



Cooking Matters - Southeast Michigan

Frequently Asked Questions for Partner Organizations



What is Cooking Matters?

Share Our Strength's Cooking Matters® teaches families at risk of hunger how to get more food for their money and better nourishment from those foods. Participants learn how to select nutritious and low-cost ingredients and prepare them in delicious and healthy ways.

Who hosts Cooking Matters courses?

Host sites are typically non-profit, community-based organizations that serve low-income clientele who are interested in and could benefit from attending nutrition-based cooking courses. Sites must provide an on-site coordinator and suitably sized program free area, either on-site or at a nearby organization, with access to running water. Gleaners also has kitchen space available for organizations without appropriate space.

Who participates in Cooking Matters courses?

Class size ranges from 10-18 participants. Each site is responsible for recruiting appropriate participants for their courses. Participants may not be charged for Cooking Matters courses. Every effort should be made to recruit participants who are eligible for or receiving SNAP (formerly Food Stamps) benefits. Our priority audience is individuals and families receiving food assistance of some kind.

Is there a set curriculum?

Yes. Our curricula are developed by our national staff and include lesson plans, activities, handouts, and recipes. The nutrition content is based on MyPlate. We have curricula for Adults, Kids (ages 8-12), Teens (ages 13-18), Families (adult with child ages 8-12) as well as addendums for Parents of Pre-schoolers, Child Care Professionals, Diabetes and Wellness (people living with HIV and AIDS). Adult and Families curricula are available in English and Spanish.

How long are the courses and when do they meet?

Each course will meet for **two hours, once a week, for six weeks** (with the exception of Childcare Professionals courses). Courses are typically scheduled Monday—Friday, starting 9am ending 8pm. We ask for 30mins either side of the class for set up and clean down. The course will meet at the same day and time each week. It is *not* a drop-in program—participants are asked to commit to and attend all six classes.

How are classes structured?

During class we discuss healthy eating habits and food budgeting, and learn basic cooking techniques. Approximately one-half of class focuses on basic nutrition messages, while the other half is spent preparing recipes that reflect the day's nutrition messages. The fifth class of each adult series includes a tour at a local grocery store.

Who leads Cooking Matters courses?

Courses are lead by a Cooking Matters staff member with the addition of volunteer instructors with a background in culinary and/or dietetics who teach the chef and nutrition portions of the class. At times there will also be volunteer class assistants and/or interns present in classes.

How are the culinary traditions and likes/dislikes of the participants taken into account?

Site coordinators are asked to communicate any strict dietary requirements of whole class groups, for example religious and cultural needs/requirements as well as site specific exclusions such as nut free zones. During the course, participants are encouraged to provide input about what foods they would most like to learn more about and prepare.

What do participants receive as part of attending the course?

Each course participant receives the course curriculum - a resource containing nutrition, food safety and food budgeting information in addition to numerous healthy, low-cost recipes. Each course graduate will also receive a few incentivizing gifts and a certificate of completion. Adult participants receive a bag of groceries containing the ingredients to make the day's recipes at home for classes 1-4 and store bought groceries in week 5.

What does it cost to have a Cooking Matters course at my site?

Do you have any funding available that could help with costs for running Cooking Matters programming? Funding is not a requirement for hosting a Cooking Matters class, but very helpful.

What is the process to set up a course at my site?

All potential sites must first contact a Cooking Matters manager via email – rmajestic@gcfb.org and complete a host site application. Once the application is complete and the program is explained via phone conversation, a Cooking Matters staff will work with your site to schedule a class series. Host site coordinators will need to meet with the Cooking Matters staff coordinator to view the facility you intend on hosting the class series at as well as finalize any paperwork prior to your class beginning.