

LSU AgCenter launches virtual nutrition lessons

Terrebonne and Lafourche – The LSU AgCenter is using technology to transform the way they offer nutrition classes in the wake of the pandemic.

In the past, nutrition agents and educators offered lessons in a face-to-face setting. With the virus still persisting, the LSU AgCenter adapted nutrition lessons to virtual format.

“The benefit of offering online nutrition education classes is that we can still connect with our audiences and provide them with research-based nutrition information while remaining safe during the pandemic,” said Sandra May, LSU AgCenter School of Nutrition and Food Sciences instructor and registered dietitian. “It also allows us the opportunity to explore alternative ways to reach our audiences who may not be able to attend face-to-face classes in the future.”

The virtual nutrition lessons were developed by representatives from Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) and Flavors of Health nutrition program.

“We wanted to be able to continue to offer nutrition education because eating right and exercising are increasingly important to an individual’s overall well-being,” said Sharman Charles, EFNEP program manager. “Our goal is to offer lessons to clientele that meet their needs and are easily accessible.”

The nutrition lessons cover topics such as healthful eating and meal planning, managing food dollars, physical activity and food safety. Lessons will be offered for both adult and youth audiences.

The virtual lessons will include a 20 to 25-minute interactive segment and a brief pre-recorded food demonstration for healthy, easy-to-prepare recipes. The entire length of each segment will be about 30 minutes.

“We had to make sure that the lessons are informative, interesting and interactive,” said Elizabeth Martin, assistant nutrition agent for Caddo and Bossier Parish. “Sometimes we take for granted our ability to interact with clients in a personal manner. But when you take away the face-to-face dynamic you have to really step up your game to keep your audience engaged.”

Virtual nutrition lessons will be offered either directly through the LSU AgCenter or in collaboration with community partners. Partner organizations may include local libraries, WIC offices, healthcare groups or other state agencies.

“My partnerships with the libraries during COVID-19 have given me the opportunity to reach a wider audience,” said Amanda Gibson, assistant extension agent for Lafourche and Terrebonne Parish. “Because the libraries were unable to host in-person programs, I offered to do virtual videos that could be shared on social media to help them meet their outreach goals. This also provided me with the opportunity to do outreach and recruit for our upcoming virtual programs.”

If you have a computer, tablet or smart phone, you will be able to join through a link provided by the LSU AgCenter or a community partner. If you do not have one of these devices, there will be an opportunity to participate by phone.

Individuals who are interested in attending a series of virtual nutrition lessons can contact the Terrebonne or Lafourche Extension offices and ask for Amanda Gibson (Lafourche Parish) or Evelyn Washington (Terrebonne Parish). You can also visit www.lsuagcenter.com/lafourchenutritionprograms directly to register.

Information will also be available on social media.



FCS agent and Registered Dietitian Amanda Gibson prepares to do a food demonstration for LSU AgCenter. Picture by Linda Ricca.

What Does 6 Ounces Look Like?



**1 small biscuit =
1 refined grains**



**3 cups popcorn =
1 whole grains**



**2 slices 100% whole wheat
bread = 2 whole grains**



**½ cup mac & cheese =
1 refined grains**



**1 yeast roll =
1 refined grains**



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Visuals like this will be used to deliver lessons virtually. Photo provided by Sandra May/LSU AgCenter.