

Sustainable Cooking Team Building

In this chapter, we examine the fusion of sustainable cooking practices with team-building exercises, aiming to cultivate collaboration, communication, and creativity in the culinary sector. Whether you are a VET trainer, a chef, a corporate leader, or involved in agritourism, this chapter offers you different exercises tailored to enhance teamwork while promoting sustainable food choices. For instance, by incorporating recipes that highlight the use of fruit peels, participants can explore innovative ways to create sustainable and flavorful meals while contributing to environmental conservation efforts. At the same time, by integrating team-building activities into sustainable cooking, participants learn about conscious food choices and develop crucial interpersonal skills essential for success in various professional settings. More specifically, in team-based cooking exercises, we aim to promote the development of these interpersonal skills

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- **Effective communication** participants will engage in activities that require clear and concise communication among team members to coordinate tasks and achieve culinary goals. Participants must convey their ideas, share responsibilities, and coordinate actions to achieve common culinary goals. Through verbal and non-verbal communication, individuals learn to listen actively, express their thoughts clearly, and provide constructive feedback. These communication skills are transferable to professional settings, facilitating productive interactions with colleagues, clients, and stakeholders.
- **Leadership and delegation** sustainable cooking exercises often require teams to designate roles and responsibilities, allowing individuals to showcase leadership qualities and delegate tasks accordingly. Leaders emerge to guide the team, make decisions, and ensure that everyone stays on track. By assuming leadership roles, participants learn to inspire, motivate, and empower team members.
- **Problem-solving abilities** sustainable cooking presents various challenges, such as ingredient substitutions, time constraints, and equipment limitations. Teams must collaborate to overcome these obstacles, employing creative problem-solving techniques and adapting to unforeseen circumstances.

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- **Conflict resolution techniques** in the environment of cooking activities, disagreements or misunderstandings may arise among team members. However, these conflicts present opportunities for participants to practice conflict resolution skills, such as active listening, empathy, and compromise.
- **Team cohesion and trust-building** through shared experiences and mutual reliance, participants in sustainable cooking exercises develop a sense of camaraderie and trust within their teams. As they work together towards a common goal, individuals learn to appreciate each other's strengths, support one another's efforts, and celebrate collective achievements.

Overall, the integration of team-building activities into sustainable cooking promotes conscious food choices and also cultivates essential interpersonal skills for success in diverse professional settings. This is why this chapter comprises a series of exercises, each designed to incorporate elements of sustainable cooking and team building. While some exercises primarily focus on cooking sustainable recipes, others emphasize fostering teamwork and collaboration during the recipe creation process. Regardless of the exercise's primary focus, all activities integrate sustainable cooking principles and team-building techniques.

Furthermore, VET trainers and readers of this chapter will have the opportunity to engage their learners in **team-building games using these exercises**. So, these team-building games will reinforce the principles of sustainable cooking and promote essential interpersonal skills in both personal and professional contexts. Each team, comprising a **maximum of 3 to 4 individuals**, will have the chance to earn points for demonstrating exemplary teamwork, leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills. Additionally, participants will receive points for incorporating sustainable practices into their cooking process, such as minimizing food waste, utilizing locally sourced ingredients, and adopting eco-friendly cooking methods. Moreover, teams can engage in friendly competitions, vying to accumulate the highest number of points across the different exercises.

List of activities - Sustainable Cooking Team Building

- 1. Sustainable menu creation**
- 2. No Recipe, No Problem!**
- 3. Sustainable Swaps Challenge**
- 4. Sustainable Mocktail Mixology**
- 5. Low-Sugar Sustainable Dessert Challenge**
- 6. The missing ingredient**
- 7. From Scraps to Scrumptious**
- 8. Kid-friendly veggie challenge**

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Teams will create a simple, sustainable dish using a limited set of ingredients that highlights the importance of seasonal, local, and eco-friendly choices. This exercise serves as an engaging start to sustainable cooking, emphasizing creative collaboration, conscious ingredient use, and storytelling. It is important to remind participants to handle knives and hot surfaces carefully and to review any potential allergies and substitute ingredients if necessary.

Materials

- Ingredients: Local, seasonal vegetables (e.g., onions, cabbage, lentils), basic spices (salt, pepper, herbs), and a seasonal fruit. Always check the cooking time of the given ingredients
- Utensils: Basic kitchen tools (knife, cutting board, mixing bowl, spoons, pots, stove).
- Presentation items: Plates, garnishes (edible flowers, herbs), and a serving tray.
- Paper, pen

Instructions

Team Setup and Role Assignment (5 minutes)

Divide participants into teams. Instruct teams to brainstorm and design a menu featuring appetizing and innovative dishes that prioritize sustainability. Teams should consider factors such as seasonality, local sourcing, and ethical farming practices when selecting ingredients.

- Divide participants into small teams (3-4 people each).
- Assign each team member a role
 - Chef Leads the cooking process
 - Sous-chef helps the chef in the cooking process
 - Storyteller Crafts and presents a story about the dish, highlighting sustainability aspects, helps the chef choosing ingredients
 - Visual Artist Focuses on the visual presentation of the dish and plating

Ingredient Selection and dish development (30 minutes)

Provide the teams with a selection of sustainable ingredients and culinary resources. Once the menu concepts are finalized, teams will invent detailed recipes for each dish, considering flavor profiles, cooking techniques, and presentation aesthetics. Encourage teams to incorporate elements of creativity and originality into their dishes to make them stand out to potential customers.

- Each team selects from the available seasonal ingredients and spices.
- They must use all ingredients sustainably, avoiding waste. For instance, they can use vegetable scraps creatively (e.g., for garnish or added texture).
- Teams work together to prepare a simple dish using the selected ingredients.
- The teams should prepare a dish without trying the taste
- Encourage teams to experiment with different preparation techniques to create depth with minimal ingredients.

Presentation and Storytelling (25 minutes)

Instruct teams to devise a marketing strategy to promote their sustainable menu and attract customers to their restaurant or dining establishment. Teams should utilize a combination of descriptive writing, visual imagery (e.g., photos or illustrations), and persuasive messaging to communicate the unique selling points of their menu. Each team will present their sustainable menu and marketing strategy to a panel of judges, highlighting the key features and benefits of their offerings. Teams should articulate how their menu promotes sustainability and appeals to the preferences and values of potential customers.

- Teams plate their dish with care, making it visually appealing.

The Storyteller presents the dish, explaining how the ingredient choices and cooking methods align with sustainability goals.

Feedback and Reflection (10-15 minutes)

Judges, including VET trainers and industry professionals, will evaluate each team's menu and marketing strategy based on criteria such as creativity, sustainability, appeal, and persuasiveness. Teams will receive feedback and scores based on the effectiveness of their menu concepts and marketing approach.

- Trainers provide positive, constructive feedback on teamwork, creativity, and sustainability choices.
- Open a group discussion for each team to share their experience and learnings about sustainable cooking.

Evaluation criteria

- Sustainability: Did the team choose local, seasonal ingredients, and avoid waste?
- Creativity: Did the team present the dish attractively and use ingredients inventively?
- Teamwork: Did each member contribute effectively according to their role?
- Storytelling: Did the Storyteller effectively communicate the sustainability aspects of the dish?

Sustainability

- Did the team make sustainable ingredient choices?
- Did they minimize food waste and manage portions thoughtfully?
- Did the team select ingredients in a balanced way to minimize waste?
- Did the team avoid overusing ingredients and demonstrate awareness of portion control?

Creativity

- Diversity of balance and dishes (1 to 5)
- Was the dish unique and visually appealing? (YES-NO)
- Creativity and originality (1 to 5)

Teamwork

- Did the team work together smoothly, with clear communication?
- Did the team collaborate effectively throughout the preparation?
- Did the team use sustainable cooking techniques (e.g., minimizing food waste, reusing scraps)?

Storytelling

- Did the Storyteller effectively communicate the team's sustainability choices?
- Was the narrative engaging and aligned with the sustainable theme?
- Did the Storyteller provide a thoughtful narrative about the dish, highlighting its sustainability aspects?
- Was the dish visually appealing and creatively presented?

Transferability Strategies

1. Encourage participants to apply the skills and strategies learned in this exercise to real-world settings, such as restaurant management or catering businesses, to promote sustainable dining practices.
2. Discuss the importance of effective communication and marketing in promoting sustainability initiatives and encouraging consumer behaviour change.
3. Provide resources and tips for implementing sustainable menu options in various food service establishments, empowering participants to advocate for eco-friendly dining practices in their communities.

Obstacles:

- Limited familiarity with seasonal ingredients.
- Difficulty balancing flavors with minimal ingredients.
- Potential waste due to lack of ingredient knowledge.

Classroom management strategy

To ensure that the “Sustainable Ingredient Challenge” runs smoothly and participants benefit fully, follow these classroom management steps:

1. Team Formation:

- Begin with a clear explanation of the exercise’s objectives, highlighting sustainable practices and teamwork.
- Divide participants into balanced teams, ensuring a mix of skills to promote collaboration. Assign roles within each team (e.g., Chef, Storyteller, Visual Artist) to ensure each member has a clear responsibility.

2. Time Management:

- **Segmented Time Blocks:** Outline the time allocations for each phase (ingredient selection, cooking, and presentation). Use a visible countdown timer to help teams stay on track.
- **Checkpoints:** Conduct check-ins at each stage, such as after ingredient selection, to ensure teams are on track and can ask questions if needed.

3. Specific Phase Strategies:

- During the ingredient selection phase, guide teams to focus on seasonal, local ingredients. Prompt them with questions like, “How can we make this ingredient the star of the dish?” and “What sustainable practices can we highlight?”

- In the cooking phase, encourage teams to use creative techniques, such as minimizing waste by using vegetable tops or skins.
- For the presentation phase, prompt teams to create a visually appealing plating and discuss the sustainable elements of their dish.
- Supervision:
 - Move around the room, observing and assisting teams. Be available for questions and monitor for any potential conflicts or imbalances in workload.
- Judging and Feedback:
 - Explain the evaluation criteria before judging begins. Provide constructive feedback on creativity, sustainability, and teamwork. Consider recognizing efforts with categories like “Best Sustainable Use of Ingredients” or “Most Creative Dish.”

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NO RECIPE, NO PROBLEM!

115

Teams will replicate a traditional recipe without any measurements or ingredient details, using only intuition, teamwork, and sustainable ingredient substitutions. This exercise encourages adaptability, creativity, and an understanding of ingredient versatility.

Materials Needed

Suggested Ingredients Seasonal vegetables (e.g., root vegetables, greens), basic spices, grains (e.g., rice, quinoa), and legumes (e.g., lentils).

Utensils Basic kitchen tools (knives, cutting boards, mixing bowls, pots, stove).

Instructions

1. Team Setup and Role Assignment (5 minutes)

- Divide participants into small teams (3-4 people).
- Assign each member a unique role
 - Chef Leads the cooking, with a focus on replicating the recipe's core essence.
 - Flavor Expert Adds depth to the dish by balancing spices and taste.
 - Sustainability Guide and Sous chef Ensures all ingredient choices are local, seasonal, and sustainable.
 - Storyteller Creates a story around the dish that highlights any ingredient adaptations made.

2. Recipe Challenge (10 minutes)

- Provide teams with a popular dish to replicate (e.g., a vegetable stew or a simple grain bowl) but give no measurements or specific ingredient requirements.
- Each team must decide on ingredient substitutions to make the dish sustainable (e.g., substituting a meat component with lentils or mushrooms).

3. Preparation and Cooking (25-30 minutes depending on the cooking time of the ingredients)

- Teams begin cooking, using their intuition and collaboration to create a balanced dish.
- The Flavor Expert can taste as they go and adjust spices to ensure the dish is well-seasoned.
- The Sustainability Guide ensures that they make eco-conscious choices, perhaps using all parts of a vegetable or reusing scraps creatively.

4. Presentation and Storytelling (20-30 minutes)

- Teams plate their dish and make it visually appealing.
- The Storyteller presents the dish to the group, sharing the team's creative process and how they adapted the dish with sustainable ingredient choices.

5. Feedback and Reflection (5-10 minutes)

- Trainers provide constructive feedback focused on adaptability, creativity, and sustainability.
- Open the floor for each team to discuss challenges they faced and how they worked around missing measurements and ingredients.

Checklist criteria

1. Adaptability

- Did the team adapt well to the lack of measurements and ingredient specifics?
- Did the team make effective ingredient substitutions and find creative ways to replicate the dish's essence?
- Did the team handle any unexpected challenges with creative problem-solving?

2. Sustainability

- Did the team choose local and seasonal ingredients?
- Were their ingredient choices eco-friendly, considering both flavor and environmental impact?
- Did the team minimize waste by using scraps or finding creative ways to use all parts of the ingredients?

3. Flavor Balance

- Did the team achieve a balanced flavor profile without precise measurements?
- Did they effectively use spices and herbs to enhance the dish's flavor?
- Did the team use cooking techniques (e.g., roasting, steaming) that improved the dish's overall flavor?

4. Creativity

- Was the final dish innovative and unique, despite the lack of a recipe?
- Did the team use ingredients or techniques that showcased creativity and resourcefulness?
- Was the dish plated in a visually appealing and thoughtful way?

5. Teamwork and Role Fulfillment

- Did each team member actively participate in their assigned role (Chef, Flavor Expert, Sustainability Guide, Storyteller)?
- Did the team collaborate effectively and communicate clearly throughout the exercise?

6. Storytelling

- Did the Storyteller clearly explain the team's approach to adapting without measurements?
- Did the Storyteller highlight the team's sustainable ingredient choices?
- Was the narrative engaging and did it convey the team's creative and adaptive process effectively?

Obstacles

- Frustration with cooking intuitively without a recipe.
- Difficulty balancing flavors and textures without precise measurements.
- Hesitancy to try unconventional methods.

Transferability Strategies

- Relate this exercise to times when recipes aren't available, like cooking with leftovers.
- Encourage participants to embrace experimentation and build confidence in trusting their taste.
- Discuss ways to recreate the experience by gradually reducing reliance on recipes at home.

- Team Formation
- Explain the exercise's focus on adaptability and intuitive cooking. Assign roles like Chef, Flavor Expert, Sustainability Guide, and Storyteller to distribute responsibilities.
- Time Management
- Segmented Time Blocks Allocate time for brainstorming, preparation, and presentation, using a timer to help teams stay on track.
- Checkpoints Midway through the brainstorming phase, check on each team's progress and provide guidance if they're struggling with ingredient choices.
- Specific Phase Strategies
- During brainstorming, encourage teams to think creatively about ingredient combinations. Prompt them with questions like, "What flavors work well together?" and "How can you bring out natural flavors without a recipe?"
- In the cooking phase, suggest taste-testing frequently to adjust seasoning.
- For presentations, guide teams to explain their choices and how they overcame the challenge of cooking without a recipe.
- Supervision
- Observe team dynamics and offer assistance, especially for teams hesitant to work without measurements. Be available to answer questions and provide reassurance.
- Judging and Feedback
- Explain criteria focusing on adaptability, flavor, and creativity. Offer constructive feedback on how teams could further develop their intuitive cooking skills.

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SUSTAINABLE SWAPS CHALLENGE

119

Designed to introduce participants to the concept of sustainable food swaps. This activity encourages teams to think about eco-friendly alternatives to common ingredients, fostering adaptability and sustainability awareness.

Teams will recreate a popular dish using sustainable ingredient swaps for at least two common components, such as replacing meat or high-impact ingredients with eco-friendlier options. This exercise promotes adaptability, creativity, and a deeper understanding of sustainable alternatives, equipping them with practical skills to make more eco-conscious choices in their cooking.

Materials Needed

- Common Ingredients A selection of typical ingredients such as meat, dairy, refined grains, and imported produce (to be swapped out).
- Sustainable Alternatives Tofu, tempeh, lentils, local vegetables, plant-based milk, whole grains, seasonal fruits, and spices.
- Utensils Basic kitchen tools (knives, cutting boards, mixing bowls, pots, stove).

Instructions

1. Team Setup and Role Assignment (5 minutes)

- Divide participants into small teams (3-4 people each).
- Assign each member a role
 - Chef Manages the cooking and ensures the dish follows the recipe structure.
 - Sustainability Expert Focuses on identifying sustainable swaps and ensuring eco-friendly choices.
 - Flavor Innovator Works on balancing flavors to make the new, sustainable version taste as close to the original as possible.
 - Storyteller Creates and shares the story behind the ingredient swaps and their sustainability benefits.

2. Dish Selection and Ingredient Swapping (5 minutes)

- Give each team a popular dish to recreate (e.g., burger, pasta, or stew).
- The Sustainability Expert chooses at least two key ingredients to swap for eco-friendlier alternatives. For instance
 - Meat can be replaced with lentils or tofu.
 - Refined grains can be swapped with whole grains or local produce.
 - Dairy can be replaced with plant-based milk.

3. Preparation and Cooking (20-25 minutes)

- Teams work together to prepare the dish using the chosen sustainable swaps.
- The Flavor Innovator ensures that the new ingredients are well-seasoned and flavorful, adjusting as needed to make the dish resemble the original.
- Teams are encouraged to be creative and experiment with spices and herbs to enhance the new flavors.

4. Presentation and Storytelling (5-10 minutes)

- Teams plate their dish attractively.
- The Storyteller presents the dish, explaining the original ingredients, the sustainable swaps made, and the environmental benefits of these choices.

5. Feedback and Reflection (5-10 minutes)

- Trainers provide constructive feedback, focusing on the creativity and effectiveness of the ingredient swaps.
- Open a group discussion where each team shares insights on sustainable alternatives and how they can incorporate similar swaps in their everyday cooking.

Evaluation Criteria

- Sustainability Did the team choose effective swaps that lowered the dish's environmental impact?
- Creativity Did the team make inventive choices and find ways to replicate the original flavors?
- Flavor Balance Was the dish flavorful and satisfying, despite the ingredient changes?
- Storytelling Did the Storyteller communicate the importance and benefits of the sustainable swaps?

1. Sustainability

- Did the team select eco-friendly, sustainable alternatives for at least two key ingredients?
- Did the chosen swaps reduce the environmental impact of the dish (e.g., replacing meat with plant-based proteins, using local or seasonal produce)?
- Did the team demonstrate an understanding of how their swaps support sustainability?

2. Adaptability and Problem-Solving

- Did the team show adaptability by making effective ingredient substitutions that still align with the original dish concept? Did the team handle any challenges with ingredient limitations creatively?

3. Flavor Balance

- [] Was the dish well-seasoned, balanced, and flavorful despite the use of alternative ingredients?
- [] Did the team effectively use spices, herbs, or other seasonings to enhance the dish and complement the sustainable swaps?
- [] Did the alternative ingredients blend harmoniously with the rest of the dish?

4. Creativity

- Did the team show creativity in their choice of ingredient swaps and approach to the dish?
- Was the final dish innovative, showing a unique take on the original while remaining visually appealing?
- Did the team utilize creative techniques to make the alternative ingredients appealing?

5. Teamwork and Role Fulfillment

- Did each team member actively participate in their assigned role (Chef, Sustainability Expert, Flavor Innovator, Storyteller)?
- Did the team collaborate effectively and communicate clearly throughout the exercise?
- Did each team member contribute to problem-solving and decision-making?

6. Storytelling

- Did the Storyteller clearly explain the sustainable ingredient swaps and why they were chosen?
- Was the narrative engaging and educational, helping the audience understand the environmental benefits of the substitutions? Did the Storyteller effectively communicate the team's process and thought behind the ingredient choices?

Obstacles

- Resistance to substituting familiar ingredients with sustainable alternatives.
- Difficulty understanding the environmental impact of certain ingredient swaps.
- Limited knowledge of sustainable options like plant-based proteins.

Transferability Strategies

- Encourage participants to try sustainable swaps at home, like using plant-based proteins or locally sourced vegetables.
- Discuss the broader environmental impact of sustainable eating and how ingredient choices contribute.
- Emphasize simple swaps to make at home, such as replacing refined grains with whole grains.

Classroom management strategy

1. Team Formation

- Start with an overview of the importance of sustainable ingredient swaps. Form teams with assigned roles (Chef, Sustainability Expert, Flavor Innovator, Storyteller) to promote responsibility sharing.

2. Time Management

- Segmented Time Blocks Allocate specific times for planning, cooking, and presenting. Use a countdown timer to keep teams on track.
- Checkpoints After the planning phase, check in to ensure teams have chosen sustainable swaps and feel confident with their menu.

3. Specific Phase Strategies

- During planning, prompt teams to consider swaps like plant-based proteins or local produce. Encourage questions like, “How does this swap improve the sustainability of the dish?”
- During cooking, support creative use of ingredients to maximize flavor.
- For presentations, ask teams to explain their ingredient swaps and the sustainable impact.

4. Supervision

- Observe team dynamics and assist as needed, especially if teams are unfamiliar with certain sustainable ingredients.

5. Judging and Feedback

- Explain the criteria, focusing on sustainability and creativity. Provide feedback, recognizing both sustainability efforts and creative ingredient usage.

Photo: Agnese Gobbi, 2024



Designed to engage participants in creating a non-alcoholic mocktail using sustainable, locally-sourced ingredients. This activity combines creativity, flavor experimentation, and presentation skills, highlighting sustainable beverage options.

Teams will craft a non-alcoholic mocktail using local, seasonal ingredients like herbs, fruits, and roots, with an emphasis on sustainability and flavor balance. This exercise encourages creativity, resourcefulness, and eco-friendly choices in beverage creation.

Materials Needed

- Ingredients Seasonal fruits (e.g., citrus, berries, apples), fresh herbs (e.g., mint, basil, rosemary), edible roots (e.g., ginger, turmeric), honey or agave, sparkling water, and optional garnishes (e.g., edible flowers, herb sprigs).
- Utensils Mixing tools (muddlers, shakers), glasses, ice, pitchers, strainers.

Instructions

1. Team Setup and Role Assignment (5 minutes)

- Divide participants into small teams (3-4 people each).
- Assign each member a role
 - Mixologist Leads the preparation of the mocktail and ensures all ingredients are used effectively.
 - Flavor Curator Balances the flavors, experimenting with sweetness, acidity, and freshness.
 - Presentation Designer Focuses on the visual appeal, ensuring an attractive and inviting presentation.
 - Storyteller Crafts and presents a narrative about the mocktail, highlighting its sustainable ingredients and benefits.

2. Ingredient Selection and Planning (5 minutes)

- Each team selects from the available ingredients to create a unique mocktail.
 - Encourage the Flavor Curator to experiment with flavor pairings and combinations, like pairing citrus with fresh herbs or using roots like ginger for a spicy kick.

3. Preparation and Mixing (15-20 minutes)

- Teams work together to prepare their mocktail, using sustainable methods (e.g., minimizing waste by using fruit peels for garnish).
- The Mixologist ensures that ingredients are muddled, shaken, or mixed to extract the fullest flavors without waste.
- The Flavor Curator adjusts sweetness, acidity, and herbaceous notes to create a balanced drink.

4. Presentation and Storytelling (5-10 minutes)

- Teams pour and garnish their mocktail to make it visually appealing.
- The Storyteller presents the mocktail to the group, explaining the choice of ingredients and the inspiration behind the flavor profile, along with any sustainable practices they used.

5. Feedback and Reflection (5-10 minutes)

- Trainers provide constructive feedback focused on creativity, flavor balance, and sustainable ingredient use.
- Open a group discussion where each team can share their experience with creating mocktails and their thoughts on using local, sustainable ingredients in beverages.

Evaluation Criteria

- Sustainability Did the team choose local, seasonal ingredients and avoid waste?
- Creativity Did the team make an innovative and visually appealing mocktail?
- Flavor Balance Was the mocktail well-balanced in terms of sweetness, acidity, and herbaceous notes?
- Storytelling Did the Storyteller effectively communicate the inspiration and sustainable choices behind the mocktail?

1. Sustainability

- Did the team choose local, seasonal, or sustainably sourced ingredients for the mocktail?
- Did the team minimize waste by using ingredients thoughtfully (e.g., using fruit peels as garnish)?
- Did the team demonstrate an understanding of sustainable practices in beverage creation?

2. Flavor Balance

- Was the mocktail balanced in terms of sweetness, acidity, and herbaceous notes?
- Did the team effectively use natural ingredients to create a well-rounded flavor profile?
- Did the mocktail taste refreshing and enjoyable?

3. Creativity

- Did the team show creativity in their choice of ingredients, flavor combinations, and presentation?
- Was the mocktail unique, incorporating innovative pairings or techniques (e.g., muddling herbs, infusing flavors)?
- Was the final mocktail visually appealing and attractively garnished?

4. Teamwork and Role Fulfillment

- Did each team member actively participate in their assigned role (Mixologist, Flavor Curator, Presentation Designer, Storyteller)?
- Did the team collaborate effectively and communicate clearly throughout the exercise?
- Did each team member contribute to the creation and presentation of the mocktail?

5. Presentation and Storytelling

- Was the mocktail plated (or poured) attractively, with thoughtful garnishing and visual appeal?
- Did the Storyteller effectively communicate the team's sustainable ingredient choices and flavor inspirations?
- Was the storytelling engaging and informative, highlighting the environmental benefits and creative process behind the mocktail?

Obstacles

- Inexperience with flavor balancing in non-alcoholic beverages.
- Difficulty achieving sweetness without added sugar.
- Limited knowledge of how to use fresh herbs and seasonal fruits in drinks.

Transferability Strategies

- Encourage participants to apply these mixology techniques when hosting events or preparing healthy drinks at home.
- Highlight the health and environmental benefits of using fresh, seasonal ingredients.
- Offer take-home tips on substituting sugary drinks with natural mocktails.

Classroom management strategy

1. Team Formation

- Begin with an overview of sustainable, non-alcoholic drink creation. Divide participants into balanced teams with roles (Mixologist, Flavor Curator, Presentation Designer, Storyteller).

2. Time Management

- Segmented Time Blocks Allocate time for ingredient selection, mocktail preparation, and presentation. A visible timer can help teams manage time.
- Checkpoints Midway through preparation, check that teams are balancing flavors and staying on track.

3. Specific Phase Strategies

- During ingredient selection, prompt teams to focus on seasonal fruits and herbs. Ask questions like, “How can you use natural flavors to balance sweetness?”
- During preparation, encourage the use of infusions and fresh garnishes to elevate flavor.

4. Supervision

- Observe team interactions and assist with flavor balancing if needed. Provide tips on using fresh ingredients in drinks.

5. Judging and Feedback

- Before judging, explain criteria for flavor balance, creativity, and sustainability. Provide feedback, offering praise for unique flavor combinations or visually appealing presentations.

LOW-SUGAR SUSTAINABLE DESSERT CHALLENGE

127

Designed to deepen participants' understanding of sustainable cooking by challenging them to create a dessert with minimal sugar and local ingredients. This activity encourages innovation and promotes healthier, sustainable sweet alternatives.

Teams will create a dessert using minimal sugar, focusing on natural sweeteners and local, seasonal ingredients. This exercise promotes creativity, healthier choices, and awareness of sustainable ingredients in dessert-making.

Materials Needed

- Ingredients Seasonal fruits (e.g., apples, berries, pears), honey or agave as natural sweeteners, whole grains (e.g., oats, spelt flour), nuts, seeds, herbs (e.g., mint, basil), and optional spices (e.g., cinnamon, nutmeg).
- Utensils Mixing bowls, baking trays, whisks, knives, cutting boards, and stovetop or oven (if available).

Instructions

1. Team Setup and Role Assignment (5 minutes)

- Divide participants into small teams (3-4 people each).
- Assign each team member a role
 - Pastry Chef Leads the preparation and ensures the dessert concept aligns with the challenge.
 - Flavor Balancer Works on sweetness balance using minimal added sugar and natural sweeteners.
 - Texture Specialist Ensures a variety of textures to make the dessert interesting and satisfying.
 - Storyteller Crafts a narrative around the dessert's sustainability and health benefits.

2. Concept Planning and Ingredient Selection (5 minutes)

- Teams brainstorm a dessert idea using the available ingredients, focusing on natural sweetness from fruits and honey/agave.
- Encourage the Texture Specialist to consider a mix of textures (e.g., crunchy, creamy, or chewy) to make the dessert enjoyable without heavy reliance on sugar.

3. Preparation and Cooking (20-25 minutes)

- Teams prepare the dessert, using fruits, grains, and nuts to build flavors and textures.

- The Flavor Balancer adjusts sweetness naturally by combining fruits and spices, using only a minimal amount of honey/agave.

- Encourage the Texture Specialist to experiment with ingredient forms (e.g., roasting nuts for crunch or mashing fruits for a creamy base).

4. Presentation and Storytelling (5-10 minutes)

- Teams plate their dessert, focusing on visual appeal.

- The Storyteller presents the dessert to the group, explaining the choice of ingredients, the low-sugar approach, and the sustainability aspect.

5. Feedback and Reflection (5-10 minutes)

- Trainers provide constructive feedback on creativity, flavor balance, and effective use of natural sweetness.

- Open a discussion where each team shares their thoughts on creating healthier, sustainable desserts and the challenges of reducing sugar.

Photo: Agnese Gobbi, 2024



Evaluation Criteria

- Sustainability Did the team use local, seasonal ingredients and minimal sugar?
- Creativity Did the team present an inventive dessert with appealing textures and flavors?
- Flavor Balance Was the dessert balanced in sweetness and enjoyable despite reduced sugar?
- Storytelling Did the Storyteller effectively communicate the dessert's health and sustainability benefits?

1. Sustainability

- Did the team prioritize local, seasonal, and sustainable ingredients?
- Did the team minimize sugar by using natural sweeteners and fruits?
- Did the team show awareness of sustainability through thoughtful ingredient choices?

2. Flavor Balance

- Was the dessert balanced in terms of sweetness, with the minimal use of added sugars?
- Did the team effectively use natural ingredients, such as fruits and spices, to enhance the sweetness and flavor of the dessert?
- Was the dessert satisfying and enjoyable despite the reduced sugar content?

3. Creativity

- Did the team come up with a unique and innovative dessert concept?
- Did they incorporate textures (e.g., crunchy, creamy, chewy) to make the dessert interesting and enjoyable?
- Was the final dessert visually appealing and thoughtfully presented?

4. Teamwork and Role Fulfillment

- Did each team member actively participate in their assigned role (Pastry Chef, Flavor Balancer, Texture Specialist, Storyteller)?
- Did the team collaborate effectively, with clear communication and shared decision-making?
- Did each team member contribute to the preparation and presentation of the dessert?

5. Presentation and Storytelling

- Was the dessert plated attractively, with attention to detail in presentation?
- Did the Storyteller effectively communicate the dessert's low-sugar approach and the sustainable ingredient choices?
- Was the storytelling engaging and informative, emphasizing the health and environmental benefits of the dessert?

Obstacles

- Difficulty achieving sweetness with minimal sugar.
- Limited familiarity with using natural sweeteners like fruits and honey.
- Challenges in creating a child-friendly, visually appealing dessert with limited sugar.

Transferability Strategies

- Encourage participants to apply low-sugar techniques to everyday desserts for healthier eating.
- Share the health benefits of natural sweeteners and how to incorporate them at home.
- Discuss strategies for substituting sugar, like using fruits or spices like cinnamon.

Class management strategy

Team Formation

Start with an explanation of the exercise's focus on low-sugar, sustainable desserts. Form balanced teams and assign roles (Pastry Chef, Flavor Balancer, Texture Specialist, Storyteller).

Time Management

- Segmented Time Blocks Outline time for planning, preparation, and presentation. Use a visible timer to keep teams aware of their progress.
- Checkpoints Halfway through preparation, check that teams are managing sweetness naturally and have a clear vision for their dessert.

Specific Phase Strategies

- During planning, guide teams to think creatively about sweetness using natural ingredients. Ask questions like, "How can we use fruit to add natural sweetness?" and "What textures can we add for interest?"
- During preparation, encourage teams to experiment with spices and low-sugar ingredients for added depth.

Supervision

- Move around the room, providing tips on low-sugar substitutes and offering guidance on creating balanced, kid-friendly desserts.

Judging and Feedback

- Explain criteria before judging, focusing on flavor balance, creativity, and sustainability. Recognize unique uses of low-sugar ingredients and creative presentation ideas.

THE MISSING INGREDIENT

131

Designed to test adaptability and creative problem-solving by challenging participants to cook without a key ingredient. This activity promotes flexibility and encourages thinking outside the box.

Teams will prepare a dish while working around the absence of a key ingredient. This exercise encourages participants to find creative solutions, fostering adaptability and problem-solving skills.

Materials needed

- Ingredients Standard cooking ingredients like grains, vegetables, spices, herbs, oils, and plant-based proteins.
- Key Ingredients to Omit Pre-selected common ingredients such as salt, oil, or a major component like a vegetable or protein.
- Utensils Basic kitchen tools (knives, cutting boards, pots, stove).

Instructions

1. Team Setup and Role Assignment (5 minutes)

- Divide participants into small teams (3-4 people each).
- Assign each team member a role
 - Chef Oversees the cooking process and ensures the dish concept aligns with the challenge.
 - Problem Solver Finds solutions for working around the missing ingredient.
 - Flavor Innovator Focuses on balancing flavors and compensating for the missing ingredient.
 - Storyteller Crafts a narrative explaining the dish and the creative workaround used.

Photo: Agnese Gobbi, 2024



2. Ingredient Omission Reveal (2 minutes)

- Announce the key ingredient that each team must cook without (e.g., no salt, no oil, or a missing vegetable/protein).
- Teams brainstorm alternatives or techniques to adapt without this ingredient.

3. Preparation and Cooking (20-25 minutes)

- Teams prepare a dish while compensating for the absence of the ingredient.

For instance

- If salt is missing, they might use herbs or acid (like lemon) to enhance flavors.
- If oil is missing, they might use broth or another liquid to prevent sticking.
- The Flavor Innovator plays a key role, experimenting to ensure the dish remains flavorful and satisfying despite the limitation.

4. Presentation and Storytelling (5-10 minutes)

- Teams plate their dish, making it visually appealing.
- The Storyteller presents the dish, explaining the missing ingredient, the workaround used, and how the team adapted creatively.

5. Feedback and Reflection (5-10 minutes)

- Trainers provide constructive feedback, focusing on adaptability, flavor balance, and problem-solving.
- Open a discussion for each team to share the challenges they faced and any insights gained about adapting recipes in real life.

Evaluation Criteria

- Adaptability Did the team find effective ways to work around the missing ingredient?
- Creativity Did the team make inventive choices to compensate for the missing element?
- Flavor Balance Was the dish flavorful and well-balanced despite the ingredient omission?
- Storytelling Did the Storyteller effectively communicate the team's workaround and adaptation?

1. Adaptability

- Did the team effectively adapt to the absence of the specified ingredient?
- Did the team demonstrate resourcefulness in finding alternative techniques or ingredients to replace the missing element?
- Did the team show creativity in their approach to working around the limitation?

2. Sustainability

- Did the team select local, seasonal, or eco-friendly ingredients to support sustainable practices?
- Did the team demonstrate an understanding of how sustainability can influence ingredient choices and substitutions?

3. Flavor Balance

- Was the dish balanced in flavor despite the missing ingredient?
- Did the team successfully use spices, herbs, or other flavors to compensate for the missing element?
- Was the final dish enjoyable and satisfying, with a cohesive flavor profile?

4. Creativity

- Did the team show creativity in their choice of ingredient substitutions and cooking techniques?
- Was the final dish unique, demonstrating inventive ways to work around the missing ingredient?
- Was the dish visually appealing and thoughtfully presented?

5. Teamwork and Role Fulfillment

- Did each team member actively participate in their assigned role (Chef, Problem Solver, Flavor Innovator, Storyteller)?
- Did the team collaborate effectively, with clear communication and shared decision-making?
- Did each team member contribute to the problem-solving and creative process?

6. Storytelling

- Did the Storyteller clearly explain the team's approach to adapting the dish without the missing ingredient?
- -Was the storytelling engaging, highlighting the team's creativity and adaptability in overcoming the challenge?
- Did the Storyteller communicate the sustainability benefits of their ingredient choices and substitutions?

Obstacles

- Frustration or hesitation when key ingredients are missing.
- Limited experience with ingredient substitution.
- Challenges in balancing flavors and textures without the usual ingredients.
-

Transferability Strategies

- Discuss how ingredient substitution can be useful in real-life situations, such as when an ingredient is unavailable.
- Encourage participants to experiment at home with ingredient replacements and trust their creativity.
- Highlight ways to identify suitable substitutes for common ingredients.

Classroom management strategy

1. Team Formation

- Explain the purpose of learning to cook with missing ingredients to foster adaptability. Form balanced teams and assign roles (Chef, Problem Solver, Flavor Innovator, Storyteller).

2. Time Management

- Segmented Time Blocks Allocate time for planning, cooking, and presentation, using a visible timer to keep teams aware of time.
- Checkpoints After the planning phase, check in with each team to ensure they have a strategy for substituting the missing ingredient.

3. Specific Phase Strategies

- During planning, prompt teams to brainstorm ingredient substitutions. Ask questions like, "How can you achieve similar flavors or textures without this ingredient?"
- During cooking, encourage taste-testing and adjusting, helping teams learn to balance flavors without the missing component.

- Supervision
- Observe team dynamics, stepping in to assist with substitution ideas and offer encouragement when teams feel challenged.
- Judging and Feedback
- Before judging, clarify criteria focused on adaptability and creativity. Provide feedback, recognizing efforts to overcome limitations and resourceful ingredient use.

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FROM SCRAPS TO SCRUMPTIOUS

136

This activity fosters awareness of food waste reduction and promotes resourcefulness.

Teams will create a dish using “throw-away” ingredients like vegetable peels, stems, and stale bread. This exercise encourages participants to rethink food waste by transforming commonly discarded items into delicious and appealing dishes.

Materials needed

- Throw-Away Ingredients Vegetable peels (e.g., potato, carrot, beet), stems and leafy tops (e.g., broccoli stems, carrot tops), stale bread, fruit peels (e.g., apple, citrus), and herb stems.
- Additional Ingredients Basic pantry items (oil, salt, pepper, spices, vinegar, honey) to enhance flavors.
- Utensils Basic kitchen tools (knives, cutting boards, mixing bowls, pots, stove).

Instructions

1. Team Setup and Role Assignment (5 minutes)

- Divide participants into small teams (3-4 people each).
- Assign each member a role
 - Chef Leads the preparation, ensuring each scrap is repurposed thoughtfully.
 - Waste Warrior Focuses on maximizing the use of all parts of ingredients, finding ways to repurpose every element.
 - Flavor Curator Ensures that the dish tastes delicious and is well-seasoned, despite the unconventional ingredients.
 - Storyteller Crafts a narrative around the dish, focusing on the waste-reduction theme.

2. Ingredient Selection and Brainstorming (5 minutes)

- Teams choose from the available “throw-away” ingredients and brainstorm how to transform them into a cohesive dish.
- Encourage the Waste Warrior to think of innovative ways to use items like peels or stale bread (e.g., using bread for croutons or vegetable peels for crisps).

3. Preparation and Cooking (20-25 minutes)

- Teams work together to prepare the dish, creatively repurposing scraps and using spices to enhance flavor.
- The Flavor Curator ensures that the dish is balanced and flavorful, using basic spices or vinegar to add depth.
- Encourage teams to try different techniques, such as roasting, frying, or pickling, to make the most of these ingredients.

4. Presentation and Storytelling (5-10 minutes)

- Teams plate their dish attractively, focusing on making the “throw-away” ingredients look appealing.
- The Storyteller presents the dish, explaining how each scrap was used and discussing the importance of reducing food waste.

5. Feedback and Reflection (5-10 minutes)

- Trainers provide constructive feedback on creativity, flavor, and resourcefulness.
- Open a discussion where each team can share insights on repurposing food scraps and how they can apply these ideas in daily cooking.

Evaluation Criteria

- Waste Reduction Did the team effectively use all parts of the ingredients and minimize waste?
- Creativity Did the team come up with inventive ways to repurpose “throw-away” ingredients?
- Flavor Balance Was the dish flavorful and enjoyable, despite the unconventional ingredients?
- Storytelling Did the Storyteller clearly convey the purpose of repurposing scraps and the importance of reducing food waste?

1. Waste Reduction

- Did the team effectively use all parts of the ingredients, including scraps, peels, and stems?
- Did the team demonstrate resourcefulness by minimizing food waste?
- Did the team find creative ways to repurpose commonly discarded parts of vegetables, fruits, or other ingredients?

2. Sustainability

- Did the team prioritize local and seasonal ingredients in their dish?
- Were their ingredient choices eco-friendly, aligning with sustainable cooking practices?
- Did the team show an understanding of the environmental benefits of reducing food waste?

3. Creativity

- Did the team showcase creativity in their approach to repurposing food scraps?
- Was the final dish unique, demonstrating innovative ways to use “throw-away” ingredients?
- Was the dish visually appealing and presented in an inviting way?

4. Flavor Balance

- Was the dish flavorful and well-balanced, despite the use of unconventional ingredients?
- Did the team effectively use spices, herbs, or other seasonings to enhance the flavor of food scraps?

Was the final dish enjoyable and satisfying?

5. Teamwork and Role Fulfillment

- Did each team member actively participate in their assigned role (Chef, Waste Warrior, Flavor Curator, Storyteller)?
- Did the team collaborate effectively, with clear communication and shared decision-making?
- Did each team member contribute to the planning and execution of the dish?

6. Storytelling

- Did the Storyteller clearly explain the team's approach to minimizing waste and repurposing food scraps?
- Was the storytelling engaging, helping the audience understand the sustainable focus of the dish?
- Did the Storyteller effectively communicate the environmental impact of reducing food waste and the creative process behind the dish?

Obstacles

- Reluctance to use scraps or “throw-away” ingredients creatively.
- Difficulty envisioning appealing dishes made from unconventional ingredients.
- Limited experience balancing flavors with food scraps as primary ingredients.

Transferability Strategies

- Encourage participants to incorporate zero-waste principles in everyday cooking.
- Offer practical tips on reusing common food scraps like vegetable peels and herb stems.
- Discuss the environmental impact of food waste and how small changes at home can make a difference.

Classroom management strategy

1. Team Formation

- Introduce the zero-waste concept, emphasizing the value of using food scraps creatively. Form balanced teams and assign roles (Chef, Waste Warrior, Flavor Curator, Storyteller).

2. Time Management

- Segmented Time Blocks Allocate time for ingredient selection, cooking, and presentation, using a timer to ensure smooth transitions between phases.
- Checkpoints After ingredient selection, check that teams have chosen scraps or throw-away items they can repurpose creatively.

1. Specific Phase Strategies

- During planning, encourage teams to consider how to incorporate all parts of ingredients. Ask questions like, “How can you use peels, stems, or seeds to add flavor or texture?”
- During preparation, suggest techniques like roasting, frying, or infusing to maximize flavor from scraps.

2. Supervision

- Move around the room, observing team dynamics and offering assistance on safe handling of food scraps. Provide tips for making throw-away ingredients appealing.

3. Judging and Feedback

- Explain the criteria before judging, focusing on waste reduction, creativity, and flavor. Offer constructive feedback, recognizing innovative uses of food scraps.

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KID-FRIENDLY VEGGIE CHALLENGE

141

This exercise encourages teams to create a child-friendly, sustainable vegetarian menu and negotiate for ingredients.

Teams will create a child-friendly, sustainable vegetarian menu by negotiating ingredient choices with other teams. This exercise fosters teamwork, negotiation skills, and creativity in designing a balanced, appealing, plant-based menu for children.

Materials Needed

- Ingredients A variety of vegetarian, child-friendly, seasonal ingredients, such as vegetables (e.g., carrots, bell peppers, sweet potatoes), fruits (e.g., apples, bananas, berries), grains (e.g., rice, oats), plant-based proteins (e.g., lentils, chickpeas, tofu), and herbs.

Instructions

1. Team Setup and Role Assignment (5 minutes)

- Divide participants into small teams (3-4 people each).
- Assign each team member a role
 - Chef Oversees the preparation and ensures the dishes are child-friendly and vegetarian.
 - Negotiator Handles ingredient negotiations with other teams.
 - Nutrition Expert Ensures the menu is balanced, nutritious, and appealing for children.
 - Storyteller Crafts a narrative for presenting the menu to a young audience.

2. Menu Planning (5 minutes)

- Each team brainstorms a simple, two-item vegetarian menu that would appeal to children, such as “Cheesy Veggie Bites” and “Fruit & Oat Energy Balls.”
- The menu should include plant-based ingredients and use mild flavors and textures suitable for young tastes.

3. Ingredient Negotiation (10 minutes)

- Provide each team with a limited selection of vegetarian ingredients.
- Teams negotiate with others to trade ingredients to complete their menu.

Encourage the Negotiators to advocate for the ingredients they need and work with other teams to find beneficial trades.

- Use tokens if desired to “purchase” ingredients through a point system for added strategy.

4. Preparation and Cooking (20-25 minutes)

- Teams work together to prepare their vegetarian dishes, using ingredients secured through negotiation.

- The Nutrition Expert ensures the dishes are balanced and nutritious, with a focus on colors, textures, and flavors appealing to children.

- Encourage creativity, incorporating playful elements to make the dishes fun and inviting.

5. Presentation and Storytelling (5-10 minutes)

- Teams present their menu, describing each vegetarian dish and explaining how it’s designed to appeal to children.

- The Storyteller shares the menu’s story in a fun and engaging way to make the dishes sound exciting for kids.

6. Feedback and Reflection (5-10 minutes)

- Trainers provide feedback on creativity, negotiation skills, flavor balance, and child appeal.

- Open a discussion where each team can share insights on their negotiation experience and the challenges of designing vegetarian, kid-friendly meals.

Evaluation Criteria

- Negotiation Skills Did the team effectively negotiate and obtain the ingredients they needed?
- Sustainability Did the team select eco-friendly, seasonal ingredients for their vegetarian menu?
- Creativity and Appeal Were the vegetarian dishes visually appealing and designed with child-friendly flavors and textures?
- Nutritional Balance Did the team create a balanced, nutritious vegetarian menu?
- Storytelling Did the Storyteller present the menu in an engaging way that would appeal to children?

1. Negotiation Skills

- Did the team effectively negotiate with other teams to obtain the ingredients they needed?
- Did the team find mutually beneficial trades, working cooperatively with other groups?
- Did the Negotiator advocate for their team's needs while maintaining positive interactions?

2. Sustainability

- Did the team choose local, seasonal, or eco-friendly ingredients?
- Was the menu designed with minimal waste, using ingredients thoughtfully and sustainably?
- Did the team demonstrate an understanding of sustainable practices in selecting ingredients?

3. Creativity and Appeal

- Did the team create a child-friendly, vegetarian menu that's visually appealing?
- Were the dishes designed with child-friendly flavors, textures, and presentation?
- Did the team add playful or inventive elements to make the dishes exciting for children?

4. Nutritional Balance

- Did the team create a balanced menu that includes essential nutrients suitable for children?
- Did the Nutrition Expert ensure that the menu items were nutritious and aligned with vegetarian dietary needs?
- Was the menu thoughtfully composed to be both healthy and appealing for young tastes?

5. Teamwork and Role Fulfillment

- Did each team member actively participate in their assigned role (Chef, Negotiator, Nutrition Expert, Storyteller)?
- Did the team collaborate effectively, with clear communication and shared decision-making?
- Did each team member contribute to the planning, negotiation, and creation of the dishes?

6. Storytelling and Presentation

- Was the menu presented attractively, with thoughtful garnishing and plating?
- Did the Storyteller clearly explain how the menu was designed to appeal to children and highlight the sustainable and vegetarian choices?
- Was the storytelling engaging and creative, helping the audience understand the thought process behind the menu?

- Difficulty negotiating ingredients with other teams.
- Challenges in creating a balanced, nutritious, and child-friendly vegetarian menu.
- Limited knowledge of child-friendly flavors and presentation techniques.

Transferability Strategies

- Highlight the benefits of involving children in sustainable eating and simple vegetarian options.
- Discuss the importance of negotiation and compromise, linking it to real-life collaborative skills.
- Encourage participants to bring similar sustainable, child-friendly ideas into their home cooking.

Classroom management strategy

1. Team Formation

- Start with a clear explanation of creating a nutritious, child-friendly, vegetarian menu. Divide participants into balanced teams and assign roles (Chef, Negotiator, Nutrition Expert, Storyteller).

2. Time Management

- Segmented Time Blocks Allocate specific times for menu planning, ingredient negotiation, cooking, and presentation. Use a timer to keep teams aware of the phase transitions.
- Checkpoints After the ingredient negotiation phase, ensure each team has obtained the ingredients needed to complete their menu.

3. Specific Phase Strategies

- During planning, guide teams to consider flavors, textures, and nutrition that appeal to children. Encourage questions like, “What colors and shapes will attract children?” and “How can we make this dish nutritious?”
- During the negotiation phase, encourage respectful interactions and emphasize mutual benefit in ingredient trades.

4. Supervision

- Move around the room, observing team dynamics and providing support during ingredient negotiation if conflicts arise. Offer guidance on making vegetarian dishes appealing for children.

5. Judging and Feedback

- Clarify evaluation criteria, focusing on child appeal, creativity, and nutritional balance. Offer constructive feedback, recognizing both creative and nutritional efforts in child-friendly presentation.

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