



University of California

Agriculture and Natural Resources | 4-H Youth Development Program

2021 4-H Virtual Cooking Academy • Sacramento County

UC ANR developed the Cooking Academy to teach 4th-6th grade students how to prepare healthy food options. 4-H and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) staff partnered to administer the project in Sacramento County. The project utilizes 4-H's cross-age teaching model whereby teenagers are trained and deliver the six-session project to younger youth, with the support of an adult coach.

The Cooking Academy aims to improve youth attitudes, knowledge and skills in food choices and preparation. Project goals include:

- Youth prepare and try new foods in delicious ways
- Youth learn the skills needed to prepare fruits, vegetables, and other healthy items
- Youth increase food literacy around recipe reading and food preparation concepts
- Youth shape their eating behaviors by creating a healthy food environment at home with their family.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 16 teenagers delivered the Cooking Academy virtually. They received a job description for their role, attended five hours of training virtually, were given an electronic copy of the Cooking Academy curriculum, and were divided into five teams in which they worked to present the program. Teens delivered the Virtual Cooking Academy content every-other week for 12 weeks to 64 elementary-aged students attending five different "day camps" in Elk Grove Unified School District. Utilizing data from EFNEP's WebNEERS system and 4-H teen teacher surveys, program outcomes included:

- 91% of youth improved their abilities to choose foods according to Federal Dietary Recommendations
- 55% of youth use safe food handling practices more often, or gained knowledge of these practices.
- 47% improved in their responses to putting cold foods back in the refrigerator
- 45% improved in their responses to washing fruits and vegetables.
- 32% improved in their responses in drinking less soda or fruit flavored drinks; eating more vegetables as a snack; and tasting new foods
- 29% improved in their responses to reading Nutrition Facts labels.

- 89% of teen teachers reported knowing how to keep a cooking area clean and make changes to a recipe.
- 89% of teens practice healthy food habits that include paying attention to how much fruit they eat and water they drink each day.
- Teens reported growth in all leadership areas and especially in leading group discussions, planning, and teaching others.