

Cooking activity



Brief description of the activity

Cooking classes are very important for individual support, community building and creating a cohesive and welcoming environment. Food is a universal language, as it is something that can be easily shared and that most people loves: in short, an easy way to connect people. Thus, cooking classes provide informal ground for learning a foreign language, while developing cooking skills, healthy habits, etc.

It eases the encounter of people from different cultures to share their culinary traditions, but also to learn about the traditions of the local community in which they have chosen to settle. Cooking together is a relaxing and educational activity to promote integration.

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Topics. Objectives and methodology:

The main idea is to create a connection between the group, find common ground, share habits, traditions, know healthy habits, learn new skills, produce a relaxed atmosphere where foreigners can feel welcome. This is also an activity to build trust, so one of the goals is to create a space where people can share their stories, their daily events and ask for help and support. The activity is also a great way to help newly arrived people in the local community to understand the different codes and lifestyles of the place. If this activity is carried out in the youth centre, parents of minors attending the centre could be invited. Due to its informal nature, the activity can also be extended to the homes of the participants. Staff members could invite some families to their homes to cook together, and encourage others to do the same.

Duration:

1,5 hours per week

Location:

This activity can be carried out everywhere cooking facilities are present: from the kitchen of the youth center to the canteens, public places or private houses.

Materials:

Depending on the recipes, they can be very simple, everything you can find in the shops to cook the traditional dishes chosen

Staff needed and eventual specific skills requires:

A high degree of flexibility is necessary for the success of this activity. It would be nice if a cook or at least a person with cooking skills could occasionally join the activities, and help the participants with advice and feedback.

Participants involved:

Maximum 10-12 participants per group, preferably mixed gender

Steps:

Before

Sharing recipes. Arrange a meeting at the youth center before the activity to talk about the recipes you want to prepare. In this way you will have time to find, if possible, all the ingredients needed for a certain dish, because sometimes some cultures have very specific ingredients, e.g. certain spices are not easy to be found in all European cities. If the activity is organized as an event of the youth center, then the staff should encourage participants to take part in it, and ask them to bring some typical dishes to share. If there are some dishes that are particularly hard to prepare, the staff should be ready to help, even just with logistics or table service.

Presentation of the dishes. At this stage the participants present their dish, listing the used ingredients to make aware anyone who may be allergic or intolerant.

Learn about eating habits, ingredients, traditional dishes and festivities. There are cultures for example that might not use cutlery, or not sit around the table, but rather practice a different way of eating. So it's very useful to teach the people you want to host, what eating habits to expect, so that you can fully integrate them into a certain tradition.

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During

Learning/sharing new recipes. Some people may like so much the tasted dishes to want their recipes.

This is a good opportunity to share them.

Learning by doing. Always involve everyone in the process of food preparation. This is a good way to connect people, trust each other, find common language, promote equality and non-discrimination. Since participants from different cultures are involved, the opportunity is strategic to learn also different habits, values, knowledge. Some may know better how to cook, others may know better how to prepare drinks, others may know new ways of serving dishes or preparing the table.

Development through practice. Different people may use the same ingredient in different ways and naturally have different abilities. If everyone is committed and has space for his/her own contribution, better recipes can be created: the different capacities together can lead to better results and a more cohesive atmosphere may arise within the group.

After

Promotion and scheduling of new appointments.

At the end of the activity try to arrange new appointments with the participants to replicate the experience. It is essential to document the various phases of the activity, from the preparation to the sharing of the meal. This step is functional to the promotion of activity, on the social networks of the organization and through the word of mouth of the people who took part. This will also help the involvement of new participants .

Do's and don'ts

Participants who do not show enough confidence in themselves or in their own skills may be involved in other side-tasks that may them feel safer and more comfortable, such as buying ingredients, preparing and decorating spaces etc...

Always support the informal atmosphere and be ready

to adapt any plan, such as cooking outside instead of inside, if possible.

Innovative aspects for the promotion of interculture

When people arrive in a new country they often have no social network, friends nor contacts. They also encounter several difficulties with the language factor that exposes them more to exclusion and isolation. This activity offers an opportunity to practice and develop skills in an informal environment. Participants can enrich their knowledge of the cultural heritage of others by sharing recipes from all over the world. More precisely, one could say that this activity is a dialogue between giving and receiving experience

It is an intercultural dialogue that eases understanding, mutual help and cooperation in a multicultural society.

The benefits of cooking experiences are: trust, leader-

ship skills, organizational, intercultural and communication skills, as well as the most important interaction between locals and migrants.

This activity promotes interculture because it creates the ground for mutual understanding of people by using the medium of food. It make participants discover differences and similarities between cultures. When they cook together, participants are able to overcome different prejudices, stimulate discussion and create an intercultural environment not only in cooking different foods, but understanding each other. What makes this activity innovative is the opportunity to review participants' perceptions of differences. In addition, food, habits and culture are essential in building new processes. Promoting positive intercultural practices and inter-group relations also stimulates processes within the local community, such as intergenerational processes and the participation of young people

