

'Quick meals for Kooris'

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'Quick meals for Kooris' is a 'hands-on' cooking program that was designed to assist urban Aboriginal people to cook healthy meals for the family. It is delivered in two three-hour sessions and is very flexible and versatile. It can be used as a stand-alone activity or incorporated within larger programs.

The recipes used include 'everyday' foods, fresh, frozen and tinned, which are always the cheapest to buy and often in the cupboard. 'Quick meals for Kooris' is designed to be run by an Aboriginal health worker or a member of the Aboriginal community. The group leader does not need extensive nutrition knowledge just some basic home cooking skills and knowledge of their local community.

Why was it developed?

There is a need for urban Aboriginal people to have access to relevant food programs that promote healthy family eating. A program was needed that was 'hands-on' and enabled new food skills to be learnt in a friendly informal environment.

'Quick meals for Kooris' was designed to enable Aboriginal people to improve their health through gaining knowledge and developing skills to enable them to feed their families healthy food on a budget.

A resource was also needed that could be used to train Aboriginal health workers or interested members of the Aboriginal community to deliver the program thus ensuring sustainability.

How was it developed?

The Central Coast Aboriginal Health Strategic Plan 1997-2001 identified that the Aboriginal community wanted health education programs that focussed on healthy eating, diabetes, heart disease, obesity and healthy eating on a budget. A pilot-cooking program was conducted with members of the local community and a pilot training program was conducted with local Aboriginal health workers.

What is in the cooking program?

There are two three-hour sessions, which begin with a demonstration of aspects of each recipe; then the class is divided into groups to cook a recipe together; the meal is then shared and eaten with socialising and happy discussions taking place.

- Session 1 - 'Family meals - fast and easy'; and
- Session 2 - 'Feeding children and filling teenagers'

Each recipe has instructions on how to modify it for diabetes, for example: how to substitute ingredients depending on availability; and how to use leftovers.

What are participants involved in?

- discussion of nutrition issues related to diabetes and heart disease;
- preparation of low cost recipes;
- sharing ideas and preparing meals from ingredients that are 'in the cupboard';

- using a range of ingredients, modifying recipes or 'extending meat' to serve more people;
- learning how to adapt or choose recipes to suit cooking skills, utensils and equipment that they may have available;
- discussing food safety and hygiene (woven into the sessions);
- preparing meals and snacks suitable for the whole family.

What else is in the kit?

Simple nutrition related health information is included as background for the group leader. It briefly covers diabetes, heart disease, nutrition and drug and alcohol abuse issues, kidney problems, chewing and swallowing difficulties and food allergies and food intolerance.

Information and guidelines are also provided to train Aboriginal health workers and Aboriginal community members to conduct the 'Quick meals for Kooris' cooking program. This includes a timeframe (what to do 8 weeks before; 1 week before; what to do on the day) and covers such things as funding sources, equipment needed, shopping list for foods, recipes, transport, childcare, promotion and sample letters/flyers/posters/press releases.

How can it be delivered?

The cooking program can be run as a 'stand alone' program or included in larger programs, including those that address: diabetes; heart disease; living on a budget; working with youth; community gardens; vacation care etc. The kit is also designed to train Aboriginal health workers or Aboriginal community members to deliver the cooking program.

What do participants say?

Comments have included:

- 'I am surprised at how easy the recipes were to cook and I'll definitely make them for my family' - Sonya, 37.
- 'It was good to learn how to make the meal go further' - Lisa, 28.
- 'I didn't know you could grate potato!'- John, 33.

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