



SPECTRUM COOKING THE EVALUATION OF COOKING CLASSES FOR PEOPLE ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

AIM



This pilot study aimed to understand the experiences of young adults on the autism spectrum participating in cooking classes.

WHO TOOK PART?



Ten young people on the autism spectrum, between the ages of 18 and 22 years, engaged in cooking classes provided by a chef.

The students were participants of Studio G (Autism Queensland). These were conducted in two group sessions of three classes with approximately five young people per group.

Four of the 10 young people agreed to be interviewed.

HOW WE DID THE RESEARCH

Ten young people on the spectrum were involved in three cooking classes of 2-3 hours duration. They travelled by train with a mentor to the café and cooking class venue.

Working with a chef an assessment was developed to gain information about the participants' food interests, preferences, knowledge, cooking experience, dietary preferences and requirements.

Based on this assessment, recipes for breakfast, lunch and dinner were developed by the chef. Participants were interviewed about their experiences of the cooking classes.

WHO WERE THE RESEARCHERS?



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA



WHAT WE FOUND



- ✓ Overall, participants enjoyed the cooking classes.
- ✓ The majority of participants identified that the cooking classes assisted in developing experience with cooking and eating food with others.
- ✓ Most of the participants were positive about the skills of the chef and her ability to accommodate their needs



Most of the participants appreciated the opportunity to socialise and share what they cooked as a group after the class.



For one of the participants, the possibility of working in a kitchen and developing a career in cooking was raised.



Half of the participants identified that as a result of participating in the classes, they developed more confidence regarding cooking, using recipes, and cooking for others.



Future Recommendations



Some participants would have liked more classes.

- ✓ **Accessibility to the venue** (close proximity to public transport) is important
- ✓ **Limited size of classes 6-8 people** if the venue permits
- ✓ **Attention to sensory sensitivities** of participants is helpful
- ✓ **Further research** with larger numbers is needed
- ✓ **Independence in being able to cook** for oneself is an important life skill



They recommended a need to limit the number of attendees in any one class, and to be considerate of access to the cooking school (transport), and enough space to undertake hands-on work.



Following participation in the cooking classes, half of the participants tried out recipes at home and with their family/friends.

FIND OUT MORE

To download the recipes developed for these cooking classes and to watch the cooking classes in action visit the website:
autismcrc.com.au/spectrumcooking

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