

ENGAGING TEENS IN COMMIT TO HEALTH PROGRAMMING: FARMERS MARKETS, CSAs and MORE!

Teens may be one of our most untapped resources when it comes to implementing nutrition literacy programming at park and recreation (P&R) sites. They not only participate in P&R activities, but also serve as super important leaders and volunteers for P&R activities – especially Commit to Health (CTH) nutrition literacy activities!

Teens can play all kinds of roles in nutrition literacy. Get them engaged and utilize their time, creativity and energy! While participating in P&R nutrition literacy activities, they will have opportunities to learn and develop presentation skills, collaborative decision-making skills, organizational and time-management skills, and other skills they can use later in life. They also will gain self-confidence in leading nutrition-based activities! Below we share some ways that teens can engage in and lead CTH nutrition literacy activities.

Teen-led Farmers Market and Community Supported Agriculture Activities

Teens can play all kinds of roles in Farmers Market (FM) and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs at your P&R site. Encourage them to participate, get their creative juices flowing and create some great, fresh-food programs! Teens can help with FM and/or CSA activities such as:

- ◆ Assessing the needs for creating a FM and/or CSA at your site. Teens can survey children, families and the surrounding neighborhood about what they would want in a FM/CSA. Teens can conduct a site-feasibility study to assess space and equipment needs. Teens can lead other activities as well; refer them to the toolkits called, "Bring Farmers Markets to P&R Sites" and "Start a CSA program at your P&R Site" to help them think through the steps to carry out FM/CSA activities.
- ◆ Attending meetings with P&R staff, farmers and others during the planning stages.
- ◆ Helping set up the FM or CSA pick-up site, each time it is offered at your P&R site.
- ◆ Selling produce at the FM or handing out CSA shares.
- ◆ Hosting educational sessions on fruits and vegetables sold at the FM and/or included in the CSA boxes (use CTH Foods of the Month [FoM] materials, such as newsletters, coloring sheets and other activities).
- ◆ Conducting food tastings of fruits and vegetables sold at the FM and/or included in the CSA.
- ◆ Leading cooking/food preparation activities during the FMs/CSA pick-ups; use CTH FoM recipes to make this easy!



Teen-led Experiential Food Activities

Incorporate fun into foods through an experiential food-based activity as a way to convince people to consume more nutritious foods, including foods that may be new to people. Many CTH program materials found on the website share ideas for experiential food-based activities that teens could lead (check out the “Fun, Experiential Activities!” sections of the FoM program, such as those on the NRPA July Foods of the Month website!).

Below, read about some other fun teen-led or teen-conducted nutrition literacy activities. They offer great opportunities for teens to learn about wellness while having fun leading and participating in food-based activities!



Teen Recipe Challenge

Create a monthly “Teen Recipe Challenge!” Charge your teens with coming up with recipes that use the CTH FoMs, or fruits and veggies sold at your FM/CSA. Ask them to come up with nutritious recipes from around the world! If you want to take this a step further, set up a competition (P&R Teen Master Chef) where they prepare their recipes in front of younger children. The recipes don’t need to involve cooking, there are many fun ways raw foods can be prepared (search Pinterest and other sites such as the Raw Blend Food For Kids Recipes² and the Parents.com “20 Kid-Friendly Veggies” slideshow³). Share the teen-created recipes with younger children, families, seniors, FM/CSA patrons and others at your P&R site.

Teen-led Food Tastings

One of the best ways to learn about something is to teach about it! Help your teens learn more about nutritious foods by asking them to host food tastings for younger children, seniors and others at your P&R site. Promote FM/CSA produce and/or the FoM program through teen-led food tastings that incorporate nutrition education about the food being tasted. Review the CTH FoM newsletters and Summer Fresh materials for ideas on what to showcase at the tasting events.



Teen-led Infused Water Tastings

All of us should try to drink beverages without added sugar. Infusing water with fruits and/or herbs (such as mint and basil) makes for a tasty, refreshing, **sugar-free** drink! Teens can be “Water Ambassadors,” promoting water consumption to replace sugar-sweetened beverages. Encourage your teens to host infused water promotions at FMs, at CSA pick-ups and at summer camp on such special days or times as “Infused Water Fridays,” lunchtime and pick-up times, so both children and parents can try infused water. Ideas for infused water-flavors that teens can share during water tastings can be found in the February *Community and Home Gardening Newsletter* on the NRPA website⁴ (look for the infused water section on the bottom of the second page).



Teens as Gardening Ambassadors

Gardens need lots of tending, so engage your teens in gardening activities to help fill the tending needs! Teens also can play important gardening roles at the start of gardening by helping design, till and plant edible gardens. They can help little kids and/or seniors who may not be strong enough to do the work. Check out the “Intergenerational Fun!” sheet on the CTH website for ideas about gardening as well as the Community and Home Gardening section of the CTH website⁵. Ambitious teens even may be able to raise funds through gardening by selling what they grow to people who visit your P&R site!

REFERENCES

¹ NRPA, July Foods of the Month website, www.nrpa.org/our-work/partnerships/initiatives/commit-to-health/foods-of-the-month/july-foods-of-the-month

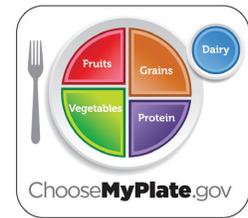
² Raw Blend, Food For Kids Recipes website, www.rawblend.com.au/for-kids-recipes.html

³ Weeden, Colleen “20 Kid-Friendly Veggies” slideshow, Parents.com (Oct. 7, 2014), <http://bit.ly/kidrawideas>

⁴ NRPA, *Community and Home Gardening Newsletter* (February 2019), bit.ly/NRPAInfused

⁵ NRPA, Community and Home Gardening website, www.nrpa.org/our-work/partnerships/initiatives/commit-to-health/community-home-gardening

kid-friendly veggies and fruits



10 tips for making healthy foods more fun for children

Encourage children to eat vegetables and fruits by making it fun. Provide healthy ingredients and let kids help with preparation, based on their age and skills. Kids may try foods they avoided in the past if they helped make them.

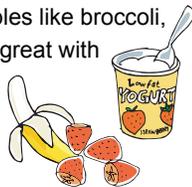
1 smoothie creations

Blend fat-free or low-fat yogurt or milk with fruit pieces and crushed ice. Use fresh, frozen, canned, and even overripe fruits. Try bananas, berries, peaches, and/or pineapple. If you freeze the fruit first, you can even skip the ice!



2 delicious dippers

Kids love to dip their foods. Whip up a quick dip for veggies with yogurt and seasonings such as herbs or garlic. Serve with raw vegetables like broccoli, carrots, or cauliflower. Fruit chunks go great with a yogurt and cinnamon or vanilla dip.



3 caterpillar kabobs

Assemble chunks of melon, apple, orange, and pear on skewers for a fruity kabob. For a raw veggie version, use vegetables like zucchini, cucumber, squash, sweet peppers, or tomatoes.

4 personalized pizzas

Set up a pizza-making station in the kitchen. Use whole-wheat English muffins, bagels, or pita bread as the crust. Have tomato sauce, low-fat cheese, and cut-up vegetables or fruits for toppings. Let kids choose their own favorites. Then pop the pizzas into the oven to warm.

5 fruity peanut butterfly

Start with carrot sticks or celery for the body. Attach wings made of thinly sliced apples with peanut butter and decorate with halved grapes or dried fruit.

6 frosty fruits

Frozen treats are bound to be popular in the warm months. Just put fresh fruits such as melon chunks in the freezer (rinse first). Make "popsicles" by inserting sticks into peeled bananas and freezing.

7 bugs on a log

Use celery, cucumber, or carrot sticks as the log and add peanut butter. Top with dried fruit such as raisins, cranberries, or cherries, depending on what bugs you want!

8 homemade trail mix

Skip the pre-made trail mix and make your own. Use your favorite nuts and dried fruits, such as unsalted peanuts, cashews, walnuts, or sunflower seeds mixed with dried apples, pineapple, cherries, apricots, or raisins. Add whole-grain cereals to the mix, too.



9 potato person

Decorate half a baked potato. Use sliced cherry tomatoes, peas, and low-fat cheese on the potato to make a funny face.

10 put kids in charge

Ask your child to name new veggie or fruit creations. Let them arrange raw veggies or fruits into a fun shape or design.

