

TIME TO GET COOKING

These farm groups are building lifelong customers by teaching kids how to help themselves in the kitchen

BY HELEN LAMMERS-HELPS

For more and more of today's kids, basic cooking skills are a lost art. With two parents working non-stop and with a full slate of after-school activities for the kids, families are eating more prepared meals or picking up food on the go.

Mary Carver, food literacy specialist at the Ontario Home Economists Association (OHEA) sees it as the culmination of a trend that's been building for at least a couple of generations.

Should farmers care? Increasingly, the answer is yes, and not only because some of these non-cooks are farm kids.

That's because there's an additional question that's getting asked. If families don't respect their food, will they respect the farmers who produce it?

It's a worry for the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, which has identified food literacy as part of its National Food Strategy.

Picking up on that theme too is the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) which has launched its Six by Sixteen campaign.

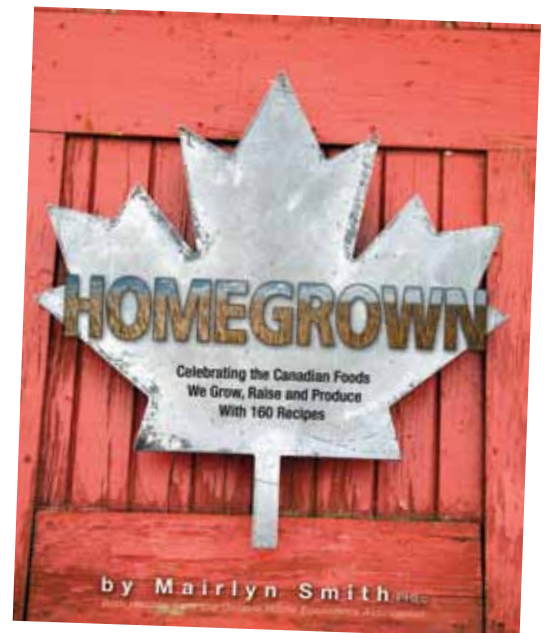
The goal of the Six by Sixteen campaign is to help young people learn to plan and prepare six nutritious, locally sourced meals by the time they are 16 years old. By arming them with lifelong healthy habits and skills, they'll be supporting local farmers, food processors and our economy.

The plan is not to duplicate all the good information already available on commodity group and government websites, says Tyler Brook, e-communication co-ordinator at OFA. Instead, the "sixbysixteen.me" website will link to existing information found on the websites of collaborating partners, which include Chicken Farmers of Canada, Ontario Pork, Foodland Ontario, Dairy Farmers of Ontario and more.

The struggle to find time to prepare healthy meals from scratch isn't unique to urban families. On farms across Canada, parents are busy working on and off the farm, shuttling kids to sports and other extra-curricular activities while also deeply involved in agricultural and community organizations.

The OHEA recently published a beautiful colour recipe book filled with helpful tips on buying, storing and cooking healthy food grown in Canada along with information on how that food is grown.

Here are a few recipes selected from the cookbook, *Homegrown* (Whitecap, 2015).



The Ontario Home Economists Association wants to see food literacy become part of the mandatory secondary school curriculum. There is a petition on the organization's website at www.food-literacy.ca. There are almost 3,000 signatures on the petition so far. Its goal is to add another 2,000 signatures.

Gluten-Free P.E.I. Potato Lasagna

Janet Buis, PHEc

INGREDIENTS

- ½ lb. (250 g) extra-lean ground beef
- ½ onion, chopped
- 1 cup (250 ml) sliced fresh mushrooms
- ½ green pepper, chopped
- 1 stalk celery, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1, 24-oz. (640-ml) jar gluten-free tomato pasta sauce
- 1, 19-oz. (540-ml) can no-salt-added kidney beans, well rinsed and drained
- 1 tsp. (5 ml) dried thyme leaves
- ½ tsp. (2 ml) ground cumin
- 1 tsp. (5 ml) chili powder
- 4 small baking potatoes, scrubbed and very thinly sliced
- ½ cup (125 ml) packed shredded cheddar cheese

“ Nothing warms up the hockey crowd like potato lasagna when they come home hungry after the game. ”

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 375 F (190 C). Line a 9 × 13-inch (23 × 33-cm) baking dish with wet parchment paper and set aside.
2. Brown beef in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add onion, mushrooms, green pepper, celery and garlic and sauté for 5 minutes or until softened.
3. Stir in pasta sauce, kidney beans, thyme, cumin, chili powder and cook until heated through.
4. Arrange half of the potato slices over bottom of prepared dish, overlapping if necessary. Top with half of the beef mixture. Layer the remaining potato slices and cover with the rest of the beef mixture.
5. Cover with foil. Bake for 50 minutes or until the potatoes are tender.
6. Uncover and sprinkle with cheddar cheese. Bake until cheese melts, about 10 minutes. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving.

Makes 10 cups (2.5 l) One serving = 1½ cups (375 ml)

Per serving: 298 Calories, 5.7 g Total Fat, 2.7 g Saturated Fat, 0.1 g Trans Fat, 349 mg Sodium, 43.8 g Carbohydrate, 9 g Fibre, 11 g Sugars, 0 g Added Sugars, 18.5 g Protein

West Indian–Style Curry Chicken

Rosemarie Superville, PHEc

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tsp. (10 ml) ground cumin
- 1 ½ tsp. (7 ml) ground coriander
- 1 tsp. (5 ml) ground black pepper
- ½ tsp. (2 ml) turmeric
- ½ tsp. (2 ml) iodized salt
- ½ tsp. (2 ml) ground ginger
- ¼ tsp. (1 ml) cayenne pepper (or to taste)
- 1 lb. (450 g) boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1-inch (2.5-cm) chunks
- 1 tbsp. (15 ml) canola oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 medium potato, peeled and cubed (approx. ½ inch/1 cm)
- 2 small tomatoes, chopped
- 1 medium carrot, scrubbed well and thinly sliced
- 1¼ cups (310 ml) sodium-reduced chicken broth

METHOD

1. In large bowl, stir together the cumin, coriander, black pepper, turmeric, salt, ginger and cayenne; toss with chicken pieces and let stand 15 minutes or longer in the refrigerator.
 2. In a large deep non-stick skillet over medium heat, add the oil and onion, sautéing for 8 to 10 minutes or until lightly browned.
 3. Add chicken pieces and garlic and cook until lightly browned, about 3 to 5 minutes.
 4. Add potato, tomatoes, carrot and broth and bring to a boil; cover and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes, stirring occasionally or until the chicken and vegetables are tender. Any leftovers can be covered and stored in the fridge for up to 3 days.
- Makes 4 cups (1 l) One serving = 1 cup (250 ml)

Per serving: 242 Calories, 5.4 g Total Fat, 0.7 g Saturated Fat, 0 g Trans Fat, 564 mg Sodium, 18.3 g Carbohydrate, 3 g Fibre, 4.6 g Sugars, 0 g Added Sugars, 32.2 g Protein

“ This is one of my ‘go-to’ recipes when I feel like an island dinner. You can control the degree of ‘heat’ by the amount of cayenne used. ”