

Who's Cooking?

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**Participants at an IG training at
Fitchburg Art Museum**

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Building Blocks

Around the Table

Whether at home, at school or at work, sitting around the table is helpful for many reasons.

For Families

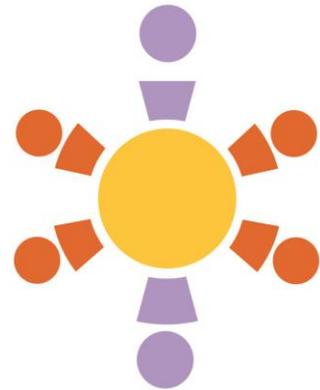
While there is much research about eating dinner together, Sandi Richard (in her book: *Anyone Can Cook Dinner*), succinctly summarizes:

Eating together at home often results:

- *Better concentration at work or school [parents and youth]*
- *Better grades*
- *Better body image*

And you [tween and teens] are:

- *Less likely to abuse drugs*
- *Less likely to abuse alcohol*
- *More likely to have better social skills*
- *More likely to have a higher self esteem*



Tips for Making Meals Together Happen

Some may proclaim that eating together is easier said than done. But, as with all things, begin somewhere!

- Look at the calendar and choose one MEAL per week or month to enjoy together. Get it on everyone's calendar. It does not have to be dinner; perhaps Sunday Brunch is best.
- Ask family members for suggestions on what to serve at the meal.
- Consider breakfast for dinner – super easy and fun!
- Be willing to do take-out on these nights.
- Ask each person to either help cook and set-up or clean-up. Even the youngest child can put out the napkins. In doing so, she learns to be a contributing member of the community.
- Consider asking grandparents or grandfriends to help by preparing the meal - a great way to be interdependent.
- Invite grandparents or other adults in your circle of love to join you. It *does* take a village to raise a child!
- **Put out a basket for everyone to put their electronic devices in. No technology – including TV – at the table!**
- Develop some fun rituals around your meal. Perhaps begin with a prayer or everyone expressing gratitude. Share about your rose, thorn, bud (best part of your day or week, hardest part and something you're looking forward to). Light candles to help bring a sense of calm. If everyone's talking over one another, consider using a special object – like a stone heart or talking stick. In order to talk, the person has to be holding onto the special object.

- Use BT's [Grand Conversation Cards](#) to start meaningful conversations. The deck of 40+ questions helps launch conversations that will leave everyone reflecting and eager to learn more – and there will be more than a few hardy laughs!

In Intergenerational Settings

Allport's Contact Hypothesis suggests that the best ways to reduce prejudice (like ageism) is to have at least two people from each group (in this case young and old) collaborating on a common project where each person contributes. It's endorsed by the authority figures (teachers, parents or staff from the senior organization). Cooking is a great common project! What's most important: have these age-integrated teams!



Know Thy Nutritional Food Groups

Nutrition is so important for our well-being – a true building block!

As children, what we consume can have a lasting impact on our health. As we age, our nutritional needs change.

If we are struggling financially, it can be difficult to eat well-balanced meals.

Malnutrition among older people is a significant problem. There are many reasons for this:

- Not understanding the food groups and their importance – nutrition is a relatively new field
- Changes in our taste buds that make food less appetizing
- Medications that can affect our appetite
- Diseases or dental problems that alter the foods we can or should be eating – and we may not be adept at adapting
- Not knowing how to cook – because our deceased spouse always did it
- Not wanting to cook – because we are tired of it after doing so for many years
- Not wanting to eat alone
- Struggling to cook for one or two people – versus a bustling household

The Food Groups – My Plate helps!

As we plan our meals, it is important to know and understand the food groups – what food are in each and how the food group helps our bodies. The government has been teaching about this using the “Choose My Plate” method.



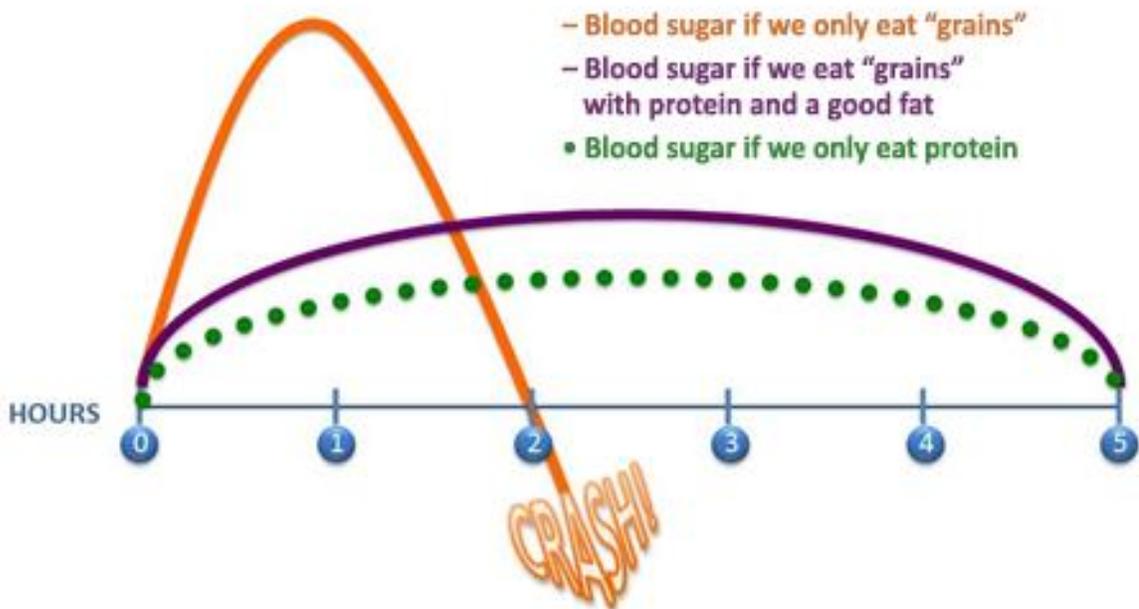
TIP: It is possible to get actual plastic plates with these divisions and graphics printed on them via the ChooseMyPlate.gov website.



Blood Sugar – Important for Teens and People with Diabetes

Eating well-balanced meals and snacks helps us maintain constant blood sugar – affecting our energy and mood. Have you heard of the new term “hangry”? It refers to when we get angry because we are hungry. Below, you can see how eating a balanced snack or meal helps us maintain energy.

Blood Sugar Levels Over 5 Hours



Conversation Starters about Cooking & Food

Here are some questions to start engaging conversation with people whom you love – especially those in a different generation:

1. What is your favorite kind of sandwich? How about your favorite type of bread?
2. Do you have a story about how foods you eat are different from the foods of others?
3. What is your favorite food? What is one of your comfort foods – a food that you want when you are having a bad day or a food that makes your tummy smile? What's your favorite food that you eat only at a special time of year?
4. Do you know any sayings about food and health - like an apple a day, keeps the doctor away. Do you believe such saying?
5. Have you ever had a “disaster” happen in the kitchen? Do share!
6. What is a recipe that has been handed down in your family?
7. With whom do you like to share a meal? If you could invite any five people who have ever lived to a dinner that you are hosting, who would you invite and why?
8. Have you ever gone on a picnic? If so, tell us about it: where, with whom, and what did you eat?
9. Are there any foods you prepare when you always have leftovers to make a new dish - like applesauce in a cake or turkey soup?
10. What are some favorite health snacks you enjoy? What about fast recipes you or your family make when you are in a hurry?
11. Do you or have you ever eaten with utensils other than traditional American forks, spoons, and knives?
12. Does/did your family do anything special at the start of your meal like say a blessing or share what you're grateful for (a Bridges Together tradition) or perhaps discuss a highlight from the day?
13. What is your favorite fruit or vegetable? What is your least favorite? What is the most unusual one you've eaten?
14. Do you have any food allergies or dietary guidelines you try to follow? How do you handle those when you eat with others?
15. Does your family eat a particular dish on a certain day of the week, like tacos on Tuesday or pasta on Wednesday? Who does the preparation? Who helps clean-up?
16. Have you ever brought ingredients to help someone make a recipe? Have you ever received help with a recipe? Do you make a recipe that you received from another person? Have you ever brought a meal to someone else or an organization, like a soup kitchen?
17. Does your family have any recipes that have been handed down from generation to generation? How about recipes that are often told with a story?
18. Have you ever followed a loved one's recipe? Did you ever try to modify it? What happened? Have you ever made up your own recipe?
19. Do you ever remember a deceased loved one by making their favorite dish?



Youth-Friendly Cookbooks



TIP: Open a cookbook to three random pages. If you do not like the recipes on all three pages, don't bother getting the cookbook!

- **Check out our “Cooking Books” supplement.** Bridges Together has created a supplement of children’s picture books with cooking themes including conversation questions, ideas for what to cook and suggested activities. Many of the books feature grandparents and grandchildren from around the world. Find the supplement on the Bridges Together website.
- **Anyone Can Cook Dinner** by Sandi Richard. Sandi Richard had a TV series and has written a number of books. This one is designed for rushed families (get a meal on the table in 15 minutes!) and for young cooks – think tweens (10-13 year olds). The book is chock-full of helpful hints and background information.
- **Children’s Quick & Easy Cook Book** by Angela Wilkes. Our family favorite because of the great photos and tips that make it easy for children to follow along.
- **Cool World Cooking: Fun and Tasty Recipes for Kids** by Lisa Wagner. Traditional recipes from Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia, presented in an easy format.
- **The Coming to America Cookbook** by Joan D’Amico and Karen Eich Drummond. This book includes stories and recipes for main dishes, side dishes, and desserts from 18 countries.
- **To Every Season** by Jane Breskin Zalben. From St. Patrick’s Day to Kwaanza, learn about the origins of 16 holidays and recipes to go along with them.



There are also many websites that have recipes. You can even google the ingredients you have, and see what recipes pop-up.

Cooking & More Activities

1. **Teachable Moments with My Plate.** Make a decision to teach about the *My Plate* method of nutritional eating. Help the people at your table or in your program to recognize which foods from each meal correlate with which food groups and plan their plates accordingly.
2. **Cooking Books.** We’ve compiled a list of picture books that lend themselves easily to cooking specific recipes. In the Cooking Books supplement, find the books, authors, life review discussion questions, suggested type of recipe and related activities. Also included – tips for using these books with children who think they are “too big” for picture books! Many of the books feature multigenerational families.

3. Use cooking to develop other skills such as:
 - Sequencing (first we gather ingredients, then we beat the sugar and eggs...)
 - Reading (the actual recipe or cookbook)
 - Writing (copying recipes to making a cookbook)
 - Comparing and contrasting (this recipe versus that version of it)
 - Fractions (from measuring cups to dividing the dish into the appropriate number or servings)
 - Research (different versions of a recipe, history behind dishes)
4. Plan a progressive dinner with different families or family members, departments or organizations. One family or group takes care of and/or hosts appetizers, another does the main course, perhaps another sides and yet another the dessert.
5. Host a pot-luck meal. Invite guests to bring their favorite recipes - perhaps around a theme like favorite holiday dishes or breakfast dishes.

Consider giving everyone a copy of this poem and discussing it -

When I walk into my kitchen today, I am not alone. Whether we know it or not, none of us is. We bring fathers and mothers and kitchen tables, and every meal we have ever eaten. Food is never just food. It's also a way of getting at something else: who we are, who we have been, and who we want to be. (Molly Wizenberg, *A Homemade Life: Stories and Recipes from My Kitchen Table*, 2009)

Do you want more ideas of how to integrate this poem? Check out February's How-To-Guide on Poetry.

6. Host your own Iron Chef. Inspired by the TV show, select a “secret ingredient” – perhaps a season fruit or vegetable. Or perhaps a rotisserie chicken you get at the grocery store. Divide the family or group into teams. Each team has to find a recipe, collect the ingredients and make it. Who will be your judges? Try to have your teams be intergenerational. This is super fun in families where you can invite adult friends to join the kiddos’ teams.
7. Everyone’s Favorites. Along the lines of the Iron Chef, select an ingredient and then ask everyone to suggest their favorite recipe using that ingredient. Select a few to try – during an intergenerational program or over a series of family meals.
 - Eggs are a great starting point if no one is allergic. Think eggs and toast, egg-in-a-hole, dunking eggs, an egg & meat sandwich, egg salad, deviled eggs and mini-quiche.
 - Pasta is another versatile option with a myriad of favorite (and inexpensive) ways to prepare it – with traditional tomato sauce and meatballs, chicken and broccoli, vegetarian ziti bake, lasagna (easy to assemble with no-bake noodles and fun for a crowd) or even as a salad. It’s now possible to get gluten-free pasta (Ronzoni is our favorite) and pasta with protein added from beans (like Barilla Protein Plus).

8. **Hello, Herb(s)!** Herbs and spices can make all the difference in the world. Quite literally. It's amazing to see how different cultures use different herbs and spices. For people who have to limit salt intake, these can really "spice" things up! Boil some carrots – and then sprinkle with different herbs. Or try a recipe with different herbs each week.
9. **Quinoa: The Power Grain.** Quinoa is an ancient grain that is packed with protein (good for muscles) and fiber (good for the digestive system). It is also inexpensive. Try some different recipes using quinoa – many of which begin with boiling it in plain water. Then, you can prepare it as a hot cereal instead of oatmeal or as a salad instead of rice. You can add it to soups and salads. Have fun with this versatile, power packed grain.
10. **Apps2.0 Bring or make your favorite appetizers.** Then, share about your favorite technology apps.
11. **Then & Now.** The need to eat is timeless, but the way in which we eat and the "in" foods change over time (and place). Compare and contrast – popular recipes at different times in history with those of today. It's easy to search online for favorite dishes from each decade... or century. Check out Betty Crocker Cookbooks from different decades – what's included? Have ingredients in specific recipes changed?
12. **Make a cook-list or a cookbook!**
 - Put together not a formal book, but a "cook-list" of quick recipes or family favorites that can be go-to's.
 - In families, collect everyone's favorite recipes or record recipes from previous generations – especially before they get lost
 - In schools and organizations, invite everyone to contribute a favorite recipe.
 - Consider throwing in some fun recipes – like how to make pretend something.... Or how to make a happy home.
 - Combine them electronically or make paper copies and have fun distributing them.
13. **Make popcorn and watch a cooking related movie.** Of course, there are all different ways to make popcorn. Perhaps even more fun, are the different toppings you can put on them. Get that popcorn going and enjoy a movie featuring cooking. Some all-time favorites are:
 - [The Hundred-Foot Journey](#)
 - [Julie & Julia](#)
 - [Ratatouille](#)
 - [Like Water for Chocolate](#)
 - And the kitchen scene is pivotal in [Parental Guidance](#)
14. **Become an advocate.**
 - Contact local grocery stores about donating day-old goods for food pantries or for "sale" at senior organizations where people "pay" what they can afford.
 - Contact local restaurants about having "communal tables" where individuals can sit and socialize. Or "dementia-friendly tables" that are appropriate for people who are suffering from memory loss.

- 15. Start an intergenerational cooking class.** Specifically for youth and older adults. Team the generations together as they learn to cook new meals. They may share the meals together, bring the meals home or deliver them to a food pantry.
- 16. Sharing is Caring.** In EVERY community, there are people who are struggling to put food on the table, people going to bed with hungry bellies. And there are other people who are starving for companionship and someone with whom they can share a meal. Meet with local food pantries, shelters, school or community social workers, YMCAs, to create innovative solutions. Consider making sandwiches to deliver someplace. Start a community dinner program like [Open Table](#) in Maynard, MA. Anyone can come for dinner where the motto is: fresh food, healthy community.
- 17. Cookies, Love.** Share the love with a plate of cookies. Invite people of all ages to come with some of their favorite dough. Bake cookies together, plate them and deliver them to people in veteran’s hospitals or nursing homes. Be sure to stop and talk with people, learning about their stories – or you may actually increase the children’s fear of aging.
- 18. Bake Off!** Inspired by the TV show, invite intergenerational teams to come and bake together – against each other. Consider three different types of baking: cupcakes, cookies and most importantly, a favorite family recipe! We first heard of a program like this in Barnstable, MA.

Healthful No-Cook Snack Recipes

Taken from our *Bridges: Our Smarts* manual

Salsa and Chips (traditional food of Mexico)

Ingredients:

- 4 tomatoes totaling about 2 cups
- 1 tablespoon cilantro
- 1 tablespoon red onion
- 2 teaspoons lime juice
- Salt to taste
- Tortilla chips

Directions:

1. Dice the tomatoes.
2. With scissors, cut up the cilantro.
3. Finely chop the red onion.
4. Mix these ingredients in a bowl with the lime juice.
5. Serve.

Adapted from: <https://weelicious.com/2011/04/12/kiddie-salsa>

My Plate:

- Tomatoes and onions are vegetable.
- Tortilla chips are carbohydrates.

Fruit Smoothie (originated on the United States West Coast)

Ingredients:

- One large container of plain yogurt
- 3 cups of fruit (frozen or fresh) - options include bananas, strawberries, blueberries

Directions:

1. Put the fruit in a blender and mix.
2. Add the yogurt.
3. Pour into small cups.

My Plate:

- Yogurt is protein and dairy.
- Fruit is fruit!

Rolls-Ups

Ingredients:

- Flour wraps
- Turkey slices
- Cheese slices
- Lettuce leaves
- Tomatoes, sliced
- Mustard or mayonnaise

Directions:

1. Lay out the flour wrap.
2. Spread the mustard or mayonnaise on it.
3. Add the lettuce and tomato slices.
4. Add the turkey slices.
5. Add cheese.
6. Roll the wrap.
7. Cut into 1" slices on the diagonal.

My Plate:

- The wrap is a carbohydrate.
- The turkey and cheese is protein.
- Cheese is also dairy.
- Lettuce and tomatoes are vegetables.
- Mayonnaise is a fat.

Hummus Dip with Vegetables (traditional food of the Middle East)

Ingredients:

- One 15-ounce can chickpeas, also called garbanzo beans, rinsed and drained
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice, about 1 large lemon
- 1/4 cup tahini
- Half of a large garlic clove, minced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, plus more for serving
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 2 to 3 tablespoons water

For dipping: Carrots, celery stalks, Middle Eastern bread

Directions:

Some of the group participants can prepare the carrots, celery, and bread into portion sizes. The other participants can make the hummus.

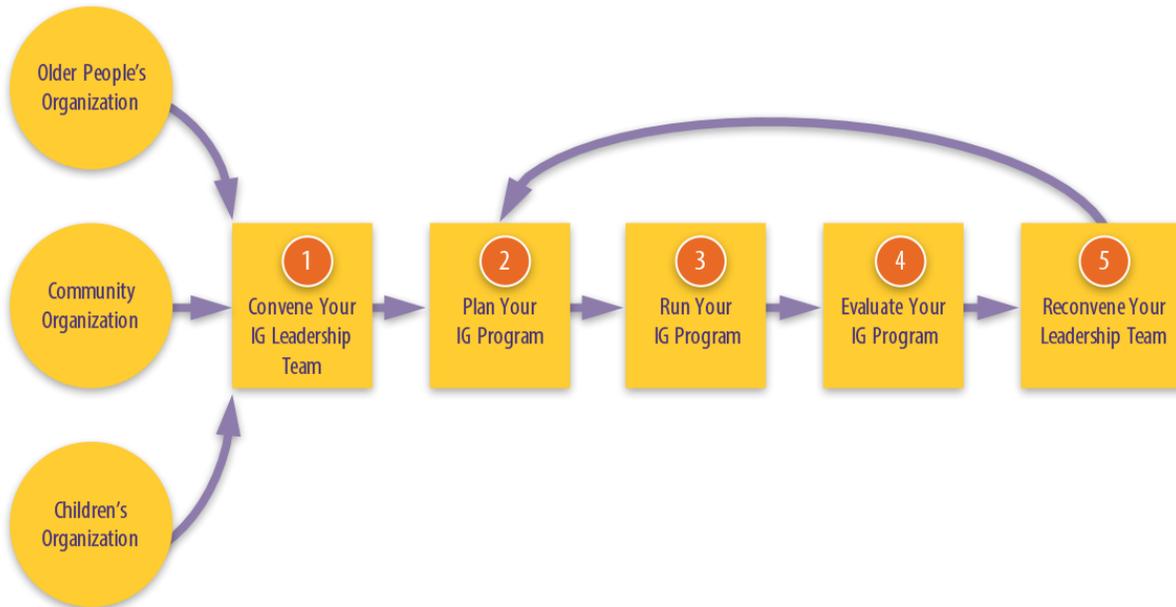
1. In a food processor or blender, mix the tahini and lemon juice for 1 minute.
2. Add all of the other ingredients except the beans and water.
3. Add half the beans and beat for one minute.
4. Add the other beans and beat for another minute.
5. Add water as necessary to make the dip smooth.

Adapted from: <http://www.inspiredtaste.net/15938/easy-and-smooth-hummus-recipe/#ixzz2My4a3Tun>

My Plate:

- Beans are protein, carbohydrate, and vegetable.
- Bread is carbohydrate.
- Carrots and celery are vegetables.
- Oil is a healthful fat.

Step-by-Step Plans for a Formal IG Cooking Program



1 Convene your “Intergenerational (IG) Leadership Team”.

1A. Invite leaders to join you.

To create your team, start with at least one person from a partner organization that serves people in a different age group. This is critical to the program’s success and the likelihood of the program continuing. You will find a standard list of potential [Leadership Team members](#) on the BT website (listed under How-To Guides). We then give specific suggestions each month.



TIP: We update potential Leadership Team partners in each How-To-Guide (H2G).

As a team, you will make decisions about your event. Potential partners around cooking include:

- **Youth-Based Organizations:** vocational technical programs, culinary schools, family networks, park & recreation programs.
- **Adult & Older Peoples’ Organizations:** activity directors or volunteer coordinators at senior centers/councils on aging, local places that offer cooking classes, current and retired cafeteria workers.
- **Community Organizations:** Local cablevision might like to host a cooking show, local chefs and caterers, farmers, restaurateurs.

1B. Meet with your Leadership Team to prepare.

Use the [Logistics Planning Sheet](#) (which can be found on the BT website under How-To Guides) to help guide your conversation and help plan your intergenerational program.

One of the important decisions you will have to make is determining your goals and/or if you have any learning objectives. We recommend capping your goals or learning objectives to three.

Some suggestions are:

- pilot an intergenerational program
- teach people of all ages about the My Plate method of eating
- unite the community around food issues

Participants will be able to:

- name the food groups and give examples of each
- follow a recipe to make a healthy dish
- Recognize the similarities and differences among food from different cultures

2

Plan Your IG Program Time.

Begin by selecting a specific theme or type of creative project. Below are the recommended components of a strong intergenerational event.

Components of IG Event	Time	Activity
Identify Your Central Theme		
Ice Breaker and/or Music & Movement activity (if the people know each other)	10 minutes	
Mini-lesson on the topic of the day or book	15 minutes	
Life Review Questions in Small Groups	10 minutes	
Activity in Small Groups	15 minutes	
Summary & Conclusion	10 minutes	
Share Food & Friendship	15 minutes+	
Evaluations		
Questions to Send Home		

2A. What ice breaker will you do to help people meet each other and feel more comfortable?

Relay Race: Break the group into teams – with at least two people per age group on each team (i.e. two students and two older people). Have everyone introduce themselves and give them a few minutes to come up with a team name – and maybe even a chant! Then, do a relay race. You might give each team a bowl – and at the other end of the course, they need to run and pick up a tool or ingredient that you’ll be using, i.e. a wooden spoon, a can of tomatoes, a bottle of oregano, a package of cheese, a bag of English muffins. And have them guess what you will be making! This goes well with the book, *The Little Red Hen Makes Pizza* – which is in the Cooking-Supplement. You might also do a relay race where the team has to carry a boiled or plastic egg on a spoon. Who can balance?!

The Matching Game: Select a bunch of kitchen gadgets like a whisk, colander and masher. Write the name of each gadget on an index card. Make sure that you have enough pairs for each person. Ask one age group to take the gadgets and the other group to take the index cards. Invite people to find their partners. You may want to put a colored dot on the index card to indicate in which group they will be working.

Scatter and Gather: This is a BT favorite! Everyone stands-up. The facilitator calls out a category and then people have to say their responses aloud – and keep repeating it as they walk and gather with other people who have the same responses. It’s always good to start with in what season were you born – as there are only four options! Building on the cooking theme, you may ask for favorite soup? Favorite pie? Favorite fruit? Favorite vegetable? Ethnic food?

2B. Mini-lesson.

Take 10-15 minutes to provide some background on your cooking project. You may share about the history of the dish, variations of it or nutritional food groups. Try to give nuggets of information that people of all ages and abilities can go home and think about or share. Lifelong learning!

2C. What life-review questions will be discussed in small groups?

There are many ideas for conversation starters about books on page 5 of this guide. Choose a few that will help people share about their own personal experiences.

2D. What will you do as a main activity in small groups?

There are ideas for activities in the beginning of this guide. See “*Cooking & More Activities*” beginning on page 6.

2E. Will you share a healthy snack?

It is great to incorporate a snack into your program so that participants can socialize informally as they eat. It also provides an opportunity to share healthy food as well as nutrition tips. Nutrition is a relatively new field and many older people never formally learned about proteins, starches, etc. There are ideas for this in the “*Healthful No-Cook Snack Recipes*” on pages 9.

2F. How will you evaluate your program?

Refer back to your goals and make sure that you have a way to evaluate each one. Also, there are two types of evaluation: Qualitative is about the stories and the impact on people while quantitative is about the numbers. Some methods might include:

- Counting how many people have cooked at home since starting the program or tried eating new foods since starting the program.
- Handing out a little quiz on food groups.
- Asking people to describe the program in one or two words and then combining them to make a word cloud.

2G. Will you send home a sheet that summarizes the experience and has questions for generations in the participants' circle of love to explore?

It is helpful to give each participant a sheet with a summary of the program, a list of leaders or organizations that were involved, and questions for them to ponder at home. Some of the questions should encourage people to think back – like the life-review questions in the beginning. You may also want to offer a few ideas for activities that they may do at home to continue the learning. Some studies have found that children who have grandparents involved in their lives are more successful academically. These questions provide an opportunity to foster that. You may even want to offer an incentive for children who ask their grandparents the questions and report back. Feel free to use questions and activities from this guide. If you do so, please let people know about the Bridges Together membership which is open to anyone.

3

Run Your IG Program.

3A. Recruit participants so you can run your program.

Asking someone directly is the best way to get participation. On the Bridges Together website, in the How-To-Guides section, there is a list of ways to publicize the program.

3B. Run your Program.

You planned well. The day and time is here. Enjoy! ***Remember the process is far more important than any product.*** In other words, do not sweat the small stuff. It does not matter if all goes perfectly as planned. (It probably will not). It is OK if the projects are not completed. *Did people have fun? Do they want to participate again? Will they say "hi" to a new friend whom they meet around town? These are the things that matter the most.*

4

Evaluate Your IG Program.

Your Leadership Team decided on methods. Take the time or find a volunteer to collate the responses. Review them and write up a summary to share with the Leadership Team.



BT Members: If you want input and suggestions, from our team, contact the Bridges Together office at 978-793-9650 or Hello@BridgesTogether.org.

5

Reconvene Your Leadership Team.

As a group, discuss the program. At Bridges Together, we often summarize using the ROSE method – what are the roses that went well? The thorns that were sticky and made us go “ouch” – that is not too good? Make sure to discuss possible solutions. The buds are what inklings do you see of what might happen next. Do make sure you decide what your next step is.



Share Your Great Work!

Remember to share your great work and tag Bridges Together on:



email us at
Hello@BridgesTogether.org
Please include a photo we may use