

# impact

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

## Youth cooking program builds knowledge and instills confidence in participants

### AT A GLANCE

Young people are learning that using an electric pressure cooker can be an easier, faster and healthier cooking method.

### The Situation

Cooking at home is becoming a lost art, and future generations may pay the price. Young people preparing to enter college are not always equipped with the necessary training and knowledge to cook a meal for themselves. This lack of knowledge can lead to poor eating habits. In a recent study, college students were asked about their eating habits. The majority said they eat out for most of their meals, eat mostly junk food and frequently skip meals due to lack of time. The rationale for their behavior was lack of knowledge of how to prepare a meal at home, not enough time to cook for themselves, and the perception that healthier foods are more expensive and cost prohibitive. In this study, the students were asked about their involvement in food preparation at home with their families. Surprisingly, most of the students had never helped prepare meals with their families (2018).

### Our Response

University of Idaho Extension family and consumer sciences educators identified the need to educate youth about food preparation alternatives that are easy, healthy, inexpensive and faster than conventional cooking methods. The hands-on program “Cooking Under Pressure for Youth” was developed to teach



4-H youth participating in the hands-on portion of the Cooking Under Pressure for Youth program. Photo by Amy Robertson.

youth about the benefits of cooking with an electric pressure cooker. The program is being taught to youth ages 11-18 years old throughout Idaho. Youth are provided with the skills they need to prepare easy, fast and healthy meals they can afford.

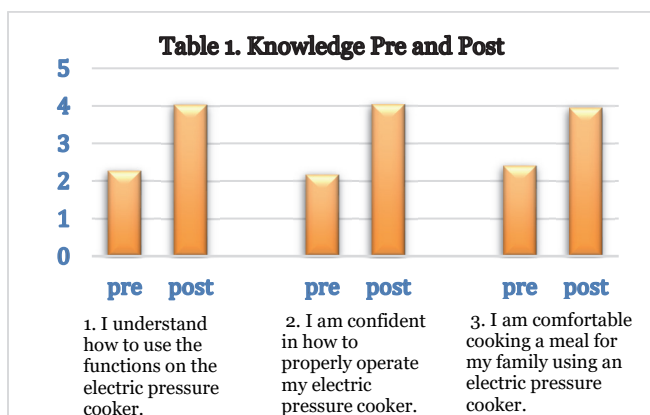
This program provides young people with the opportunity to experience cooking with an electric pressure cooker firsthand. Through this hands-on program, the youth have gained the cooking skills and knowledge needed to increase their confidence to cook healthier and affordable meals for themselves.

### Program Outcomes

From 2018-2019, over 400 youth from six counties have participated in the Cooking Under Pressure for

Youth program. This program was taught to youth in schools and to 4-H groups, the participants ranged in age from 11 to 18, with 46% between the age of 16-18. Fifty-nine percent were female and 41% were male. The program’s primary objectives are to teach participants how to safely operate an electric pressure cooker, while concurrently explaining the time savings, monetary savings, and the health and nutritional benefits of using the steam-pressure cooking method. The goal is to provide participants with a positive experience and instill the confidence to use an electric pressure cooker while preparing a meal independently at home.

Pre and post-survey questions were asked to determine the knowledge gained by participants. A total of 315 participants from six counties of the state responded. The bar graph below shows the participants’ knowledge before and after the program, based on a scale of one to five, with one equaling very low and five equaling very high.



Before the class, 86% of respondents had no or little knowledge of the functions of an electric pressure cooker. After the class, 76% of the respondents felt they had increased their knowledge and understood the functions of an electric pressure cooker. Very few

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students had used or seen an electric pressure cooker before participating in the program.

It was easy to observe that at the start of the class, the students had little to no confidence in their ability to use an electric pressure cooker. Before the hands-on portion of the class, 84% of respondents reported little to no confidence cooking using the steam-pressure method. During the hands-on portion of the class, the students had the opportunity to cook a recipe using an electric pressure cooker. This hands-on experience led to a huge confidence gain, with 78% of the students feeling confident or very confident with their abilities to cook with an electric pressure cooker.

A major objective of the program is for the participants to feel comfortable using an electric pressure cooker independently at home. Before the class, 21% of the respondents reported they were comfortable cooking a meal for their families at home using an electric pressure cooker. After participating in the class and learning the functions of an electric pressure cooker and gaining confidence by cooking with the appliance, 72% of the students were either comfortable or very comfortable preparing a meal for their families at home.

As part of the evaluation, we asked each of the respondents the following question “Explain the benefits of cooking with an electric pressure cooker vs. buying boxed or frozen foods?”

Of the 315 responses to this question, an explanation of the health and nutritional benefits, time savings and or monetary savings were listed 281 times. The students said, “It is quicker and tastes better,” “It saves you so much money” and “It’s healthier and fresher.”

Reference: Sogari, G., Velez-Argumedo, C., Gomez, M. I., and Mora, C. (2018). College Students and Eating Habits: A Study Using an Ecological Model for Healthy Behavior. *Nutrients*, 10(1823), 1-16. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu10121823>