

Cooking for Salud®

Assessing Clinical Health Impacts of Olivewood Gardens' Culinary Based Lifestyle Modification Program

Callie Brust, MPH, RDN, CHES, Tessa Tinkler, PhD, and Jennifer Nation, MA

What is Cooking for Salud®?

In response to community request and need, Olivewood Gardens and Learning Center, a nonprofit garden and nutrition education center, created a program to support community change through healthy eating. Olivewood Gardens' Cooking for Salud® program is a 7-week, peer-to-peer lifestyle modification program that gives participants tools to change their food-related habits through:

- Chef and peer-led culinary instruction
- Nutrition Education
- Community supported wellness classes
- Access to organic, fresh fruits and vegetables
- Mindful eating strategies

The Program is a launching point for ongoing, sustainable behavior change through peer support, empowerment, and continued education. Participants enjoy class topics such as fruits and vegetables, healthy proteins, cultural cuisines, introduction to nutrition, grains and carbohydrates, and more. Each 3-hour class begins with a wellness activity such as chair yoga, then a nutrition lesson and culinary demonstration, and is completed with discussion and goal setting. In the Fall of 2018, Olivewood Gardens hosted a group of 15 older adults for the 14th cohort of Cooking for Salud®. This program targeted low-income, Spanish-speaking men and women over the age of 55 living in National City, California who have or are at risk for chronic disease.

Culinary + Clinical Intervention

Informed by Social Cognitive Theory and as seen in previous evaluations of the Cooking for Salud® program, participants reported an increase in nutrition knowledge, adoption of healthy behaviors, and confidence in modeling healthy behaviors. However, limited information exists to confirm the medical impact of this type of nutrition education intervention. **The objective of the study was to evaluate the clinical health outcomes of participants in Cooking for Salud®, a culinary based lifestyle modification program.**

Methods

Data collection methods included a mix of pre and post clinical health measures, pre-survey, retrospective post-then-pre survey, as well as observational and focus group data. Baseline survey and clinical health measures were collected prior to the start of the 7-week intervention and then again at the completion of the program. Participants met with a registered nurse to gather clinical metrics such as body composition, blood pressure, total cholesterol, high-density lipoprotein (HDL) and low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, triglycerides, and hemoglobin A1c, which are all impacted by diet. Additionally, focus group discussions were held 3 months post-intervention.



Results

“ I want to apply what I learned with my friends at the Seniors Club. I have already told them I will teach them new recipes and healthier ways to cook in our next meeting. I like to share and help others and this has helped me and I want this to help other people too. ”

After completing the 7-week Cooking for Salud® program, participants showed and reported positive impacts on clinical outcomes, mental health, physical health, confidence, healthy eating practices, and socialization.

100% of participants positively changed one or more clinical health measures, with statistically significant improvement in A1c and HDL Cholesterol levels.

100% of participants reported feeling healthier than they used to and now eat meals that are more nutritious.

¡Yo Soy Kitchenista®!

Upon completion of Cooking for Salud®, graduates become Kitchenistas® of Olivewood Gardens. As part of the Kitchenistas® Community Engagement Program, these graduates continue learning topics such as nutrition and health, leadership development, public speaking, emotional wellbeing, financial literacy, and others through ongoing Olivewood classes and workshops free of cost. Kitchenistas® are also invited to partake in community education outreach to lead their peers towards healthy lifestyles. The older adults of the 14th cohort of Cooking for Salud® continue to attend educational classes, partake in Kitchenistas® social gatherings, and share their knowledge with their family, friends, and neighbors.

Conclusion

The evaluation of the Cooking for Salud® program shows that nutrition education and behavior modification can result in significant improvements in chronic disease-related clinical outcomes in low-income older adults in southeastern San Diego. In 7 weeks, changes in physical and mental health, confidence levels, and cooking skills are possible. Additionally, further improvements are expected with continued participation in the Kitchenistas® Community Engagement Program.

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OlivewoodGardens.org | info@olivewoodgardens.org