

Students read recipe for scholastic success

Harrison County fifth-graders stirred, chopped and measured their way to better math and reading skills during “Recipe for Reading,” a program developed by the Harrison County Extension Homemakers as a way to promote literacy to children.

Real life skills

Harrison County Family and Consumer Sciences Extension educator Cheryl Case says that in today’s busy society, more and more families are eating at least one of their meals away from home every day.

“Parents are not taking the time, or don’t have the time, to teach cooking skills to their children,” she says. “And so, we have a generation of youth that are not learning to prepare meals.”

The two-day event reached all 250 fifth-graders in Harrison County. The students were divided into groups with the task of preparing one of 11 dishes with the help of the Extension Homemakers and other volunteers. Through this experience the students learned how to read recipes and about cooking measurements, kitchen safety and practical living skills. After all the dishes

were prepared, the students were able to sample each dish.

“I think it’s real nice because I get to cook with my friends and have fun,” says Ethan Hill, a student at Northside Elementary School.

“It’s a wonderful experience,” says Pam Cunningham, a fifth-grade teacher at Northside. “It’s really good for their math skills and reading skills. It just really puts it in a real-life situation where they have to apply what they know.”

She says hands-on experiences, like Recipe for Reading, help reinforce the importance of fractions and reading, two things her students are tested on during Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) testing. However, these types of activities can be difficult to do in a classroom with limited space.

This is the second year for the program, which was developed during a Homemaker meeting, where members brainstormed how they could promote literacy to children in a way that would be an enjoyable learning experience. Bonnie Teater, Harrison County Extension Homemaker, says the program was a natural fit for Homemakers and a way they could share their talents with students.

“We decided to incorporate reading with other skills that we had because we all love to cook; and we all love to read cookbooks; and we all love to double recipes and triple recipes when we have big families,” she says.

The Homemakers were able to get the project started through a grant from the Kentucky Extension Homemaker’s Association. They have also received funding from the Kentucky Pork Producers and the Kentucky Cattlemen’s Association. The Harrison County school system also contributed by purchasing cookbooks and recipe ingredients.

When the project was piloted, only one class from each of the county’s elementary schools could participate. It expanded this year because the schools had a difficult time

Recipe of the Month: Braided Beef Stromboli

Ingredients:

- 1 lb. ground beef*
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- ¾ cup chili sauce
- ½ cup shredded carrots
- ½ cup raisins
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1 package (13.8 oz.) refrigerated pizza dough

Instructions:

1. Brown ground beef with cumin in large nonstick skillet over medium heat 8 to 10 minutes or until beef is not pink, breaking up into ¾-inch (in.) crumbles. Stir in chili sauce, carrots, raisins, salt and pepper, as desired; cook 2 to 3 minutes or until carrots are crisp-tender and liquid has evaporated, stirring occasionally.
2. Heat oven to 400° F. Spray large baking sheet with cooking spray. Place pizza dough in prepared pan; roll or press dough into 15×10-in. rectangle. Spoon filling down center of rectangle, leaving a ½-in. border on the long sides and a ¼-in. border on the short sides. Cut dough at

- 1-in. intervals along each long side just to edge of filling. Alternating sides, fold dough strips halfway up over filling at an angle, creating braided appearance. Pinch short sides of dough together to seal and enclose filling.
3. Bake in 400° F oven 12 to 15 minutes or until crust is golden brown. Cut crosswise into eight slices to serve.

Cook’s tip: One pound frozen whole wheat or white bread dough, defrosted, may be substituted for refrigerated pizza dough. Roll dough into 15×10-in. rectangle on lightly floured surface. If dough springs back, lightly cover and let rest 10 minutes. Transfer dough to prepared baking sheet. Proceed with recipe as directed above, increasing baking time to 15 to 20 minutes.

Nutrition information per serving: 512 calories; 10 g fat (4 g saturated fat; 3 g monounsaturated fat); 76 mg cholesterol; 2,230 mg sodium; 76 g carbohydrate; 3.0 g fiber; 33 g protein; 6.5 mg niacin; 0.4 mg vitamin B₆; 2.2 mcg vitamin B₁₂; 6.0 mg iron; 18.0 mcg selenium; 6.1 mg zinc.

*The *Angus Journal* suggests using *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®).



choosing only one class, and participating teachers felt every student could benefit from the skills the Homemakers were teaching.

“It’s a little bit bigger project, and it’s a little more ambitious and a little bit noisier. But the students are very much on task; so it’s not been a problem,” Teater says.

Homemakers chose nutritious recipes that they thought children would like, which can be a task in itself because many children can be picky eaters, Teater says. Through helping with the program, she has learned children are more open to trying new foods when they take part in preparing them.

“Last year, when we were piloting the program, one of the young boys made the Philly cheese steak sandwich, and he says, ‘I don’t like onions.’ But he couldn’t help himself; he had to try it,” she says. “So he

tested that with the onions and went home that night and told his mom, ‘I’ve got to make those for you; you’re going to love them.’”

After the program, the students received a cookbook that contained each of the 11 recipes that were made.

“One of the interesting concepts we’re teaching is made-from-scratch,” Case says. “You don’t have to have a cake mix in order to make a cake. You don’t have to have a box of macaroni and cheese to make macaroni and cheese.”

Tyler Bauer, a student at Saint Edward Elementary School, says she planned to take the cookbook home and make the recipe she made during the program with her mom.

Sabrina Traylor, a Northside student, says normally she only cooks meals in the microwave or that come from a box, but she

will make the macaroni and cheese recipe that she made during the program if she has the ingredients.

After doing the program twice, Case is confident other counties can easily replicate the program. Case and the Harrison County Homemakers will host a session at the Kentucky Extension Homemaker’s Association state meeting where they will share the project with others.

“We’ve worked out most of the problems and have been able to come up with recipes that the children enjoy making that fit into the food guide pyramid plan for the way they should be eating,” Case says.



Editor’s Note: This column was adapted from a release written by Katie Pratt for the University of Kentucky (UK) College of Agriculture.