

# EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit

October 2022



**Illinois Extension**

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

## Two hundred youth learn important life-skills at Illinois Junior Chef

"We are not sure who has more fun at Illinois Junior Chef (IJC)...the youth or the staff," [Kaytlin Beekman, University of Illinois Extension SNAP-Education](#) community worker mentioned. Kaytlin and the entire SNAP-Education team serving Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell counties spent a good portion of their summer teaching IJC programs throughout the area.

Illinois Junior Chef is a very popular program offered each summer through U of I Extension's SNAP-Education program. This year all 13 of our week-long programs were either close to or at capacity. Two hundred youth enjoyed the cooking, nutrition, and team building lessons.

IJC gives children ages eight to thirteen a chance to learn hands-on cooking skills that they will use throughout their entire life. "They learn so many important life skills," Kaytlin mentioned. "I wish every kid had the chance to learn these types of skills at a young age."

Each day of the five-day program a new cooking skill is featured, along with a MyPlate food group and two delicious recipes. The recipes focus on healthy, easy-to-make foods that participants can make on their own at home. "Many times, kids experience 'new-to-them' foods. Sometimes they like them and sometimes they don't," Kaytlin continued.

Participants learned how to correctly measure liquid and dry ingredients, mixing techniques, knife safety, and how to read a recipe. 4-H Teen Teachers were also a big part of making the programs a success. They were able to lead the participants in icebreakers and team-building activities each day. On the last day of the program, the participants were awarded a certificate, the Illinois Junior Chef cookbook, and an incentive bag full of helpful cooking utensils.

"We enjoyed watching the children grow a love for cooking and trying new things," Kaytlin shared. "One boy made his disgust of anything pumpkin known on the first day. By the end of the week, he had tried pumpkin pancakes and pumpkin pudding. He loved them both and left saying that he could not wait to make and share the recipes with his family.

"We are already looking forward to next summer and are in the process of finding creative ways to make it just as fun and educational."

Being able to give children the nutrition education and skills needed to make good food choices will always be a goal for SNAP-Education.



Photo by Anita Wilkinson | Illinois Extension

*Illinois Junior Chef is a popular program for both the participants and U of I Extension SNAP-Education staff. This summer's programs reached 200 youth through 13 programs throughout the four counties.*

### **Kaytlin Beekman**

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