

What is a Community Kitchen?

A Community Kitchen, as its name suggests, is a kitchen where a group of people prepare meals together. There are many reasons for having a community kitchen and one is to produce nutritious meals for hungry people. Another reason is to bring parents together to learn how to plan and prepare healthy, inexpensive meals for their families. Finally, people living with diabetes, their caregivers and supporters have begun grouping together in community kitchens in an effort to manage diabetes by controlling food intake.

What can be learned in a community kitchen?

The following are just some of the numerous topics that can become part of a community kitchen program:

- The nutritional values of foods
- How to prepare traditional recipes using local foods – a perfect opportunity to involve older members of the community by asking them how food was prepared in the past!
- How to prepare balanced, healthy meals in a cost-effective way
- The safe handling of food

What better way to learn about nutrition and acquire cooking skills at the same time than in a community kitchen! Activities are hands-on and persons interact socially with others in a relaxed, enjoyable atmosphere. Learning is enhanced because everyone uses their sense of sight, taste, smell, sound and touch.

Who's involved?

Participants who will **benefit** are:

- People living with diabetes
- Family member(s)

➤ Caregivers

One or more of the following persons can **organize** or become a **resource person**:

- Local CHR
- Diabetes Educator
- Dietician
- Community Health Worker
- Person Living with Diabetes
- Community member

Where can a community kitchen be held?

- Sometimes, the local Health Centre has kitchen facilities large enough to accommodate a group
- Community Hall space can be rented or donated free of charge
- Participants can take turns to hold a community kitchen in their own homes

When is it a good time to hold a community kitchen?

One way to determine the best time to hold a community kitchen is to take a general survey of potential participants. Do this to find out whether they are interested in attending and their times of availability. The organizer can do this survey in several ways:

- Telephone
- Personal contact using invitations (a very good approach!)
- Make an announcement on the local radio station
- Place a notice in the local newspaper/newsletter
- Put posters up in the community (e.g. grocery store, post office, etc.)

Costs to Run a Community Kitchen

- Hall rental
- Hire a cook
- Purchase food
- Purchase materials (e.g. teaching manual, cookbooks, cooking utensils)

Evaluating a Community Kitchen Project

Helps organizers to:

- Continually **plan** the content of each session (e.g. Will the group learn to preserve fruits when they are in season?)
- Look at the **benefits/changes** to the participants during and/or after their involvement in the program

Who does the evaluation?

A. Organizers can observe participants while they are engaged in the program.

Participants can evaluate the sessions by responding to a questionnaire that asks the following:

1. *What did you really like about the cooking session today?*
2. *What was the most interesting thing you learned?*
3. *What didn't you enjoy?*
4. *How can we improve the cooking session?*
5. *"I also want to say that....."*

6. *Other topics we can look at.....”*

Community Kitchens can open the door to other activities:

- Exchange healthy recipes
- Organize ‘healthy choices’ shopping excursions
- Co-operative purchases of nutritious food
- Community garden project

Example of a Community Kitchen project in an Algonquin community in Quebec

- Three to five persons prepare 5 recipes consisting of one entrée, two main courses and two desserts.
- Afterwards, every person returns home with enough portions to feed their own family.
- Cost is \$1.00 per person payable on the same day of the activity.
- Time required: one planning meeting before each session (to answer questions such as *What is the menu? Who is going to shop? Who is going to cook certain menu items? Etc.*)
- There is one Community Kitchen held each month.
- All persons living with diabetes, their caregiver and/or family member can participate.
- Helps persons who are having difficulty eating balanced meals.
- Helps those who are suffering from isolation and want to change their lifestyle.

- Helps persons economize on their time, effort, and money.
- Helps persons take charge of their life.
- Promotes good nutrition
- Mutual support is available in a family-oriented atmosphere

Some closing words to consider

Recently, a Community Kitchen was held on the Akwesasne Mohawk reserve. The guest cook, who has spent her lifetime learning and practicing healthy and nutritious food preparation, had these words to say about cooking:

“Prepare food with a good attitude. As you handle foods, think about the food itself and how much you like it. Think about your ancestors. Think about the pots you will be using and just put your good energy into the food.”

2. Health Canada *Food Program* Publications

To view the list of publications that can be downloaded from the Internet, type in the following URL:

<http://www.health.gc.ca/food-aliment-english-publications-publications.html>

Summary: This website was created and designed to keep the public aware of current issues in food safety. Information is available on *Food Recalls, Calcium Risk Assessment, Nutrition Labelling, Garlic in oil products, Risks Associated with Sprouts, Aluminum and Human Health, Cookware Safety*, and much, much more.

3. *Meals for Good Health* by Karen Graham

To order: 1. Contact your local Canadian Diabetes Association or write to the national CDA:

15 Toronto Street, Suite 800,
Toronto, Ontario M5C 2E3
Call toll-free: 1-800-BANTING (1-800-226-8464)

OR

2. Order directly from McNally Robinson Booksellers
At: 1-800-561-1833

3. For information about **bulk purchases**:

Paper Birch Publishing
89 Wilkinson Crescent
Portage la Prairie, MB R1N 1A7
Tel: 204-857-7365
Fax: 204-239-6918
Email: discover@cpnet.net

Summary: This is a one-of-a-kind book that features a month of meals shown at actual size. With 250 beautiful colour photographs, it is easy to read and contains low-calorie meal plans that are tasty, nutritious and easy to make. It is especially useful to people with Type 2 diabetes because the emphasis is on portion control and reducing fat intake. Its many uses include the following:

- Teaching healthy eating and healthy living
- Cooking at home and cooking classes
- Classroom teaching and doing workshops
- Healthy eating for pregnancy and gestational diabetes
- Planning individual or group shopping excursions (reading labels and meal planning)
- Support groups for weight loss, or for diabetes and heart disease

Note: Also available from this same publisher are *Meals for Good Health Manual*, and *Meals for Good Health Teaching Binder*

Additional Resources:

For more information on community kitchens, contact the following persons:

1. Rose-Anna McDougall, CHR in Pikogan, Quebec at:
(819) 732-9096 (T)
(819) 732-9824 (F)
2. Shelly Polson, CHR in Winneway, Quebec at:
(819) 722-2440 (T)
(819) 722-2768 (F)