

Title: The Effectiveness of Cooking Matters Courses in the Low Country Region on Changing Graduates Dietary, Cooking, and Resource Management Behaviors

Authors: Leah Cody, Dana Mitchell RDN, LD, Kelley Martin MPH, RDN, LD

Objectives: The study evaluated the effectiveness of Cooking Matters® (CM) classes taught by the Lowcountry Food Bank (LCFB) compared to Share Our Strength® (SOS) national results.

Design: Retrospective survey administration

Methods and Instruments: A validated paper survey designed by SOS was provided to LCFB CM graduates measuring their cooking confidence, confidence in resource management, and healthy eating behaviors after 6-months of program completion. Results were compared to published SOS national outcomes.

Results: Twenty-four graduates completed the survey. Based on a Likert scale from 1-5 (1=rarely/not confident; 5 = always/very confident), mean scores from the LCFB graduates indicated greater consumption of low-fat/fat-free dairy products (3.73 vs 3.33), low sodium packaged foods (3.42 vs 3.14), lean meats (4.00 vs 3.81), green salads (3.24 vs 2.95), and “healthy food” at restaurants (3.78 vs 3.05) versus mean SOS outcomes. LCFB graduates perceived less cooking barriers (3.66 vs 2.46) and more confidence in healthy food preparation (3.92 vs 3.76). LCFB graduates showed comparable weekly dinners eaten at home (4.95 vs 5.0), respectively. LCFB graduates reported eating fewer vegetables (2.96 vs 3.33) and expressed less confidence in food resource management (3.78 vs 4.03) versus SOS data.

Conclusions: Results from graduates of the LCFB CM courses compared to national outcomes reported better consumption of healthy foods and less barriers to food preparation and cooking. They reported similar or poorer outcomes in the rate of meals eaten at home, vegetable intake, and confidence in food resource management. These are areas the LCFB should target in future CM offerings.

Conflict of Interest: None

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Positive:

Increased low fat or fat free dairy options consumption (3.73 vs 3.33)

Increased low sodium selections (3.42 vs 3.14)

Increased lean meat or low fat proteins selection (4.00 vs 3.81)

Increased eating of green salad (a little over more than a week vs less than once a week) (3.25 vs 2.95)

Increased consumption of “healthy” foods at fast food or sit down restaurants (3.78 vs 3.05) – healthy foods include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, low-fat or fat free dairy, and water

Less eating of French fries, fried potatoes, home fries, hash browns, tater tots (3.83 vs 2.15)

Increased consumption of beans (2.50 vs 2.41)

Less likely to worry that food would run out before they had the money to buy more (2.92 vs 3.11)

More confident that they could buy healthy foods for their family on a budget (4.54 vs 3.85)

More confident they could make food money last all month (3.63 vs 3.42)

More confident they can make low cost meals (4.17 vs 3.99)

Less cooking barriers perceived: Cooking Barriers scale (3.66 vs 2.46)

Healthy food preparation scale (3.92 vs 3.76) for comparison

Neutral:

Lower meals made at home than the national average (4.95 vs 5) or on par

Same consumption of whole grains if not slightly lower (3.65 vs 3.7)

Self-efficacy food resources management (alternative scale for food resource management) (3.97 vs 3.98)

Negative:

Less consumption of low-fat milk (3.13 vs 3.54)

Less consumption of non-fried vegetables like carrots, broccoli, green beans, or other vegetables (2.96 vs 3.33)

Food resource management was less for CM graduates than for comparison group (3.78 vs 4.03)

Cooking confidence scale?