

FOOD SKILLS PROGRAMS

THE ISSUES WE FACE

DIET-RELATED ILLNESS

Rates of diet-related illness are at historic highs and cost our healthcare system \$26 billion annually.¹ **80% of type 2 diabetes cases, 80% of premature heart disease, and 40% of cancers can be prevented through lifestyle, including healthy eating.**²

FOOD ILLITERACY

People have lost the skills, knowledge, and confidence to grow, cook, and choose healthy food. **Low-income households struggle most to find the time and the money to buy and prepare healthy food.**³

MORE PEOPLE EATING ALONE

Despite the known benefits of eating with others, more and more people are eating alone. **Lack of companionship during mealtime has been linked to depression in older adults and poorer heart health in teens.**^{4,5}

OUR RECIPE FOR CHANGE

- 1. Offer hands-on cooking and gardening programs** that bring people together and help them build the skills, knowledge, and habits they need to feed themselves a healthy diet.
- 2. Empower people to take control over their personal health and nutrition** within the context of their circumstances.
- 3. Foreground participant leadership in programs**, and focus on supporting people to make lasting and sustainable changes in their diets.

KEY INGREDIENTS

- Hands-on cooking and gardening experiences
- Food skills lessons
- Convene groups with shared experiences (e.g. seniors, mothers of young children, newcomers, Indigenous community members)
- Focus on fun, inspiration, and interaction
- Recognize participants' skills and provide leadership and mentorship opportunities
- Physical activity components

PROGRAMS ON THE MENU

- + Community kitchens
- + Community gardens
- + FoodFit
- + Child, youth, and family programs



THE CHANGE WE'RE COOKING UP

↑
HEALTHY FOOD SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

↑
CONFIDENCE IN THE KITCHEN AND THE GARDEN

↑
CONSUMPTION OF HEALTHY FOODS

↓
SOCIAL ISOLATION

↑
PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

THE PROOF IS IN THE PUDDING

77%
of people surveyed say they've made healthy changes to their diets.⁶

"If you cook and eat healthy food, it gives you more energy and you can exercise more. It's like a snowball, improving your mental health and then social health."

—Community member at
The Stop Community Food Centre (Toronto, ON)

56%
report improvements in their physical health.⁷

¹ Gov't of Canada (2015). Amending food, drug regulations. (abbrv.)
² World Health Org (2009). Unhealthy diets & physical activity.
³ Government of Canada (2010).
⁴ Kimura et al. (2012). Eating alone Japanese elderly. (abbrv.)
⁵ Khoury et al. (2015). Evaluating associations[...]. (abbrv.)
^{6,7} CFCC (2018). 2017 annual report.





SPOTLIGHT: FOOD SKILLS PROGRAMS

A snapshot of healthy cooking and gardening programs offered by Community Food Centres across Canada. These programs aim to build food skills and knowledge, increase access to healthy foods, and strengthen community connections for people living on low incomes.

The programs listed below reflect the work happening at the following Community Food Centres (CFCs):
The Alex CFC (Calgary, AB) - Dartmouth North CFC (Dartmouth, NS) - Hamilton CFC (Hamilton, ON)
The Local CFC (Stratford, ON) - NorWest Co-op CFC (Winnipeg, MB) - Regent Park CFC (Toronto, ON)
The Stop (Toronto, ON) - The Table CFC (Perth, ON)

COMMUNITY KITCHENS

Whether by drop-in or a pre-registered class, participants gather in a convivial setting to prepare a healthy meal together. Featuring whole foods and seasonal ingredients, community kitchens teach a range of techniques and recipes. Some groups have a specific demographic focus, while others hone in on a certain outcome, like preparing foods from different cultures or cooking a meal to take home for the week.



COMMUNITY GARDENS



Most CFCs offer garden programs whereby individuals and families work collectively to help a garden flourish, while sharing in the bounty it produces. In addition, some CFCs host allotment gardens, where participants get a garden plot of their own to grow their own food. Free garden workshops help to animate the space while supporting budding gardeners and their green thumbs.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

KIDS GARDENING

Kids explore the natural world through gardening and other adventures to build skills and connect with nature.

KIDS IN THE KITCHEN

Children and youth have a blast and build confidence in the kitchen as they transform ingredients into healthy, delicious meals.

COOKING & GROWING IN COMBINATION

Kids roll up their sleeves in the kitchen and garden, all while learning about the broader food system and getting empowered to make healthy food choices.

FAMILY FOCUS

MOM AND BABY

Pregnant women and moms with new babies meet weekly to share a meal and connect with other moms and peri-natal supports.

FAMILY COOKING

Parents and kids of any age collaborate to whip up tasty meals and dine together. Getting kids involved in the kitchen at an early age helps them develop lifelong healthy eating habits.

FOODFIT

This fun and social program combines nutrition education, physical activity, and cooking sessions to help participants build healthy habits. Some sites also run youth-focused FoodFit programs and drop-in alumni programs for FoodFit grads.



TARGETED PROGRAMS

Many CFCs run food skills programs that are designed to reach an under-represented demographic or carve out space for a group with shared interests and needs.

EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

- Intercultural kitchen
- Diabetes cooking group
- Newcomer cooking/gardening
- Men's cooking group
- Indigenous gardening
- Seniors gardening
- Seniors cooking and exercise
- Harm-reduction kitchen
- Culture-specific cooking groups, e.g. Middle East community kitchen, Filipino family cooking group, Sabor Latino
- Global roots garden

