited to help—especially when children benefit
- The worst they can say is “No!”
References

- Curious Chef Knives: [https://curiouschef.com/3-piece-nylon-knife-set](https://curiouschef.com/3-piece-nylon-knife-set)
- Farm Daddy container gardens: [http://www.farmdaddy.com/index.html](http://www.farmdaddy.com/index.html)
- Maitland Public Library website: [www.maitlandpl.org](http://www.maitlandpl.org)
- National Fire Protection Association: [https://www.nfpa.org/](https://www.nfpa.org/)
- Winter Park Health Foundation: [https://www.wphf.org/](https://www.wphf.org/)
QUESTIONS?

mdaniels@maitlandpl.org