

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

Statewide trainings help Idahoans realize the benefits of cooking at home

AT A GLANCE

A statewide electric pressure cooker program was developed to highlight the benefits of preparing meals at home to save money and develop safe food cooking practices.

The Situation

Americans love to eat out, so much so that there are 640,000 food service and drinking establishments in the United States, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Factors influencing why Americans eat out so frequently include convenience, saving time, lack of skill or interest in cooking. In 2016, for the first time, the U.S. Census Bureau reported Americans spent more money on dining out than on groceries.

This upended a longstanding pattern in which the bulk of America spending on food occurred at the supermarket.

Our Response

A team of University of Idaho Extension educators developed an Electric Pressure-Cooking School program to provide opportunities for Idahoans to learn how to prepare quicker, healthier, less expensive meals at home through expanding their cooking skills and knowledge of safely using an electric pressure cooker.

This program emphasizes preparing meals at home that are simple, fast and budget-friendly. Participants learned how to cook a meal from scratch in an electric



Over 600 participants attended the Cooking School in Nampa Idaho.

pressure cooker, in less time than it would take to load up the car and drive to a restaurant, wait for a table and then wait for food to be prepared.

One of the most significant benefits to an electric pressure cooker is that consumers can buy less expensive, tough cuts of meats and cook them until the meat is tender.

This team of Extension educators has taught this program throughout the state of Idaho. Locations in 2019 included Nampa, Pocatello and Idaho Falls.

Program Outcomes

A post survey was conducted with program participants. Two hundred ninety-four survey respondents self-measured their pre- and post-program knowledge

on a five-point Likert-type scale (one=very low to five=very high).

Results show the program made a significant, positive change in participants' knowledge in topics of meal planning, budgeting, preparing healthy meals at home, skills needed to cook a variety of foods in an electric pressure cooker, food safety practices, safely using an electric pressure cooker and how to save time while cooking at home.

A follow-up survey was conducted six months after the program in which 84 participants responded and reported on the cooking practices they changed and/or adopted based on skills learned from the program.

Cooking Skills Obtained	Food Safety Skills Obtained
Cooking ribs in electric pressure cooker	Removing and cleaning the silicon ring to remove cooking odor
Making cakes and deserts	Putting the lid and ring in the dishwasher separately
Pressure cooking hard boiled eggs	Utilizing different cleaning techniques on an electric pressure cooker

The six-month follow-up survey asked participants to report the number of food dollars they saved per week as a result of the practices they implemented after attending the training. Sixty-five participants reported total savings in food dollars of \$760 a week (an average of \$11.69 a week per family). This means, cumulatively, they saved a total of \$39,520 per year in their food dollars since the program participation. We can assume that had all 1,216 people who participated in the program adopted the learned practices, and they

might save a total of \$766,536/year since program participation.

The Future

Cooking school programs will continue to be taught throughout the state, allowing opportunities for more Idahoans to participate and improve their cooking skills, their ability to cook more meals at home, and increase food savings from cooking more at home compared to eating out.

Collaborators and Co-Sponsors

- Idaho Press-Tribune: Matt Davison, president and publisher; Jeanne Huff, community editor; Michelle Robinson, advertising director; Cori Buck, marketing manager.
- Post Register: Donna Nims, advertising director; Krysten Bullock, special sections editor.
- Idaho State Journal: Mark Maier, advertising director; Traci Lund, marketing and event manager.
- University of Idaho Marketing and Communications: Amy Calabretta, marketing and communications manager; Hans Guske, digital media producer.
- Bed Bath and Beyond: Thad Phelps, regional customer service manager
- Walmart: Brett Lyons, general manager
- Broulins: Lane Summer, general manager

References

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