

Online World Cooking Series

[Spokane County Library District](#)

Adults

Online World Cooking Series

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\$101-250

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Byline

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Immigrant chefs prepare a meal live over Zoom while participants cook along in their home kitchens.

Advanced Planning

One of the goals of our strategic plan was to expand our collaboration with immigrant communities. The library system had some existing relationships with organizations serving refugees and with Spanish-speaking community members. We

hoped this program would help deepen those relations and develop new ones.

Our library system plans programs in quarterly batches. If I were planning these one at a time, I would recommend at least two months' lead time.

To find chefs, I contacted staff at the refugee serving organization and asked for leads on folks who would be willing to demonstrate a dish online. In this case, we needed someone confident enough in their English skills to explain the cooking process as they executed it. We also needed someone comfortable enough with Zoom to successfully showcase the process as they cooked. My first presenters ended up being immigrant staff members at these organizations. I also contacted a local non-profit, Feast World Kitchen, a restaurant serving a different cuisine every day. Immigrants sign up to cook for a night and take home the night's proceeds without having to invest in a brick-and-mortar business. I asked the coordinator at this restaurant to circulate my call for presenters among the chefs. A couple of them reached out to me. Some chefs also recommended other chef friends to me. Some chefs were existing library customers. I have recruited at least one chef after a conversation at the circulation desk.

Prior to the program, I called the chef to explain the program and answer the field questions. I followed up with an email that they can refer to. Some chefs request a practice Zoom session or recordings of past events to help them plan.

By far the most challenging aspect of preparation is getting a written copy of the recipe in advance from the chef. Most chefs cook by heart, and some are not familiar with American recipe formats. It is typical for me to spend an entire month emailing/calling back and forth with clarifying questions and revisions.

I email registrants a reminder at least one week before the program. The body of the email includes a list of ingredients. When specialty ingredients are called for, I provide the presenter's suggestion of where in town to purchase them.

In the email, I make it clear that participants need to have the ingredients purchased and prepped (chopped, peeled, etc.) prior to the start of the program to cook along with the chef. The most common feedback we get is that customers missed this detail and struggled to keep up during the demonstration. It is important to make it as upfront as possible.

I also include the Zoom link in the email. I have included the full recipe as an

attachment.

The day before the program, I send out the Zoom link a second time, with a second reminder about prepping ingredients. If the recipe involves marinating meat, I make the subject of the email "Don't forget to marinate your chicken for tomorrow's World Cooking Program" and include instructions in the email.

Marketing

We print a magazine listing our quarterly program offerings. Registration is strongest for this program because the events are grouped together in the magazine as a series, and when registration opens for all of them at once.

Our marketing department promotes the event on social media. Recently, a local foodie group on Facebook picked up one of our events, and registration exploded. Over 100 people signed up, although only 47 followed through and attended live.

Budgeting

We currently offer presenters a \$150 stipend.

Participants have the option of purchasing their own ingredients to cook along with the demonstration in their home kitchen. This is the participant's responsibility; we do not provide ingredients. It's best for the chefs to limit themselves to preparing two dishes max so that the ingredient list can be short and reasonably priced.

Day-of-event Activity

During the event, I host the Zoom meeting and record the session to the cloud. I field participant questions in the chat and ask clarifying questions if I feel that the participants may not have understood the instructions. I also take notes on my copy of the recipe when the chef inevitably deviates from the instructions they provided in advance.

After the event, I update the recipe to reflect what the chef actually demonstrated. I then send all registrants an up-to-date copy of the recipe and a link to the program recording.

Program Execution

The online format works really well for these programs. The library doesn't have to invest in cooking equipment or navigate food handlers' permits, etc. Everyone gets an up-close look at what the chef is doing. Those who choose can make it a hands-on learning experience and cook along. People get their questions answered in real time. Everyone's kitchen smells AMAZING! Sometimes, the chef's family logs in from other parts of the world. It's great.

In my library system, any adult program with 15+ attendees is considered a success. For this series, our lowest attendance to date was our first program (only 4 participants). At our most recent program, we had 47 live attendees. We take a break over the summer, so there is often a dip in attendance at the first program of the fall. These are the numbers we've had so far.

| Date | Cuisine | Live Attendance |
|--------|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Oct-23 | World Cooking: Venezuelan Food | |
| Nov-23 | World Cooking: Turkish Food | |
| Jan-24 | World Cooking: Colombian Food | |
| Feb-24 | World Cooking: Puerto Rican Food | |
| May-24 | World Cooking: Lebanese Food | |
| Nov-24 | World Cooking: Afghan Food | |

Dec-24World Cooking: Mediterranean Food

Jan-24World Cooking: Filipino Food

We get LOTS of rave feedback on our surveys. Several couples use this as a stay-at-home date night. People love that the food is authentic. We've heard that people feel as if they have been welcomed into the chef's home. I love watching participants' eyes widen as they take their first bite of the food they have just prepared.

I appreciate that the program gives me an opportunity to engage the immigrant community as collaborators rather than just service recipients. The Filipino Cooking workshop opened up the doors for collaboration with our local Asian and Pacific Islander Association and the various more specific ethnic associations represented therein.

Advice

Collaboration with immigrants takes more time than hiring an American-born chef from your local cooking school. There will be communication difficulties and cultural snafus, but it is worth it. Their contributions enrich the library, and their communities benefit from greater exposure to library services.

Supporting Materials

[Download this Program as a PDF](#)

- Feedback (Coming Soon!)
- [Programming Librarian Facebook Group](#)

More Programs

May 24, 2024

Adults (21 and up)+ | \$

[Image](#)



Beginner Sourdough Class

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)

Jan 21, 2025

Adults (21 and up)+ | \$

[Image](#)



Spice Club

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)

Jan 28, 2025

Intergenerational+ | \$

[Image](#)



Cereal Party

Audiences:

Intergenerational