

Rusty's Cooking Club: A Free Web-Based Cooking Program for Preschoolers and Their Families

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Introduction

Frequent fruit and vegetable consumption supports children's growth and development. However, the average daily fruit and vegetable intakes of young children fall below their recommended intake ranges as suggested by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Picky eating behaviors present additional challenges to families trying to support their children's nutritional needs. To address these obstacles, many families seek creative and engaging solutions that make nutrition education and eating more enjoyable for children.

Program Objectives

- Expand children's experience with food.
- Reduce picky eating tendencies.
- Promote social engagement through a convenient and accessible platform with recipes that consider potential restrictions to equipment, ingredients, and time.

Program Description

Rusty's Cooking Club is a free, online club that launched in September 2023 and delivers monthly educational resources related to cooking and food, designed for young children.



The club is named after Minnesota's state bee, the Rusty-Patched Bumble Bee

Once the family has signed up, they receive access to a variety of free educational resources, including:

- Recipe with fun facts
- Videos
- Background on recipe's cultural significance
- Discussion prompts to engage children in cooking
- Tips on feeding young children

Ongoing Evaluation Activities

- Conduct a short pre-survey upon registration (includes demographic information and items regarding their child's eating behaviors and involvement in cooking).
- Distribute 3-month follow-up surveys to assess changes and obtain program feedback.
- Administer semi-structured interviews to gather insight on program's usability, content, and suggestions for improvements.

RAINBOW FRUIT SALAD SUPPLY LIST

SHOPPING LIST

- ☐ Red fruit (strawberries, watermelon or red grapes)
- ☐ Green fruit (honeydew, green grapes or kiwi)
- ☐ Blue or purple fruit (blueberries, plums or blackberries)
- ☐ Orange or yellow fruit (cantaloupe, pineapple or mandarin oranges)
- ☐ Tan or white fruit (bananas or brown pears)
- ☐ Orange juice

EQUIPMENT LIST

- ☐ Colander
- ☐ Bowl
- ☐ Sharp knife for adult
- ☐ Table knife for child
- ☐ Measuring cup
- ☐ Spoon
- ☐ Cutting board

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LOOK AND COOK

STEP 1
Rinse fruit. Cut into bite-sized pieces.

STEP 2
Put the red fruit in the bowl.

STEP 3
Add the blue/purple and white/tan fruits to the bowl.

STEP 4
Add the orange/yellow and green fruits to the bowl.

STEP 5
Add the orange juice. Stir all the fruits together.

STEP 6
Enjoy!

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FOR CAREGIVERS AND CURIOUS KIDS

TABLE TALK

Share fun facts:

- Kiwis grow on vines like grapes.
- It takes about 4 oranges to make 1 cup of orange juice.
- The world's heaviest watermelon weighed about 350 lbs. Now that's a lot of watermelon!

Connect:

- What does the rainbow fruit salad look like? How does it smell? How does it taste?
- What other foods could you add to the rainbow fruit salad?
- If you could slide down a rainbow, where do you think it would take you? What do you think you would see?
- Tell me about something that made you happy today.

MAKE EVERY BITE COUNT

Encouraging your child to eat a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables is good for their health. Dark green fruits and vegetables are good for brain development, red fruits and vegetables help build a strong immune system to fight colds and infections, while orange fruits and vegetables are good for the eyes.

When shopping, have your child find fruits and vegetables of different colors. Let them pick out a fruit or vegetable they have not tried before.

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FOR CAREGIVERS AND CURIOUS KIDS

EXPLORE MORE

Follow Rusty as he explores fruits and vegetables of different colors. What colors of fruits and vegetables can you find in your house?

zumn.edu/rustyexplore10

BEE ACTIVE

Add these action cards to your other Bee Active Cards.

For more information on how to use the Bee Active cards visit: zumn.edu/Beeactive

Jump over the rainbow.

Crawl under the rainbow.

Hug the rainbow with your arms.

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Examples of content and resources from Rusty's monthly email, including an ingredient list, a "Look and Cook" instructions guide, "Table Talk" discussion prompts, and "Bee Active" cards.

Next Steps

- Complete qualitative and quantitative data collection.
- Revise program materials based on evaluation findings.
- Partner with Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) and WIC to provide education and outreach to those who might not have already been cooking with their children.