Back to Basics: 7 ways to increase Family Food Literacy now

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What is the issue?

Canadians cite time as their biggest barrier to food preparation. On average, we spend less than 30 minutes a day on food preparation.

*Dalhousie University, 2017*

Younger generations are more likely to use convenience tools because they lack more complex prep skills due to lack of learning in-home and less education on food and nutrition.

*Journal of Nutrition and Education Behaviour, 2017*
Increase in Social Media Use
What’s going on?

40% of Canadians < 38 years old eat outside 1 to 2 x weekly

35% of the average Canadian food budget is spent on food people consume away from home
  • Restaurants
  • Grab-and-go
  • Portable food options

“Prediction: By 2030 with this trend, over 50% of our food budget as Canadians will be spent on outside food”

Dr. Sylvain Charlebois, Dalhousie University 2018
Who are the players?

- Educators
- Policy Makers
- Parents and Producers
- Commercial and corporate
- RDs/other professionals

Increasing family food literacy will involve a combination of hands-on learning at home, at schools, advocacy and support from professionals, and proper policy.
Top Seven Ways to Increase Food Literacy in Children

1) Shopping Together: weekly
2) Preparing and Cooking Together: weekly
3) Eating Together: As much as possible
4) Story Telling: About cooking, food, folklore, history, culture
5) Visiting: Gardens, Farms and Markets
6) Showing up: Supporting Community Programs
7) Advocacy: food and farming-based learning programs in schools/ communities
1. Shop Together

- Create lists of planned meals and snacks
- Talk about budget and food costs
- Explore food labels
- Recognizing advertising and marketing influence!
2. Cook Together

Have regular food related interactions
- Don’t make food and cooking a BORE or a CHORE
- Talk about food as a creative tool
- As an important, fun life-skill...like swimming!

- Cooking IS quality family time-REFRAME

Start early and often, food literacy is an essential learning
Dietitians of Canada + Health Canada Study:

Compared to those with “basic or limited” mechanical food preparations skills, those who reported having “very good skills” were more likely to also report:

- Higher frequency of vegetables and fruit consumption
- Better self-perceived eating habits.
- Higher levels of perceived health.
3. Eat Together

“Shared family mealtimes have been associated with such diverse outcomes as reduced risk for substance abuse, promotion of language development, academic achievement, and reduced risk for pediatric obesity”

Increase literacy by reducing screen-time

No screens while eating
- Music and togetherness instead

- Reduces anxiety and shame around food
- Reduces negative social media exposures
- Reduces exposure to savvy marketing towards kids, which can skew their understanding of food.
4. Understand the story of our food

STORYTELLING is the "magic" of food

Discuss where foods come from, physical, cultural

- How was food created?
- Why is it in a package?
- How did it get here?

What did you eat as a child?
5. Visiting: Gardens, Markets and Farms

Trips and planned activities at farms, markets, co-ops, community gardens and agencies providing literacy work

Supports the story-telling by showing kids where their food comes from

Storytelling is a way to engage:

EMOTION is a powerful connector

People remember what they feel MORE than information!
How Does Food Affect:

**Health**
All the ISSUES

**Environment**
• Packaging? Delivery? Pesticides?

**Our Economy**
For farmers:
• 20-25% of what is spent retail on food goes to farmers
• Only 4% of what is spent from prepared food goes to farmers

Students and young working adults:
• spending > 35% of their income on outside food = NORMAL ($1000 month on UberEats)
• No concept of how to plan for future or financial or health set-backs
6. Showing Up: Support Community Food Programs

Parents: Take advantage of programs for children in your community—includes meal and cooking programs, educational programs, garden projects

RDs: Look for opportunities to create/encourage these programs

Promote this on social

Educators: Prioritize these trips and projects; larger part of curriculum

Community Partners: how can you create projects that meet community food literacy needs

Corporate and Commercial: can food literacy be part of their platform, ethical products
7. Advocacy: food learning programs within schools, centres and communities

Are there food programs in your local schools?

Can they be improved or created?

Support initiatives to get cooking/food prep education back into schools!!

Breakfast Programs NEED to include Food Literacy as an integral part
  - Learn to prepare
  - Parents and Kids

RDs: How can we advocate for these programs and network to ensure this message is received?

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Examples of the work

- Evergreen Brickworks
- George Brown College Culinary Program
- James Beard Foundation
- Second Harvest
- Roots to Harvest
- Ontario Federation of Agriculture
- School Breakfast, snack or lunch programs
  TDSB etc.
- Other partners

- Community Kitchens
- Ontario Dietitians in Public Health
- FoodShare
- Ontario FARMING Association
- National Resource Centre Group
- Sustain Ontario
- EcoSource
- Ontario Home Economics Association
Roles: More than Status-Quo

Parents
- Include your kids in the process of shopping, cooking, preparing, story-telling, visiting, showing up and advocating: Food = Quality Time + Life Skill

RDs
- Advocate: Be proactive with ideas, describe, promote, develop in this work, you are experts.
- Flood the Feed: use social media, blogs, video, talks, events community programs to communicate literacy messages and support to families with food literacy tools

Everyone
- Use story telling to help children understand and relate to how their food is grown, prepared, and used in their bodies. Let food literacy be a fun and creative learning experience! Show up to community projects, support ethical corporate and commercial ventures
Thank You!