

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

Let's Get Cooking series: Workforce skills development in Valley County

AT A GLANCE

Workforce development training strengthened the culinary arts expertise and skill sets in the West Central Mountains of Idaho.

The Situation

The West Central Mountains (WCM), Idaho's adventure corridor, attracts tourists to stay and play with abundant recreational opportunities. Visitors and residents alike enjoy dining at restaurants, food trucks, bakeries and farmers markets in the region. A trade school for culinary arts is not easily accessible for service workers to attend and local professional development opportunities are limited. UI Extension identified a need to support the hospitality industry through a workforce skills development culinary arts training program in partnership with the WCM Economic Development Council, WCM Food Coalition, Idaho Department of Labor and local chefs. Local restaurants and chefs agreed they would locally recognize this certificate and it would create an added resume value for service industry applicants.

Our Response

UI Extension in Valley County co-developed a curriculum with local chefs and a syllabus for the certificate course. The course was three classes and featured knife skills, cooking methods, sauces, soft skills and food safety. UI Extension educator taught short soft skills professional development sessions each class including planning for the future, resume development,



Chef Matt Gilbert, Shore Lodge, teaching knife skills to Let's Get Cooking participants.

transferable skills and the change equation. The Extension educator coordinated scheduling of professionals including local chefs and food safety specialists. Three fine dining chefs taught the culinary arts content infusing the class with a wealth of culinary experiences and engaging stories reflecting on their own chef stories in the kitchen, national and international recognition in their field. The Central District Health Department taught food safety to course participants and discussed training options to obtain a food handler license and participants were encouraged to get this accreditation during the Let's Get Cooking course timeline.

Program Outcomes

Each partner contributed time and talent to reach the identified outcomes of this program including:

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- Increase participant's knowledge of cooking from scratch using fresh ingredients;
- Support local skills development by providing culinary arts training for summer WCM employment;
- Support and strengthen one of the top sectors in the WCM by training existing and new talent for culinary arts in the region.

Participants were given pre- and post-evaluations to access the learning outcomes and impacts of the certificate program. The pre-survey indicated that 31 percent of students had 0-3 years of culinary arts employment experience, 15 percent 3-8 years, 15 percent 8-15 years and 39 percent had never worked in this industry. However, 100 percent of class participants planned on entering or staying in the culinary arts profession.

Eighty-seven percent of course participants were extremely satisfied with the overall course and 85 percent planned on applying these skills in the WCM region. All participants (100 percent) planned on using the knowledge gained in cooking methods, recipe creation, and sauces during the course at home and in future employment. Sixty-seven percent of participants believed they significantly improved their ability to create recipes and sauces, with 99 percent indicating they somewhat and/or significantly improved these skills. Ninety-three percent of respondents either significantly and/or somewhat improved their knife skills and soft skill sets throughout the course, and 86 percent significantly or somewhat improved their knowledge of food handling and safety during the classes.

This program was very well received by the participants and 12 out of 15 respondents indicated this course will have an impact on their future. The ripples of this impact are unknown, however course evaluations indicated that four participants planned on developing their skills for a culinary arts business in the future.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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The course shared information about Idaho Department of Labor's apprenticeship programming, hoping the certificate course might be a steppingstone for further professional development opportunities. While the course served to create a broadened awareness about this opportunity, only 40 percent of participants indicated they might be interested in an apprenticeship program post course completion.

All but two participants completed the three classes of this course and received a West Central Mountains Culinary Arts Certificate.

Acknowledgements: Without the support of local partners including the West Central Mountain Economic Development Council (WCMEDC) and local chefs, this course would not have been possible. The local chefs contributed their time and talent to support the professional development of local service workers. WCMEDC brought the stakeholders for this program together including local chef talent, UI Extension, Idaho Department of Labor and the Central District Health. WCMEDC secured generous scholarship funding from the City of McCall, Buck Knife donations, registration, budget management and joint marketed the program with all community partners.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

- Buck Knives
- City of McCall
- Central District Health Department
- Chef Gary Lucy, Rupert's, McCall, Idaho
- Chef Matt Gilbert, Shore Lodge, McCall, Idaho
- Chef Steve Topple, Ragazza Di Bufalo, Donnelly, Idaho
- Idaho Department of Labor
- West Central Mountains Economic Development Council
- West Central Mountains Food Coalition