

# L E A D I N G Y T C



**simcoe  
muskoka**  
DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

# Tips for leaders

## Setting the stage for participants to learn to cook

Most people learn best by doing, so whenever possible allow participants to try a task on their own. Keep in mind that younger children will need to be supervised when they are using knives and sharp kitchen utensils (e.g. graters, peelers and blenders). Arrange for additional volunteers to assist with cooking sessions depending on the age and number of participants registered. Review safety tips as well as the importance of hand washing and cleanliness at each cooking class.

Many participants may not know the name of different utensils, cooking terms and appliances used in the kitchen. It is important to begin each class with a review of the terms and supplies that will be used.

## Building youth assets

If your program involves children and youth, you can help create opportunities to develop assets that will help them grow up to be healthy, caring and responsible individuals.<sup>1</sup> You can do this by:

- Learning their names and greeting them by name at each session.
- Taking time to talk and get to know them.
- Expecting youth to behave responsibly. Let them know what is expected of them during YTC classes, including rules and consequences.
- Encouraging everyone to be respectful of one another.
- Choosing to see youth for their assets and not their limitations.
- Giving feedback along with encouragement.

YTC offers a unique opportunity for adults to role model healthy attitudes and behaviours to youth. By using the suggestions above you are more likely to find your experience as a YTC leader more enjoyable and more rewarding.

## Dividing youth into groups

YTC recipes have a varied number of skills and steps. It is best to begin with the easier recipes and then move to the more challenging recipes as participants learn and practice more of the required skills.

In order for all participants to be involved in preparing the recipes, it is best to work in small groups of 4-6. If you have a large group (more than 16), then you will need additional volunteers to assist. Encourage everyone to take turns doing each task.

## Sampling the recipes

Once the recipe(s) are prepared, the group will sit together to discuss them and eat a sample (if desired). During this discussion time, participants will likely talk about what they like and do not like about the recipes. Many participants will be trying a certain food or ingredient for the first time. It is important not to pressure anyone to try something if they do not want to. Individuals often need to be exposed to a food a number of times before they are willing to taste it and they are more likely to want to try a food if they feel no pressure. Focus on the positive aspects of the experience, such as cooking or using new ingredients. Some leaders might believe that a 'one bite rule' is helpful. They feel that if the participant has 'one bite' of a new food, they will realize that it is tasty and want to eat more. This is opposite to what research says and it is not recommended in YTC programs.

<sup>1</sup>Search Institute® (2012). Developmental Assets. <http://www.search-institute.org/assets>.



## Tips for leaders

### Talking about food and nutrition

An important part of YTC is the focus on food and nutrition, which is why YTC recipes emphasize vegetables and fruit and wholesome, minimally processed ingredients. You do not need to be an expert in nutrition to lead a discussion about food. Be sure to keep the discussion focused on aspects of cooking as well as using wholesome, minimally processed ingredients to help encourage participants to be open to trying new foods (even foods you may not like). Refer to the discussion questions below to help you.

Hand out copies of Canada's Food Guide (available from Health Canada website) and/or refer youth to <https://food-guide.canada.ca> for more specific information. If participants ask questions related to nutrition, weight, dieting, calories, etc. refer them to their healthcare provider.

An important part of YTC is the focus on food and nutrition. All YTC recipes emphasize vegetables and fruit. The recipes have higher levels of nutrients important for good health (e.g. fibre, vitamins and minerals) and lower amounts of nutrients to limit (e.g. saturated fat, total fat, sugar and sodium).

### Curriculum Connections

Cooking with students is not only fun, but it can help reinforce what is taught in the school curriculum. Here are some ways to link YTC cooking lessons with the Ontario curriculum.

<b>Math</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learn about fractions using different measuring cups and spoons for dry and wet ingredients.</li><li>• Explore student taste or meal preferences and display results on different types of charts and graphs.</li><li>• Calculate fractions by measuring ingredients and calculate modifications to the recipe (e.g., how to double a recipe).</li><li>• Reading a nutrition facts table and % daily values.</li></ul>
<b>Language</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review recipe instructions as an example of procedural text.</li><li>• Learn new vocabulary related to food preparation.</li></ul>
<b>Art</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make a photo collage of the recipes prepared during the program.</li><li>• Make a step-by-step video of students preparing a recipe from start to finish.</li></ul>
<b>Science</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learn about how to keep food safe and proper handwashing.</li><li>• Learn about states of matter using water as an example (e.g., boiling, freezing).</li></ul>

### Be creative

Depending on how your school has chosen to offer the YTC program, you may want to enhance the learning and enjoyment of YTC by including a complementary activity. Refer to YTC program activities section for more ideas.

### Involving parents

Parents and guardians may be interested in learning more about the YTC program. Make opportunities to communicate with parents and guardians when possible to inform them about the program content, reassure them about safety guidelines and principles and raise their awareness about the importance of developing food literacy in youth aged 10 and up. Encourage parents to allow their child to help in the kitchen at home with food and meal preparations.

# Tips for leaders

## YTC at your school

You're the Chef is an adaptable program intended for students aged 10 and up. YTC can be included as part of an overall school improvement plan. It can be incorporated into both elementary and secondary levels. Always discuss your plans for the YTC with your school administrator prior to implementing.

We encourage students to become actively involved! For this reason, include students when selecting recipes. This is a great way for students to be adventurous and experience new foods in a safe environment, so encourage trying a diverse range of foods.

When recruiting volunteers, consider having students that have experienced the program as peer leaders. They can provide hands-on help and while building leadership skills. Connect with the local high school for students looking for experiences and opportunities for volunteer hours. Four weekly sessions at minimum are recommended so that students have an opportunity to practice skills they have learned.

## Funding sources

The cost of implementing an YTC program can vary depending on the number of cooking sessions offered, the number of participants, the available equipment and the recipes selected. On average you can expect to spend a minimum of \$30 for four participants and up to \$60 for 16 participants to prepare weekly recipes. The price range is dependent on the number of groups preparing recipes, and which recipes are being prepared each week. Families might be willing to lend cooking equipment to offset program costs.

## BrightBites

Running the You're the Chef program is a great way to introduce food skills and food literacy to students in your school. Check out [www.BrightBites.ca](http://www.BrightBites.ca) for more ideas on how to create a healthy school nutrition environment by making bite sized changes throughout the school environment.

