



Veggie Phobia: Mindset Shifts at a Local Food Pantry

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**The
People's
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Rochester, NY



INTRODUCTION

Food insecurity impacts a significant portion of our community in Rochester and contributes to **poor health outcomes**. **Local food pantries** serve those facing food insecurity, providing **non-judgmental** and **dignified** support to the Rochester community.

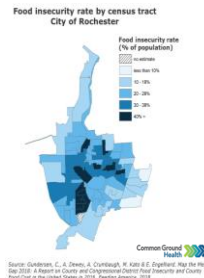


Many local pantries have adopted a **“Grocery Model”** of client choice creating opportunities for **nutrition education** and active intervention.

By exposing **volunteers** and **shoppers** to **new dishes** that incorporate unpopular vegetables, their **openness to trying new food** is enhanced, **reducing food waste** and **increasing fruit and vegetable intake**.

COMMUNITY PARTNER

The People's Pantry of Rochester strives to mitigate the effects of food insecurity **without bias or discrimination**. The pantry, located in **Group 14621**, serves residents of Monroe County with **no other requirements**, thus ensuring that all people can benefit from their services. The Group 14621 neighborhood and surrounding area have some of the **highest food insecurity rates** in Rochester.



COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Intervention: Warm food samples delivered to shoppers waiting in line outside and shared with volunteers during low-volume times. Particular attention was paid to the characteristics of the dishes with a focus on **crunchy, sweet**, and/or **umami-forward** textures and flavors.

Why:

- **Cognitive Interviews** conducted with one volunteer and one shopper demonstrated that childhood experiences had the highest impact on openness to trying new foods. Furthermore, pre-existing conceptions that some produce was “slimy”, or “alien” strongly decreased their interest in trying new produce.
- In the general population, people who score high on **openness to new experiences** ate **4.5 times** more servings of fruits and vegetables per a week compared to those who were less open.
- Samples are a **low risk** and **low barrier** commitment to trying new food and can directly increase openness to trying new foods. By delivering samples to shoppers directly, all physical barriers are removed, thus allowing shoppers to focus on overcoming mental barriers.

Evaluation:

- Rating of openness to trying new vegetables on a **1–7 point Likert Scale**

Volunteer Impact:

- Volunteers were observed to **improve the language** they used to describe the produce they tried in the sample. For example, one volunteer who previously noted that butternut squash with warts looked “alien” to shoppers **instead told two shoppers about how it tasted “really sweet”** after trying the sample.

Shopper Impact:

Dish/Vegetable (Total # of Samplers)	% Shoppers that Rated their Openness Higher after Sample (# of Samplers)	% Shoppers that Rated their Openness the Same after Sample (# of Samplers)
Southwest Chicken/Bell Pepper (38)	52.63% (20)	47.37% (18)
Oven Roasted Parmesan Yellow Squash (36)	58.33% (21)	33.33% (12)
Baked Butternut Squash (38)	36.84% (14)	23.68 % (9)

CONCLUSIONS

- In a sample size of **112 shoppers and volunteers**, sampling new dishes **increases openness to trying and cooking with new foods**.
- **Low-stakes environment** of sampling new dishes can **improve shopper attitudes** towards vegetables leading to **improved health outcomes** and **decreased food waste**.
- Increased **volunteer engagement in nutrition** and increased openness to new foods **positively influences language** used to describe novel produce and directly impacts shopper perception.
- Limitations include reliance on ebb and flow of pantry traffic, my inability to speak Spanish, and financial constraints.

IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Next Steps:

- Coordinate with **SNACCS SRO** to create a sustainable infrastructure for serving samples
- Template for **nutrition education**, specifically a vegetable highlight of the month, including a recipe (microwave, stovetop, and oven friendly)
- Work with volunteers to answer their nutrition questions and **sharing resources** they can use to further their own education

Impact:

- **Improved health outcomes** in food insecure zip codes
- **Decreased food waste**
- Interest in **nutrition and cooking**