Kids Can be Top Chef! in Ward County

The Situation
The kitchen is a fascinating place for children and exposing them to it offers many benefits. Youth learn how to use kitchen equipment and a whole new vocabulary of cooking terms. They learn how to follow directions and measure. Youth learn how to be safe in the kitchen and to clean up after themselves. They also learn how to prepare foods that are healthy. Ultimately, they will be responsible for feeding themselves and their loved ones.

Extension Response
Kids Can Be Top Chef! was offered at four summer school sites in 2013 and 2014. Each site had approximately 15 third through fifth grade students. Lessons were once per week for a total of four visits. Lessons consisted of: MyPlate, Safe Kids in the Kitchen, and Measuring/Cooking Basics. Upon completion of the above lessons, children were able to participate in a Top Chef competition. Youth teamed up to create a nutrient rich food. Beginners often prepare recipes with very little nutritional content, such as cookies and cake. This program gave access to a variety of healthy ingredients in a supervised environment. School staff sampled and scored each creation using criteria based on taste, presentation, nutrition and creativity.

Each child received The Everything Kids’ Cookbook due to a grant from the North Dakota Nutrition Council. The top scoring teams also received kitchen incentives.

Impacts
Each child was given a short survey before participating (Week 1) and after completion of the program (Week 4). Upon completion of Kids Can Be Top Chef,

- All youth were able to correctly identify pictures of kitchen equipment compared to only 81% on the pre-survey.
- 86% of participants could identify the food that did not need refrigeration compared to 62%.
- All youth understood cooking abbreviations compared to only 81% before the Top Chef program.
- 86% of participants correctly answered the minimum amount of time needed to wash hands compared to 62%.
- 73% of youth correctly answered how vitamin C helps our body compared to only 29%.
- All participants recognized the food that does not belong in the dairy group compared to 90% on the pre-survey.

Feedback
“I learned which foods to put in the fridge, to be careful when you cook, and don’t be junkfoodish be healthy!” ~ youth comment on post-survey

“My favorite was learning how to measure and read recipes.” ~ youth comment on post-survey

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