Cook the Book Club

Columbus Library (Salt Lake County Libraries)

Adults

Cook the Book Club

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Byline

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Once per month, we host a cookbook club-meets-potluck event that always draws a crowd. Each member picks a recipe from the same book (voted on by the group) and they bring in the dish to share.

The result is a potluck with lots of talk about cooking and recipes and how to improve on them. And it's about community, getting to know our neighbors and making new friends, with an opportunity for many of our refugee and new American patrons to practice English with native speakers in a fun, social setting.

Advanced Planning

Our goals were to establish a fun program based around our collection and to bring new and established members of our community together to mingle and grow.

Little advance planning was involved. We advertised the group, and interested patrons attended an initial meeting where we chose a book and established the ground rules. For instance, I have each patron who would like to attend the next meeting email me — or tell me at the reference desk — the recipe they'd like to make for the next gathering. That way we don't have duplicate dishes, and I can keep our count at 40.

Because we have 18 libraries in our system, we are able to have at least 18 copies of each cookbook we choose available to check out.

Marketing

We promote the program through posters in our branch, digital signs at other branches, and through social media. Word of mouth has also factored in greatly.

The program has been a sure success. We have limited the group to 40 patron attendees each month, and each month we are full with a wait-list.

Budgeting

Tablecloths, dishes and cutlery were donated. Each month we spend $25 on cans of sparkling water and $25 on a gift card to a local bakery, coffee shop or ethnic foods market. Patron attendees vote on the tastiest dish each month, and the winner receives the gift card.

Day-of-event Activity

The day of the event, we chill the beverages; set up 10 large tables with tablecloths in a community room; and set up chairs. Five of the tables are for seating, and five are for beverages, plates, utensils and cooked food. We put out bins for dirty dishes

and cutlery, a very large trash can for waste, and a smaller trash can for recyclables. Attendees bring in their cooked dish and a serving utensil. The library provides the plates, bowls, forks, knives, and spoons. The attendees put the dirty plates, bowls, etc.in the bins after eating; and after the event, the staff washes them.

We make cards to display in front of each potluck item with the name of the recipe and ingredients for those with food allergies. Copies of the cookbooks we'll vote on for our next meeting are also put out on the tables.

One staff member is able to complete these tasks.

The biggest challenge is washing/sanitizing all the dishes/cutlery after the event!

Program Execution

The program is great fun. We run for 1.5 hours. At the hour mark, we go around the room, standing up and introducing ourselves one by one, discussing the making of our respective dishes (our alterations to the recipes, unexpected outcomes, etc.) and expounding on an additional topic such as a book we've recently read. There's a lot of laughter in the room.

We also vote on our next cookbook and the tastiest dish. At the end of the night, we present the gift card to the winner of the tastiest dish and announce which book we'll be using for our next gathering. Feedback is always positive.

Advice

Circulation in our 641s has increased dramatically since we started this cookbook club; a few members have informed us that they never thought much about cooking but it is now their new hobby. Through ad hoc feedback, we've learned that several friendships and neighborhood alliances have formed among club members.

Members of our English as a Second Language Conversation Group learned that the club is another opportunity to practice English and meet neighbors, and have since attended.

Another library in our system has recently begun a Cook the Book Club, having heard about the success of ours.

Did you try this program at your library? Share your experience using this form.

Supporting Materials

Document
cook_the_book_club_flier.pdf
Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

More Programs

Sep 25, 2017
Young Adult (17 - 20)+ | $
Image



Cultural Cooks

Audiences:

Audience
Young Adult (17 - 20)
Adults (21 and up)
Intergenerational
Nov 19, 2018
Adults (21 and up)+ | □□
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Book Club Round-Up: From Our Archives

Audiences:

Audience
Adults (21 and up)
Jan 3, 2020
+ | □□
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Looking to Cook? Instant Pots, Supermarket Dieticians and More

Audiences:

Jul 19, 2019
+ |

Book Club Reboot

Audiences:

Oct 16, 2019
+ |

Culinary Literacy at Your Library

Audiences: