

Life Skills for the future – Year 7 and 8 Cooking Curriculum

Background

Developing the ability to prepare healthy meals will empower our children and youth to be able to access and enjoy a nutritious diet within their own budgetary, cultural, social and time constraints over a lifetime. The school curriculum is the most appropriate place to teach and develop cooking literacy skills as it reaches all children and provides cross-curricular learning. The current education curriculum provides for this to occur, **but does it actually happen?**

Purpose

In conjunction with Vegetables.co.nz and the Heart Foundation, Massey University dietetic students undertook a study aimed at investigating food programmes taught to Year 7 and 8 students in New Zealand intermediate and composite schools by developing a survey suited to multiple forms of delivery.

Method

Respondents were 102 teachers from 101 schools throughout New Zealand, which provided a food programme to Year 7 and 8 students. An additional ten schools (8.9%) responded and were found to not offer a food programme to this age group. Verbal and face-to-face interviews were conducted over three weeks. The online survey collected responses over eight weeks.



Key findings

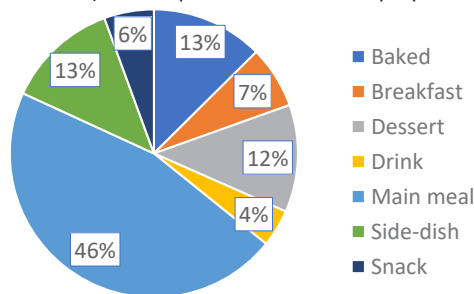
Curriculum:

- There was a high degree of inconsistency between what is taught, how it is taught and how long is devoted to it.
- Only 13% of teachers identified students being able to plan and prepare a complete meal as a key learning objective.
- A major theme was the Food Technology process of “brief, design, produce and evaluate”.

Key findings

Food items made:

- The majority of food items prepared were not main meal items (54%).
- Discretionary food items (dessert and baked items) made up 25% of food items prepared.

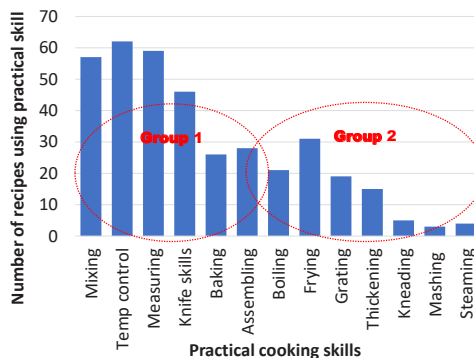


Recipe selection:

Respondents sourced recipes primarily from cookbooks (77%), the internet (76%) and existing school recipes/sources (65%). The two most common themes driving recipe choice was time constraints (59%) and the ingredient cost (73%). Additionally, 16% of teachers reported that the recipe needed to be appropriate for use at home and fit within the budgetary constraints of the family. Focus was placed on utilising seasonal produce, as greater availability meant reduced cost. Teaching a specific skill or technique and nutritional value of the recipe were other common considerations.

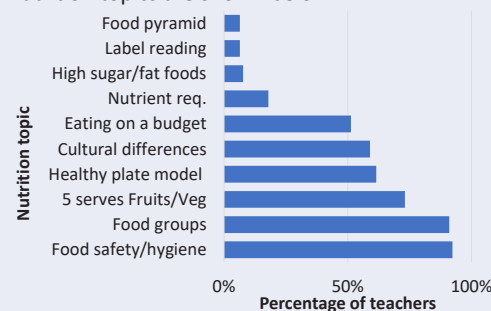
Practical cooking skills:

- The practical cooking skills used in the recipes chosen were predominantly associated with cooking discretionary food items (Group 1).
- There was a clear gap seen in the skills taught which are associated with preparing a main meal (Group 2).



Theory-based nutrition:

Only 85% of students were taught theory-based nutrition and these nutrition messages were inconsistent. The ten most commonly taught nutrition topics are shown below.

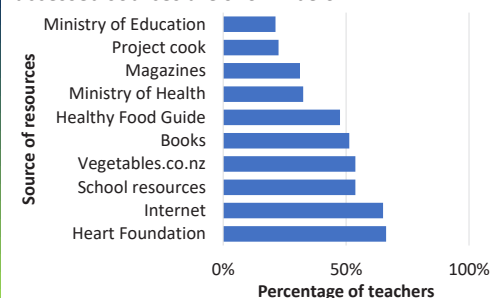


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Key findings

Over 30 sources of resources were identified as being used to teach nutrition messages to Year 7 and 8 students. The ten most commonly accessed sources are shown below.



Conclusion

The communities' expectations of the current curriculum are that all Year 7 and 8 students nationwide, from differing cultures and socio-economic backgrounds have the opportunity to learn practical cooking skills. Wide differences in teachers time, budgets, resources, and messaging mean that the life skills actually being taught vary dramatically.

Recommendations

'Best practice guidelines' for the curriculum should work within current practical food programmes being held for Year 7 and 8 students in New Zealand schools.

Lesson plans:

It is essential lesson plans be cross curricula and utilise digital technologies. This will include food with technological literacy, sensory and numerology literacy and health – Food and Nutrition.

Practising teaching criteria:

These proposed pilot lesson plans can be used as valid evidence by teachers to meet practising teaching criteria. The proposed lesson plans and associated resources would demonstrate commitment to:

- Promoting the well-being of all ākonga
- Bicultural partnership in Aotearoa New Zealand
- Ongoing professional learning and development of personal professional practice

Essential topics and themes to incorporate:

- Knife skills/handling
- Food skills – methods of cookery (bake, steam, stir fry, roasting, steaming/hangi)
- Food safety including personal hygiene, washing dishes, cross contamination
- Temperature control includes care and safety of electrical equipment – safety in kitchen.
- Food presentation – plating the meals
- Recipes – sound, economical, realistic and descriptive with pictures
- Food presentation and sharing food - eating with family/whanau
- Time management - incorporate planning for efficiency, routine/methodical process
- Sustainability – food waste management techniques

References and further reading:

Bi-hussein, Z., Blair, R., Henderson, L., Jackson, A., Lawn, A., Stachyshyn, S., ... Williams, V. (2017). *Year 7 and 8 New Zealand food survey*. Auckland. Education council. Practising teacher criteria. Retrieved from <https://educationcouncil.org.nz/content/registered-teacher-criteria-1>
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