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Kenton Kids Cooking Club adapts to pandemic with take-home kits



In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, OSU Extension distributed 205 take-home kits for the Kenton Kids Cooking Club.

Credit Jennifer Morris

Each week during the summer of 2019, about 45 kids visited the Kenton Kids Cooking Club at the Kenton Farmers Market in north Portland, where they prepared Food Hero recipes such as Farmers Market Salsa using produce from the market. The market is one of five neighborhood markets operated by the Portland Farmers Market. The Kenton Kids Cooking Club is offered through Portland SNAP-Ed, a nutrition education program of the Oregon State University Extension Service.

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The COVID-19 pandemic created a significant challenge for the club. While farmers markets were deemed an essential service in Oregon and operated with additional health and safety precautions, all in-person Extension community programming and tastings were put on hold. Portland SNAP-Ed brainstormed ways to continue to engage with its cooking club participants by adapting the Kenton Kids Cooking Club as a take-home cooking kit model.

The kits were developed collaboratively with the farmers market manager, and contents included a seasonal produce item, an educator message, Food Hero recipes and activity pages for kids. Food Hero (<https://www.foodhero.org/>) is a statewide initiative of the Oregon Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) program and was developed by Extension in English and Spanish. All the recipes are tested according to criteria, such as overall flavor, color and texture. Food Hero meals are low-cost and feature easy to find ingredients, easy to follow instructions, and minimal preparation time.

The kits were distributed each week at the market from August through September. Participants were encouraged to create the Food Hero recipes at home and to learn about Oregon-grown produce.

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A total of 205 take-home cooking kits were distributed to Kenton families, with 127 kids participating in the program, 31 of which repeatedly visited the market to pick up their kit. Many families reported having fun at home with the kits, and their kids were excited about trying new foods. A Kenton resident and first-time Kenton Farmers Market shopper, said, "I have three grandkids who will be so happy for something to do."

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Credit Ren Suo (Cropped from original)



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