Cooking 101 in Ward County

The Situation
Many individuals and families rely on fast food and frozen, heat-and-serve type meals. This is because either they do not possess basic cooking skills or they are not accustomed to planning meals ahead of time. Relying on these convenient foods is usually more expensive than and not as nutritious as home cooked meals.

Extension Response
The Cooking 101 series was offered to several locations in Ward County with a high percentage of lower income people. Classes were held at two centers for people with disabilities, one public housing site, one transitional living home, and three state-funded drug/alcohol treatment centers.

Cooking 101 is a 7-lesson program that provides grocery shopping, menu planning, and basic cooking lessons for adults with hands-on, applicable activities to practice new knowledge. Each lesson was 45 minutes to 1 hour in length and included a weekly meal planner, grocery list and recipes. Participants sampled recipes at each lesson following a cooking demonstration.

Impacts
Adults learned how to plan nutritious meals and shop with a food list. They learned that cooking at home can be quick and easy and save money.

Adults learned what kitchen equipment is necessary and were given the opportunity to practice basic cooking skills.

Participants learned which foods to have on hand for quick, nutritious meals, including how to use leftovers to stretch the food dollar.

An evaluation was given to the participants after the completion of at least five lessons. After receiving the education:

- 80% of participants thought about nutrition when deciding what to eat.
- 86% of participants make meals at home.
- 89% of participants plan meals ahead of time.
- 86% of participants use a food shopping list.

Feedback
When asked what had been most helpful from the Cooking 101 series, participants responded:

“Being aware of nutrition labels and pricing.”

“How to make quick and easy meals, menu planning, shopping tips and recipes.”

“I love the recipes and learning how to eat healthy.”

“The presenter being educated and able to answer our questions about nutrition.”

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