

SNAP-Ed Toolkit

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A Taste of African Heritage

Oldways

Overview

A Taste of African Heritage (ATOAH) is a direct education cooking and nutrition curriculum designed to increase consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, and spices and reduce salt; improve cooking skills and nutritional literacy; reduce diet-related health disparities in the African American community using heritage as a motivator for health; and reframe nutrition and culinary education in a way that is culturally relevant to participants and honors African American's culture, traditions, and contributions. African Americans are too often told that the foods they grew up eating are unhealthy and that poor health is a part of their heritage. A Taste of African Heritage (ATOAH) flips the script by celebrating the culinary legacy and often-unsung cultural ownership of healthy eating for people of African descent. Consisting of six 2-hour sessions which feature healthy foods (like leafy greens, whole grains, and beans) from across the African diaspora, the accessible six-session format can be easily scaled into existing community health infrastructure, yet it is immersive enough to produce meaningful results. **Please Note:** If using this curriculum with SNAP-Ed audiences, MyPlate must also be introduced and discussed along with the curriculum. **Target Behavior:** Healthy Eating **Intervention Type:** Direct Education

Intervention Reach and Adoption

Since its inception in 2012, ATOAH has been taught approximately 445 times in 26 states (plus Washington, DC) by SNAP-Ed implementing agencies, community centers, and health clinics reaching approximately 3,000 people. ATOAH targets both youth and adult participants in a variety of community gathering locales including school, worksites, faith-based organizations, and community gardens. Recognizing that access to kitchen equipment is a barrier in underserved communities, each recipe in ATOAH is designed to be made on a hot plate, no oven required. The recipes feature inexpensive, accessible ingredients (e.g., canned beans, sweet potatoes) and offer recipe substitutions for the few ingredients that may be less common (e.g., substituting brown rice for millet). Most importantly, the recipes are culturally accessible to the target audience, honoring the foods and foodways of people of African descent. Setting: Community, Farmers markets, Faith-based community, Food pantries, Retail (Shop/Eat), Health care, Worksite (Work) **Target Audience:** High School, Pregnant/Breastfeeding Women, Parents/Mothers/Fathers, Adults, Older Adults, Homeless/Food Pantry Clients **Race/Ethnicity:** Black or African American, Hispanic/Latino, Non-Hispanic/Latino.

Intervention Components

ATOAH includes 6 weekly lessons (2-hrs each). Each lesson has a nutrition discussion, a cultural and historical discussion, and a culinary component. All partners are to implement the curriculum as it is written without omitting any of the components. To promote consistency among diverse sites, the curriculum includes a detailed Teacher's Manual with a lesson-by-lesson script, set-up instructions, and tested recipes. Recipes can be taught demo-style or hands-on with participants depending on the setting. There are several discussion prompts in the script (such as describing family favorite dishes) that encourage instructors to bring their unique personalities and lived experiences into the program while still maintaining consistency within the broader structure. The curriculum also offers suggestions for optional add-on activities, such as a grocery store tour or a walking group.

Intervention Materials

Partners provide the instructors and physical space, while Oldways provides the curriculum, student handbook, evaluation, materials, training, and customer support. Teacher training (<https://oldwayspt.org/teacherguide>) consists of a 1-hour webinar featuring a program overview and best practices from Oldways staff members and two long-time teachers. After watching the webinar, prospective teachers take a 6-question quiz, and Oldways' Heritage Diets Curriculum coordinator sets up an individual call with all new teachers to see if they have any questions and discuss best practices in greater detail. Teachers also share tips on ATOAH's private Facebook group.

Intervention Costs

Partners can license the curriculum for \$300/year or can pay for printed copies. The food costs are \$250 for the full 6 weeks for an average class size of 10-15 people.

Evidence Summary

Prior to its creation, ATOAH assembled a committee of African American nutrition scientists and culinary historians to develop the African Heritage Diet Pyramid as the framework for the curriculum. It was piloted on a small scale in the target communities to refine the flow and recipes, before being rolled out nationally. Feedback was continuously collected from participants and facilitators to optimize the program. . Acceptability was assessed using feedback from both facilitators and participants, and feedback continues to reflect high acceptability within the target communities. A peer reviewed study in the Journal of Nutrition and Education Behavior ([https://www.jneb.org/article/S1499-4046\(21\)00938-6/pdf](https://www.jneb.org/article/S1499-4046(21)00938-6/pdf)) shows that participants of ATOAH significantly increased weekly intakes of MyPlate food groups like fruits, vegetables and greens, increased weekly exercise frequency, and had significant improvements in weight, waist circumference, and blood pressure. The study also identified an improvement in awareness and knowledge of healthy eating from program participants. **Evidence-based Approach:** Research Tested

Evaluation Indicators

Based on the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework, the following outcome indicators can be used to evaluate intervention progress and success.

Readiness and Capacity – Short Term (ST)

Changes – Medium Term (MT)

Effectiveness and Maintenance – Long Term (LT)

Population Results (R)

[MT1](#), [MT3](#)

Environmental Settings

Sectors of Influence

- MT1: Healthy Eating
 - Intake frequencies of fruit and vegetables (and leafy greens in particular) improved from pre- to post-program
- MT3: Physical Activity and Reduced Sedentary Behavior
 - Exercise frequency improved from pre- to post-program

Evaluation Materials

For evaluations, all participants complete a low-burden, pre- and post-intervention survey, modeled after those used in other community-based cooking interventions such as Cooking Matters. For sites that have the capacity and equipment to take health measurements, pre- and post-intervention weight, waist circumference, and blood pressure measurements are also collected. Additionally, facilitators submit evaluations detailing location, attendance, and general feedback.

Success Story

Vetri Community Partnership: Eatiquette 360:

<https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/success-stories/vetri-community-partnership-eatiquette-360>

Additional Information

Website: The ATOAH website (<https://oldwayspt.org/programs/heritage-cooking-classes/heritage-cooking-classes/taste-african-heritage>) includes more information regarding program implementation, resources regarding traditional diets, health studies, recipes, and more. **Contact Person:** Sarah Anderson 617-896-4880 classes@oldwayspt.org