

Peer educators play key role in new recipe development and testing

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Cooking and recipe demonstrations encourage healthy eating and the adoption of unfamiliar foods by class participants. The [research brief](#) shared in the *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* demonstrates

that valuable input by peer educators can be obtained through a hybrid home-use testing method.

The process of [recipe](#) development involves sensory evaluation of the appearance, aroma, taste, texture, and flavor of the [food](#). Although a controlled laboratory setting is the gold standard for evaluation because of consistent preparation and presentation of food, bringing peer educators to a central location results in time and financial constraints.

Corresponding author Ginnefer O. Cox, Ph.D., RD, Department of Nutritional Sciences, College of Family and Consumer Sciences, University of Georgia, explained, "Peer educators are key stakeholders in the recipe development process because of their close relationship with the community and their hands-on involvement with recipe demonstrations."

For this study, 40 peer educators signed up to select from eight recipes to prepare over a four-week period. They were provided detailed recipes, non-perishable ingredients, but shopped for the perishable ingredients. They completed two surveys per recipe, preparing the recipe following the first survey. The presurvey (first survey) asked questions about their perceived acceptance of the recipe title, appearance, flavor, texture, and likelihood of peer educators preparing the recipe at home or as a food demonstration for *Food Talk*.

Food Talk is a direct, evidence-based initiative of the University of Georgia using the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program and SNAP-Ed curriculum to help individuals make nutrition-related decisions.

Additional questions from the presurvey included how *Food Talk* participants may perceive these recipes based on the peer educator's experience with participants and the likelihood of participants preparing

the recipes at home. After preparing the recipe, the postsurvey evaluated similar questions after the peer educator had tasted the finished recipe.

The study showed no significant difference in overall liking or preparation acceptance from the presurvey to postsurvey responses. The presurvey responses provided valuable insights into the perceptions surrounding a recipe before preparing and tasting it; additionally, postsurvey comments solicited specific modifications to adapt ingredients to a specific culture, improve the preparation or cooking time, or make the title more descriptive.

"The use of presurvey and postsurvey questions of acceptance toward unfamiliar recipes offers an underexplored method of evaluating recipes in the community nutrition setting. Our research may indicate that an online process can be used to predict recipe performance without formal testing at a central location," concluded Dr. Cox.

More information: Melanie K. Ng et al, Sensory-Informed Evaluation Method for Use With Peer Educators of Nutrition Education Programs, *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jneb.2023.07.011](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2023.07.011)

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