

Making a Difference

2015 Multi-County Cooking Healthy School Erath, Eastland, Parker and Comanche Counties

Relevance:

Research shows daily calorie intake from foods eaten away from home increased from 18% to 32% in the last 25 years. Foods eaten away from home tend to be more calorie dense and nutritionally poorer than foods prepared at home, on average. Providing families with healthy recipes and menu planning tips through the multi-faceted Dinner Tonight! program is intended to encourage families to eat at home more often, and make healthier food choices to prevent such diseases as diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, etc.

Response:

Since these issues are relevant in all counties participating, a committee was formed to plan the school including community members, sponsors, and professionals. Multi-faceted cooking healthy avenues include Dinner Tonight! YouTube videos, Dinner Tonight! Cooking Schools, Dinner Tonight! electronic newsletters and the Dinner Tonight! Facebook pages. The Dinner Tonight Healthy Cooking Schools offer a face-to-face educational method to teach families about meal planning and healthy food preparation. These events are intended to be high-visibility, large scale events that are fun and informative for participants. For some people, it may be their first exposure to the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

Results:

- **DINNER TONIGHT! HEALTHY COOKING SCHOOL:** On Tuesday, March 24, 2015, the Dinner Tonight! Healthy Cooking School was held on the campus of Tarleton State University (TSU) in Stephenville. This was a joint effort between Erath, Eastland, Parker and Comanche counties. A total of **217** (183 participants plus 34 volunteers) attended the event. People from over **12** different counties attended the event.

Two different menus were prepared by HEB Unit Director, Casey McCauley and guest celebrity chefs, The Crockin' Girls from Brownwood. Other educational presentations included Texas Health Resources Registered Dietitians, Ellen Wells and Laurie Lively, 4-H Food Challenge teams and TSU Meal Management students. TSU Assistant Professor Paula McKeehan, was an integral part of the team by allowing the Meal Management class practical experience making audience samples, testing recipes, and helping with preparation for the event as part of their coursework. Culinary Arts students from Stephenville High School also made samples and served participants at the event.

Sponsors for the event included TSU, HEB, The Home Place, STAR Council, Texas Health Resources, Stephenville and Texas Beef Council. Lots of door prizes, including a Kitchen Aid mixer were made available by sponsors. The gift bags given to *each participant* were worth a **\$43.00!** The generosity of The Home Place makes this event popular! Donations and sponsorship of the school were valued at **\$2500.**



- **96%** of the participants (120 out of 125) were *completely/mostly* satisfied with the Dinner Tonight! Healthy Cooking School.
- Demographics of participants: 96% female; 97% White; 64% lived in a 1-2 person household; 45% were under the age of 50 while 55% were over the age of 50. **47%** said this event was the first time they had participated in an Extension event.
- **88.5%** of evaluations were turned in (162 of 183) from the cooking school with following results:

Participant Level of Understanding:

- **90%** (138 out of 154 participants) increased their understanding of the Mediterranean Meal Plan.
- **85%** (130 out of 153 participants) increased their understanding of thinking how the foods you eat impact your health.
- **84%** (128 out of 153 participants) increased their understanding incorporating a variety of fruits and vegetables into their meal plan.
- **82%** (128 out of 156 participants) increased their understanding of how meal planning can help save time and reduce stress.
- **67%** (99 of 148 participants) increased their understanding on how to modify recipes to reduce calorie count.
- **63%** (95 out of 151 participants) increased their understanding of how to reduce sodium in the diet.
- **54%** (55 out of 103 participants) increased their understanding of how to modify recipes to change or reduce the fat content.
- Participant understanding of key components of the Mediterranean Meal Plan *increased 48.3%* during the course of the program.
- Participant understanding of the sodium (salt) content of foods you prepare *increased 14%* during the course of the program.
- Participant understanding types of fat used in the foods you consume and prepare *increased 17.7%* during the course of the program.
- Participant understanding of the calorie content of the foods you consume *increased 16.7%* during the course of the program.

Comments from the Dinner Tonight! Healthy Cooking School:

- This was an amazing experience for me. I wouldn't change anything about this. Thank you for the wonderful experience.
- Thought tonight was fantastic and can't wait to see what you do next year. Loved the part of cooking with kids!
- Loved live cooking demos.

Acknowledgements:

● ● ●
Planning Committee:

Ellen Wells, Laurie Lively, & Julie Swink – Texas Health Resources
 Paula McKeehan and Dr. Karol Blaylock – TSU
 Harriet Frazier – STAR Council
 Casie McCauley and Holly Hodges – HEB
 Beth Langley – Culinary Arts Instructor at Stephenville ISD
 Belle Dowell – The Home Place at Ace
 County Extension Agents Marie Arick, Lana Stidham, Kathy Smith, and Donna White



● ● ●
Sponsors:

The Home Place at Ace
 HEB
 Texas Health Resources
 Tarleton State University
 STAR Council
 Texas Beef Council

