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Cooking for success

Judy Young shares her love of cooking with 'Dress for Success' program

BY BONNIE BING
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It started when two of Judy Young's friends told her she should have a restaurant. She didn't want a restaurant, but she did have a desire to share her knowledge and love of cooking. Everything came together one day when she was having lunch with Pat Jones, director of Dress for Success Wichita, which helps women who are looking for employment.

"I said to her, 'I wonder if your (clients) would have any interest in learning to cook healthy,'æ" Young said.

Cooking for Success was born. Her goal: Get women out of fast-food drive-through lanes and into grocery lines.

Young, a lifelong Wichitan, secured a grant to help pay her costs — mainly, buying groceries — and before long, women in the Dress for Success program were invited to take six two-hour cooking classes for a one-time fee of \$10.



Photos by Dave Williams

Judy Young, center, leads Teresa Cook, left, and Cindy Goodwin on a tour of the produce department of Dillon's, Central & Rock Rd. Young holds a "Cooking for Success" program for Wichita women.

The classes are designed to help them learn how to shop, cook and eat healthfully, even on a restricted budget. They include a field trip to a grocery store, led by Young, to learn how to be a smart shopper.

And they include hands-on cooking classes, like one held recently at the K-State Research and Extension in west Wichita, where Young prepared a menu that featured Greek sliders, kale salad and fresh pineapple.

As she and her students cooked, Young, mother of four and grandmother to nine, offered tips on nutrition and thrifty cooking:

* Think about kale for salads and other dishes. It has many nutrients and antioxidants, is low in calories and lasts a long time in the refrigerator.

* When using fresh spinach, wash it, then place it between paper towels, put in a zip-lock plastic storage bag and store in the refrigerator. When ready to use the spinach, re-use the paper towels to mop up or to wrap other vegetables.

* Guard against wear and tear on cooking pans by placing sheets of rubber shelf protector between pans to protect their surfaces.

* Save money by buying spices in bulk, available at health food and specialty stores. Save bottles and jars to put them in.

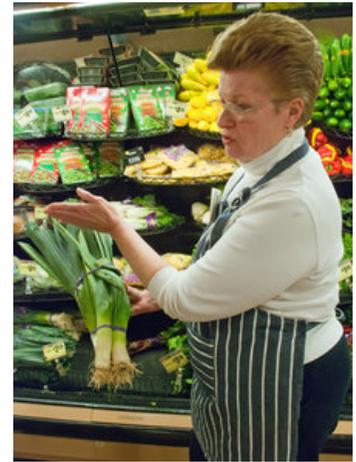
* When a recipe calls for fresh lemon juice, use the lemon's zest, too. "My grandmother always said, 'Waste not, want not,' " Young said.

* Recycle and compost. The Extension Office has tips on how to do both.

Cindy Goodwin, of Belle Plaine, one of Young's students, said she's learned to shop more carefully for "You get a prize for doing your homework," Young told Goodwin, handing her a new wire scoop used for taking cooked items from hot liquid.

Another student said she has a new appreciation for fresh fruits and vegetables.

"Judy says if you can't pronounce it (preservatives, etc.), why would you put it in your body?" she said.



Photos by Dave Williams

Young's classes have raised her awareness of how to shop and cook, the student said. "I realized I was in the routine of cooking the same things over and over, or just loading everyone in the car to go out to eat," she said.

Young now is working on a "Cooking for Success" guide. "I call it a guide because it's not really a recipe book," she said. "It's more of a how-to guide. It's a compilation of my ideas, wisdom and favorite recipes."

The 68-page guide will be published by a self-publishing Web service, MagCloud.com, she said. It will cost \$17, with \$5 from each sale going to Dress for Success.

She also is working on a Cooking with Judy website. It's gratifying to her that the women who take her classes not only learn how to cook, but also discover that cooking can be fun.

"If it's fun, they'll do it, and as they learn, it becomes even more interesting and fun," she said.