EO PARENT MAGAZINE

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Nutritious Food Hero meal recipes save the day!

By JENNIFER COLTON   Apr 1, 2019

Two Cute smiling kids drinks healthy green smoothie w

When you tell kids it's time to eat their spin
make a face indicating their displeasure.

But hand a child a green popsicle that tastes like tropical fruit and they'll eat the whole thing no matter how much spinach is inside it. Soon, you just may find them asking to make the smoothies at home, measuring and adding the spinach leaves, yogurt, juice and fruit themselves.

The Popeye Power Smoothie is one of the most well known recipes from Oregon State University's Food Hero program with regular tastings — frozen and otherwise — at events across Eastern Oregon.

Angie Treadwell is the SNAP-Ed Program coordinator for OSU Extension in Umatilla and Morrow counties. She travels around the area providing taste tests and cooking activities and introducing children and families to new foods and new recipes.

"The best way to get your child to eat vegetables is to cook with them," she says. "Kids need to taste, touch, see and smell foods to become familiar with them."

Bringing kids into the kitchen is a key element of Food Hero, a research-tested social marketing campaign providing interactive demonstrations, along with policy, systems, and environmental change activities aimed at increasing all forms of fruit and vegetable consumption. Food Hero launched in 2009 to help low-income Oregonians improve health by increasing how many fruits and vegetables they eat. Ten years later, the program is thriving. Forty-three states use Food Hero materials, and Food Hero educators, like Treadwell, cover all 36 of Oregon's counties.

That means you'll find Food Hero recipes and tasting at health fairs, farmers markets, schools and community events across the state.

You can also take Food Hero materials hom[e]
interactive website and monthly newsletter[s]
Hero Monthly provides recipes and informa[tion]
from eggs to beans to cauliflower in recipes

So far in 2019, issues have focused on onions, beans and pork with recipes like roasted onions and fried rice with pork. Each issues suggests ways kids can help, including stirring foods during cooking and measuring and mixing ingredients.

Not every kid will like every recipe on the first try, of course.

"Many vegetables will take several exposures. Be patient, it will work," Treadwell maintains. "Good recipes help, too. I am always amazed at the amount of Food Hero Baked Cauliflower Tots kids will consume."

Cauliflower Tots and the Popeye Power Smoothie are two recipes that are "kid approved" from Food Hero.

At the end of 2018, 77 Food Hero recipes were tagged "Kid Approved," meaning at least 70 percent of kids liked the taste. The recipes aren't all dessert either; kid-approved menus include a quick chili, quinoa salad and veggie quesadillas. You can find more at the website: www.foodhero.org.

Maybe, just maybe, it's time to introduce the kids to quinoa, overnight oats, spinach or a hearty Fruity French Toast Casserole!

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Jennifer Colton is news director of KOHU and KQFM, and mother of three, based in Pendleton.

Baked Cauliflower Tots

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

Ingredients

2 cups grated cauliflower (about half a med

1 egg

3 tablespoons flour

¼ cup low-fat cheddar cheese, grated

¼ teaspoon salt

Directions

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Spray a baking sheet or line with parchment paper or foil.

Grate cauliflower on large holes of a grater.

In a medium bowl, combine cauliflower, egg, flour, cheese and salt; mix well.

Press mixture together to make about 15 small balls or logs; Place on the baking sheet with space between each ball or log.

Bake for 20 minutes or until cooked through. For extra crispy tots, broil for an extra 2 minutes. Watch closely to avoid burning.

Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.