

# EAST OREGONIAN

## OSU class teaches locals about healthy cooking

Local class teaches families how to cook simple meals with vegetables

By Jayati Ramakrishnan •

Published on July 23, 2018 5:42PM



Buy this photo



Staff photo by E.J. HarrisSilvia Castilla watches as her sons, Angel Cruz Arreola, 5, and Dante Castillo, 14, pour salad dressing on a Asian salad Thursday during a family cooking class for the OSU Extension Service's nutrition education program in Hermiston.



Buy this photo



Staff photo by E.J. H the end of the class.

Angie Treadwell wants to talk produce.

“Does anybody here have a favorite vegetable?” she asked the 10 people in her cooking class.

“Carrots!,” shouted four-year-old Angel.

He was in luck. For the “Fruits and Vegetables for Families” class last week, Treadwell, coordinator for OSU Extension Service’s nutrition education program, taught families how to make two dishes using the orange root: an Asian carrot salad, and a Mexican vegetable-beef skillet dish.

Even though several of the people at the class knew how to cook, many were there to learn how to use more vegetables in their meals and how to make healthier cooking choices.

Umatilla-Morrow Head Start, along with OSU, is providing the classes to families that qualify for the WIC (Women, Infants and Children) program. WIC is a supplemental nutrition program that provides nutritious foods to low-income pregnant and breastfeeding women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at risk of not getting adequate nutrition.

“We’re trying to do preventative care,” Treadwell said.

She noted that scientific research has shown that eating a healthy amount of vegetables can help prevent, and even address, common diseases.

For the “Fruits and Vegetables for Families” program, people were screened for food insecurity, and had to qualify in one of three areas: meeting CDC guidelines for obesity, or being diagnosed by a healthcare provider with diabetes or hypertension. Those who qualify are asked to come to at least four cooking classes, and get a bag of fresh produce to take home with each class. Classes are funded by an \$85,000 grant from Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization. In June, 122 people attended one of the six classes offered.

Though the classes target women and children, Treadwell said they encourage the whole family to join in.

Silvia Castillo came to Thursday’s class with her children.

“I am not big on cooking,” she said. “But as a family we had lots of fun.”

As she grated carrots, her son made dressing and her daughter chopped tomatoes. She said she plans to come back for other classes, and hopes to cook more at home with her kids.

Victoria Erevia-Garcia stirred brown rice into the vegetable-beef skillet.

She said she loves to cook and has done it for years. But the class introduced her to some new things. She’d never cooked with squash before, and wasn’t used to cooking with carrots.

“I’m diabetic, so it helps me learn what to do,” she said of the class. “Maybe it will help me get rid of my diabetes as well.”

In another room, Head Start employees arranged bags stuffed with fresh produce including zucchini, potatoes, carrots and cantaloupe.