



# Creating Recipes that Positively Influence Nutrition in Low Socioeconomic Communities

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## INTRODUCTION

There are demographic and socioeconomic disparities that influence nutrition daily. Nutrition is often limited by accessibility, affordability, and cultural traditions. Food insecurity often leads people to make unhealthier choices, which strongly correlates to the development of many of the comorbid conditions seen in these communities. While there are organizations currently trying to bridge the barrier of food insecurity, people often find that they do not have complete fulfillment of culture and taste with nutritious meals. The fear of losing this connection with food, often discourages people to eat healthy once resources have become available.

What is the need for this project in the Rochester community?

Areas of Significant Need for Monroe County, based on the NYS Prevention Agenda 2019-2024

Preventing Chronic Disease				
Indicator	NYS PA Goal	Monroe County	Notes- Monroe County	
% obese- adults*	24.2	32.2	Disparity: Income	
% obese- children/adolescents*	16.4 (non-Hispanic)	15.3	Disparity: Urban/suburban	
% adults with perceived food security*	80.2	79.5	Disparity: Income	
% adults who consume > one sugary drinks per day†	22	25.1		

Monroe county falls short in 75% of the goals put into place by NYS Prevention Agenda for Nutrition and Food Security.

## COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

### Menu Creation:

I created a recipe book which includes breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snack ideas that the entire family can enjoy. This was created with the intention to help inform caregivers and parents with limited budgets on how to cook delicious, healthy meals.

All recipes were personally tested and reviewed by a nutritionist before submitting the final copy to Foodlink.

Examples from “*Flavor of Heath*” Recipe Book:



Oven Fried Chicken:



Chipotle Bowl:



Chicken Stir Fry:



The recipe book was printed out and dropped off to the course participants for use at home. Throughout the course I discussed the importance of having different food groups at each meal, as well as healthy methods to enhance flavor.

I intermittently asked the Cooking Matter’s course participants about the usefulness of the recipes and discussions throughout the course.

### Class Participation and Feedback:

- 4-5 families consistently participated per Zoom session
- Children (pre-school – teen) accompanied their parents during each session
- Participants were pleasantly surprised by the taste of each meal.
- 100% of participants reported that they would try the recipes again after the class was completed.
- 1/3 of the participants claimed to have *already* tried one of the recipes on their own outside of class.

## COMMUNITY PARTNER

Foodlink offers a Cooking Matters program for inner city families with potential food insecurity. This program is a national curriculum that meets for 2hrs every week for 4weeks. These are cooking classes that introduce new, healthy recipes to families.

### Cooking Matter Course Description:

#### Food curiosity

- Learning goals
- Five flavors
- Food system
- Available food resources

#### Culinary skills

- How to use a knife
- Sauté vs roasting
- Achieving different flavors

#### Nutrition

- What is healthy food?
- Learning to balance flavors
- Listening to your body
- Unique ways of reusing leftovers

The goal is to increase healthy eating behaviors, while also encouraging bonding family experiences during meal creation.

## CONCLUSIONS

The recipe book created seemed to increase taste satisfaction and further the use of the nutrition information within the home.

We often council our patients about what foods are considered “healthy” and “unhealthy,” however, we rarely consider the fact that food also carries a lot of culture and connection, especially in minority populations. For this reason, I felt like creating a menu that still appealed to the taste buds was really important. Rather than telling someone that they have to replace all of their favorite foods, it may be easier to just change how they are making them.

Through these recipes and classes, I was not only educating these families about nutrition, but I was also helping to provide a space for bonding.

### Limitations:

It was difficult to follow-up with the class participants after completion of the course to determine long-standing eating habit changes.

## IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

For so many people food is much more than just a means to nutrients. It is also a means of socializing and celebrating. Seeing the families laughing, learning about different cooking strategies, and trying new foods together was so much more rewarding than I could have imagined. I believe that the experience that the participants had during the Cooking Matters course will encourage them to not only continue using these recipes, but also continue to use meal time for bonding.

Let’s Continue Cooking Our Way to Heath and Fulfillment:

- This project can be sustained by future medical students interested in continuing to assist with nutrition education in underserved communities. I will leave a file of the cookbook with CHIC and Foodlink coordinators that can be expanded by others in the future. The cookbook can be edited depending on the response to the recipes by the community.
- The cookbook will also be provided to the URMIC Pediatrics and Internal Medicine departments, with the hope that it will be used as a guide or reference for their patient population.