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College Student Health: How Cooking Can Promote Nutrition and a Healthy Diet

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COLLEGE STUDENT HEALTH: HOW COOKING CAN PROMOTE NUTRITION AND A HEALTHY DIET

By

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of the Requirements for
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Abstract

This paper focuses on college student health and the manner in which nutrition and overall health can be improved by cooking. College students are at a high risk of poor health because of the college lifestyle. They are faced with a great deal of demands on their time from classes, extracurricular activities, work, and friends. Many students cite this lack of time as one of the main reasons they do not prepare their meals at home. Students also struggle with the perceived inadequacy of their cooking skills, and therefore find it much easier to purchase prepared food instead of making their own. Maintaining a healthy diet is something that is very important for people of all ages especially now that chronic diseases are appearing in younger populations. Because of this, it is important to look at college students to see how we can help them to prevent the development of such diseases. To combat this cycle of unhealthy eating, I created an entry level cookbook designed for students who are new to cooking. The cookbook can help students learn how to prepare foods in a healthy way. Such a cookbook can demonstrate how simple it can be to eat a healthy diet, and can make a difference in a student's overall health.

Thesis Summary

College students may be in the prime of their lives, but their overall diets are not sustainable. College students eat a great deal of fast or processed foods (Dingman, Schulz, Wyrick, Bibeau & Gupta, 2014). Meals such as these are quick and easy and therefore do not require students to take too much time out of their busy schedules to cook food. Because this is the case, students often do not meet the recommended guidelines for fruit and vegetable consumption. This may not seem detrimental now, but chronic diseases such as diabetes (Chronic Diseases, 2016), and osteoporosis (Leslie & St Pierre, 2010) are appearing in younger and younger populations. Students need to take preventative measures to help protect themselves from developing these chronic diseases.

Diet can play a large part in both preventing and causing chronic diseases. For example, the high carb and high sugar Western diet can be predictive of chronic diseases, whereas the Mediterranean diet which is high in whole grains, seeds, oils fruits and vegetables, can be preventive (Potentas, Witkowska, & Zujko, 2015). In order for students to help protect themselves against these diseases, they need to make a dietary change. Eating more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains and fewer processed foods is a good place to start. However, for many students, the prospect of cooking can be intimidating. Students who believe they lack the skills or the funds to prepare their own food will likely not do so. Therefore, developing a tool or resource to help students obtain healthier food and cook more often would be a good start to improving their overall diets.

The Gamecock Pantry provides low income students with food. It provides both dry and canned goods along with soup and some breakfast foods. Recently, they started providing vouchers, so students can get fresh fruits and vegetables from the Healthy Carolina Farmers’

Market. This is a great resource for students, however, it is lacking one element. Students who are new to cooking may not know what to do with the food once they have it. Another excellent resource would be a cookbook. This is what I created: a cookbook that is specifically designed for students who are new to cooking or may be new to cooking fresh vegetables. Such a cookbook can serve as a guide to cooking. It gives students an easy way to learn how to use fresh vegetables from the farmers' market, and it helps students who feel intimidated by shopping at a large grocery store. A cookbook tells students what to look for in the grocery store, and makes shopping there less intimidating. A cookbook for college students helps them develop or refine their cooking skills, and this in turn can act as a preventative measure against chronic diseases.

Introduction

College student health is a topic that is vitally important but often not considered by public health professionals. Students' diets are a major factor in their health status and because chronic diseases are appearing more in younger populations, there should be more focus on diet and health (Diet, Nutrition, 2017). One major issue is that the diet of a college student is lacking in many important nutritional components. Students tend to eat fewer fruits and vegetables in college than they did in high school. According to one study on college freshman, 70% of study participants said they ate fewer than five fruits and vegetables daily. Information from this same study showed after their first two years of college, 70% of the study participants had gained a significant amount of weight (approximately 9 pounds) (Racette, Deusinger, Strube, Highstein, & Deusinger, 2005). Because student diets are possibly lacking in nutrients, it is important to realize the impact these diets can have on health and how health professionals can make a difference in students' lives.

By looking at students attending the University of South Carolina, we can see that college students are consuming diets that can negatively affect their health for a number of reasons. Eating on campus is easier and faster than preparing their own food. Students can select what they want to eat from a wide variety of sources and have their food in a matter of minutes. Unfortunately, campus dining halls do not always offer the healthiest options. For example, at the Russell House on the University of South Carolina's campus there are three different fast food restaurants represented: Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, and Chick-fil-A. Besides those, there are seven other places that serve food that is akin to fast food: Fresh Burger, Einstein Bros. Bagels, Santorini's, Ballpark Burgers, Pandini's, Mein Bowl, and Wholly Habaneros. All ten of these options are usually fast, and the students know they will like the food they receive at these

places. To add to the unhealthy food options, the main cafeteria line also serves chicken fingers and fries every Wednesday, and this is considered to be a campus tradition. There is also the Marble Slab which is open long hours so students can get ice cream and milkshakes at almost any time during the night. The other options in the Russell House are the Horseshoe Deli for sandwiches, the hotline, The Grand Market Place, Garden Toss, Planet Health, and Naturally Woodstock. However, the fast food places are generally faster, due to the pre-prepared nature of their food. The lines at the Horseshoe Deli, the salad bar, and at Woodstock can move slowly, and for students in a hurry these lines are not feasible.

Barriers to Healthy Eating

When students eat at fast food places, they do not have to wonder what food is being served; they know they can get their favorite item. The majority of the options at USC's largest and most centrally located dining hall are not healthy. Of course, not every option can be healthy, and it is up to students to eat what they want. When the fast food options are faster and more reliable, however, students are more likely to eat there.

Students at USC also do not have easy access to fruits and vegetables. When students move off campus and begin to eat at the campus dining halls less and less, they may find their selection of foods has decreased greatly. Students on a budget may not be able to afford fruits, vegetables and whole grains, or simply think these products are out of their price range. There also may not be a convenient place to buy these items. Many apartments or other off campus housing options are closer to fast food restaurants or gas stations than they are to grocery stores. It is usually quicker and easier to buy snacks and other food items there than it is to take a big trip to the grocery store.

Preparing food may not be high on a student's priority list for a number of reasons. Lack of time is the most commonly cited reason for not preparing healthy meals (Pelletier & Laska, 2012). Students are under a great deal of stress from their academic responsibilities. They may think cooking will take up too much time and thus will waste valuable time they could spend doing homework or other important activities. According to a study of students at two year and four year universities, 46.4% of students reported feeling that preparing a healthy meal would take time away from other activities (Pelletier & Laska, 2012). They are in college to get an education and ultimately find a career. Class and homework are generally their top priorities. Students who come home from a long day of classes, work, or extracurricular activities may not feel like spending a great deal of time cooking. They assume preparing a home-cooked meal will take a good deal of time and effort, and would rather just stop at the nearest fast food restaurant and grab a quick meal to go.

Finally, students may not know how to cook healthy foods. They may not have had the opportunity, or the interest, to watch their parents preparing healthy meals. If they do not learn these skills at home, where else are they going to learn to cook? For the first year at least, most students rely on the on campus food and therefore do not have to make their own. The on-campus housing in which they live may not have a convenient kitchen that is clean and useable. So, when they move off campus and have access to their own kitchen, they are unprepared to make their own meals. In a study on college students and young adults, 23% of males and 18% of females reported that inadequate cooking skills were a barrier to preparing their own food (Larson, Perry, Story, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2006). If students lack the confidence to try to make home-cooked food, then they will never get any better and will continue to rely on campus food or nearby restaurants for their meals. Students who have a limited number of cooking skills will

tire of eating the same things over and over and may start supplementing their diets with pre-prepared foods from fast food restaurants or convenience stores. Student cooking is not something that is impossible and nor does it have to take up a great deal of time, but many students need resources to help them discover ways to make their own meals in an inexpensive and timely manner (Larson, Perry, Story, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2006). Not only will this help them later in life when they do not have a dining hall to fall back on, but it will aid them nutritionally. Students need to be healthy to succeed in their classes. Even though this is so important, students often neglect their diet, and their dietary and nutritional needs fall by the wayside.

College students are a vulnerable population for a number of reasons. They are in a new environment and are setting the stage for their health for the rest of their lives. For many young adults, college is a time in their lives when they are on their own for the first time. They likely do not have experience planning their meals much less planning out healthy meals with a good balance of fruits and vegetables. According to an article published in 2016, only 5% of students eat 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day (Amuta, Crosslin, Goodman, & Barry, 2016). These habits do not improve much in adults, with 87% of adults not meeting the recommendations for daily vegetable consumption between 2007-2010 (Adults Meeting Fruit, 2015). Not only are adult responsibilities, such as cooking, new to students, but college itself is a new experience. College is very stressful with classes, work, extracurricular activities, friends, and a future career all placing demands on students. Stress can manifest itself in a variety of ways; one of these is the dietary habits of these students. About 22% of students are overweight and 12% are obese (Amuta, Crosslin, Goodman, & Barry, 2016). Eating poorly can certainly lead to obesity which in turn leads to many other health problems in a student's later years.

Obesity is a risk factor for many other chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke, sleep apnea, some cancers, and some mental illnesses (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). If students eat badly now, they will be affecting their health years down the road. Plus, the eating and cooking habits they develop now may be the ones they continue to use for the rest of their lives. It is vitally important for students to learn how to eat and cook well, and their needs in this case are being overlooked by health care professionals.

College students have been ignored or left to their own devices by healthcare professionals. They are at a transition time in their lives, and it is at this point that the decisions they make about their health will probably last them the majority of their adult lives and have direct consequences on their health (Graham, Pelletier, Neumark-Sztainer, Lust, & Laska, 2013). Thus, it is very important college students receive the knowledge and guidance they need in order to prevent the development of chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease or obesity. Student health centers seem to be aware of this need and are in the perfect position to help guide students towards a healthier lifestyle.

Resources at the University of South Carolina

The University of South Carolina has a great deal of resources to help students be aware of their health and to become healthier. Many of these options are complex or more technological. What students need most is a tool so they can help themselves. They need something they can use at their own pace and that will help them learn how to make themselves healthier. A cookbook would be a great tool. Diet is a very important component of a healthy lifestyle and a cookbook would help students to achieve a healthier diet while teaching them good cooking skills they will use for the rest of their lives. Cooking is a basic skill students will

always need, and if USC offered a cookbook, it would help to prepare it students for the post-college world in more ways than one. Many of the resources offered at USC would be enhanced with the addition of a cookbook.

What does the USC Health Center have to offer students regarding to diet and nutrition? On their website, they have listed nutrition consultations, resting metabolic rate tests, and Gamecocks Eat Well cooking classes. The nutrition consultations consist of two one-on-one session with a registered dietitian where students have the opportunity to create a nutrition plan. For full time students, this service is free, but for part time students there is a fee. For the first appointment, students must access, print off, and fill out a food record form and bring it with them to the appointment. This is a record of everything the student eats for three days, also known as a dietary recall instrument (Student Health Services, n.d.). Despite assurances on the website that dieticians will not judge students based on the foods they write down, this may still be a deterrent for students. They may not want to admit what they eat or they may lie on the form to make themselves look better. It may be too cumbersome to track all the food they eat. Also, a nutrition plan may not be what students need to help them get started becoming healthier. If a student is not confident making fresh foods or has a difficult time accessing them, a nutrition plan will not do them much good. A nutrition plan is a great first step, but it will be even more effective if paired with another resource, such as a cookbook. That way, the students can use the cookbook to help them prepare foods that follow their nutrition plan. They can use the nutrition plan to help them find new foods to cook and can then use the skills they learned from the cookbook to make preparing these items easier. These two things working in conjunction could be a great tool to improve student diets.

Resting Metabolic Rate (RMR) testing is another service offered by the USC student health center. This tool helps students determine the number of calories their bodies need to help them maintain or attain a healthy weight. By measuring RMR, a student can determine how many calories they burn during the day and from that number, the number of calories they need to consume per day. For USC students, the test costs twenty-five dollars, lasts an hour and includes a nutrition consultation (Student Health Services). While this may be a good tool to help students with weight loss, it also puts a very heavy focus on calories. What is more important in weight loss and in maintaining a healthy weight and lifestyle is the kinds of calories consumed. The evidence from a study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* showed that the types of food consumed not the number of calories is what leads to weight gain or loss. This study found that eating food like potatoes, French fries, sugar sweetened beverages, unprocessed red meats, and processed meats lead to weight gain. However, eating more healthy foods like whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and yogurt leads to less weight gain (Mozaffarian, Hao, Rimm, Willett & Hu, 2011). This study showed the kind of foods consumed had more of an effect on health than counting calories. So, a program like testing students' RMR may put an undue attention on calories. Students will be better served if they pay attention to what they eat, try to eat healthier foods, and avoid those foods that are fried or very high in sugar and fat.

Finally, the Gamecocks Eat Well cooking classes are offered each semester. These cooking classes are a great resource for students who want to learn how to cook in a hands-on setting. These classes are free, so there is no budget restriction. Students can learn useful skills such as how to prepare vegetables or how to cook meats in a classroom setting, so they can ask questions and receive feedback (Student Health Services). The only problem is that the recipes are often not ones students on a budget can repeat at home. They frequently call for very specific

ingredients or those that are expensive. These class may teach straightforward cooking skills, but they may not teach students how to modify recipes. Without recipe modifying skills, students will have a difficult time changing a recipe into something they can replicate it at home. These classes would be an even better resource when paired with a cookbook. Students could take the skills they learn in the class and apply them to their own cooking with recipes they can afford.

A cookbook can serve as a guide to help students navigate their nutritional needs through college and remain as healthy as possible. A cookbook may seem like a very specific resource for helping students be healthy, but it is an excellent one because diet is so vital in maintaining health. Students need to be watching what they eat because a poor diet can lead to chronic diseases and poor health in their later years. In fact, many chronic diseases that used to affect older adults are starting to affect more and more college-age people. If students are not careful with what they eat, they could end up living shorter, unhealthier lives, with more of their resources spent on medical bills than other pursuits.

Being able to prepare fruits and vegetables removes a barrier to eating them. Knowing how to prepare healthy meals helps student realize that making their own food does not have to be time-consuming or difficult. Home cooked meals tend to be healthier, as reported in a 2006 study, “Young adults who reported more frequent food-preparation skills used fast food less often and were more likely to meet the dietary objectives of *Healthy People 2010* for fat, calcium, fruit, vegetables, and whole grains” (Larson, Perry, Story, & Neumark-Sztainer p.2005). Other studies have shown students who eat at home are less likely to consume foods high in carbs and sugars and “similar to fast food consumption, preparing a meal at home or with vegetables and eating breakfast were inversely associated with sugar sweetened beverage

consumption” (Laska, Hearst, Lust, Lytle, & Story, 2014 p. 2140). Meals eaten at home also tend to have more fruits and vegetables when compared to fast foods or foods eaten on the run.

Chronic Diseases Affected by Diet

A healthy diet is linked to the prevention of many chronic diseases that college students can develop later in life. When students prepare foods at home and learn how to cook fruits, vegetables and whole grains, they will be consuming fewer empty calories and fewer foods high in sugar and salt, and this is “more likely to result in healthy weight, a chronic disease prevention” (Jones, Walter, Soliah, & Phifer, 2014, p. 1553). One of the top risk factors for developing and dying from a chronic disease is poor nutrition. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). “In 2011, more than one-third (36%) of adolescents and 38% of adults said they ate fruit less than once a day, while 38% of adolescents and 23% of adults said they ate vegetables less than once a day (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). These low numbers of fruit and vegetable consumption demonstrate how many people place themselves at risk for the development of a chronic disease. Some major diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, osteoporosis and obesity are all linked with poor dietary intake (World Health Organization, 2003). These chronic diseases can have major negative impacts on a person’s life and many college students are putting themselves at increased risk for these diseases via the foods they are eating.

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). According to the World Heart Federation, (2017, n.p.). While college students may seem too young to be experiencing cardiovascular problems, their diets set them up for such problems later in their lives. In a 2010 study on college students, researchers found that 29% had unhealthy cholesterol levels, 10% had

high cholesterol, and 10% had high blood pressure (Spencer, 2010). Despite their youth, students are clearly not immune to cardiovascular problems, and if issues such as these arise this early, then students are setting themselves up for more complications as they get older. In order to solve current student health problems and prevent future health issues, students need to make changes now. Since diet is one of the risk factors for developing cardiovascular disease, a few good changes to students' diets should help protect them. Eating more fruits, vegetables, nuts, fish, and whole grains is thought to reduce the risk of heart disease (World Heart Federation, 2017, n.p.). By providing the tools for students to eat healthier, colleges can not only protect a student's health in the present, but they can help ensure students live longer, healthier lives after they graduate.

Another very serious chronic disease is diabetes; this disease has links to an unhealthy diet, and foods such as sugar sweetened beverages. Scientists are not exactly sure what causes type 2 diabetes, but gaining excess weight or being overweight is thought to be one of the leading causes (Mayo Clinic, 2017). Students commonly gain weight in college, but if their weight gain continues unchecked either during or after college, they are at a higher risk for developing type 2 diabetes. Diabetes does not just mean a person cannot eat sugar or must take insulin shots; it is a very serious disease that has consequences for many parts of the body. According to an article published in the *American Journal of Health and Behavior*, "Uncontrolled blood sugar resulting from poor dietary choices is detrimental for the body, with short-term complications leading to hypoglycemia, and longstanding consequences negatively impacting several organ systems" (2016, p. 396). By not watching what they are eating, students can severely hurt their bodies and cause lasting damage. Diabetes is occurring more and more in younger populations. The previously mentioned article details projects the number of young

people diagnosed with type 2 diabetes will increase from 22,820 in 2010 to 84,131 in 2050 (Amuta, Crosslin, Goodman, & Barry, 2016). It is vitally important students start and maintain good eating habits in college, so they can help prevent the onset of diabetes. Avoiding excess consumption of sugar sweetened beverages is one way for students to lower their risk of developing diabetes. Researchers believe another way is for students to begin consuming more fruits and vegetables (Amuta, Crosslin, Goodman, & Barry, 2016). The more opportunities students have to learn how to cook fruits and vegetables, the better their health will be. Students who have access to tools and resources will have a better chance at attaining or maintaining a healthy lifestyle during their college years and beyond.

Diet has protective effects against another very serious disease: cancer. According to the Kidney Cancer Association, “diet has been estimated to be a causal factor in about 35% of all cancers” (2016, n.p.). The Western diet, typically higher in processed grains, processed flours, and sugar sweetened beverages, is significantly different than the Mediterranean diet. The latter is high in fruits, vegetables, potatoes, legumes, nuts, seafood, and olive oil and has been shown to lead to a decreased risk of developing cancer (Potentas, Witkowska, & Zujko, 2015). For college students, developing cancer may not seem like a very real risk or it may seem like something they cannot prevent. But diet has a very real effect on an individual’s risk of developing cancer and on helping to prevent the occurrence of cancers.

Breast cancer is not the only type of cancer associated with diet. It is thought to play a role in reducing the appearance of colorectal tumors and in slowing the appearance and progression of the tumors themselves (Vargas, & Thompson, 2012). Preventive dietary actions for colorectal cancer include: eating foods that are good sources of dietary fiber such as fruits, vegetables and legumes, avoiding red meat and lowering the intake of processed foods.

Another chronic disease that is affected by diet is osteoporosis. This is a disease of the bones wherein the body loses bone, does not make enough bone, or in some cases both; it can cause bones to weaken and increase the risk of broken bones from falls (National Osteoporosis Association, 2017). Most people think of osteoporosis as a disease of the older population, but a 2003 study concluded that osteoporosis is no longer limited to older adults, and therefore college age women need to be educated on prevention efforts. According to an article by Dr. Maryann Leslie and Dr. Richard St. Pierre, “The college student population represents the age group where optimal bone development is likely to occur and certain lifestyle behaviors are reinforced” (1999, p. 67). This means it is even more important to help students reinforce healthy lifestyle behaviors so they can keep from developing osteoporosis. This chronic disease is greatly affected by diet, because eating a balanced diet includes nutrients that are good for the bones and may help prevent osteoporosis. Foods such as fish, leafy greens, broccoli, peppers, oranges, strawberries, bananas, and beans are examples of items that have vitamins that help prevent bone loss (National Osteoporosis Association, 2017). Foods students should avoid include those that are high in sodium, because sodium can lead to bone loss; students should therefore lower their intake of processed or canned foods.

A final chronic disease majorly impacted by diet is obesity. Moving to college can be a cause or risk factor for obesity. When college students leave home and adjust to independent living, good dietary habits may decline and poor dietary habits tend to get worse. (Brunt & Rhee, 2008). Students are no longer relying on parents or guardians to provide food for them and are likely either eating the convenient food from the school cafeteria or preparing their own meals. If students do not have experience cooking or lack the confidence to cook, they may turn to prepared foods or meals from fast food restaurants. According to a study published in *Appetite*,

students who lived off campus consumed fewer fruits, vegetables, and other nutrient dense foods than did students who lived on campus and used the provided meal plan (Brunt & Rhee, 2008). When they start living on their own in off campus housing, their food selection becomes much more limited and predicated by their budget. The unhealthy foods students eat during their college years can lead to unhealthy weight gain and even obesity.

There are many factors that cause obesity in students. There is a lack of access to healthy foods for many students. This does not mean students are living in a food desert and have no grocery stores nearby where they can buy fresh foods. College students may live near a grocery store but there may be a convenience store or a fast food restaurant within walking distance and therefore easier to access. Comparatively it is more difficult to buy fresh foods than it is to purchase packaged foods. Some students may not have the money to buy fresh vegetables or feel that buying fresh foods will be too expensive for them. They must take into consideration both the cost of the food item and the time it takes to prepare it. This may discourage them from buying and preparing healthier foods and in turn can lead to becoming overweight or obese.

Why a Cookbook

There are so many different factors that play into health that it is difficult to find a solution that will work for everybody. The fact that USC offers a variety of options for students is great, but I think there needs to be a more general option that applies to every student. With very few exceptions, every student cooks for themselves at some point in their college career. The type of food students prepare for themselves during college can affect their health for the rest of their life. That is why I think it is so important students know how to prepare healthy foods, and know it is possible to prepare them on a budget. Having a simple cookbook available for student use would be an important step towards reaching this goal.

A cookbook could help students be healthier in general by offering students a resource to use when cooking. Armed with a cookbook, student chefs will have a tool they can use to shape their eating and shopping habits. If they do not know what to buy, a cookbook will instruct them via its recipes. Students who do not know what to do with the food they already have can use the cookbook to learn ways to prepare these foods. A cookbook can get students started cooking so they gain confidence in the kitchen. Cooking becomes less complex and intimidating than students might have imagined. Any worries they had about being able to make food or about not liking the food they made can be assuaged by a cookbook. Not only that but they can take the things they learn from one recipe and learn how to apply them to other foods. With the skills students learn from making recipes in the cookbook, they can start cooking a variety of things. Also, once they have cooking experience, making their own meals becomes less intimidating and (hopefully) more enjoyable.

A cookbook provides a reason to try cooking and eliminates excuses not to cook. A cookbook can pique a student's interest, and if the meals look good, they have an incentive to go out and try new things. Having access to a cookbook might also make grocery stores less daunting. If a student does not know what to buy or has never shopped in the fresh fruits and vegetables section of a grocery store, they might find the selection intimidating. They might be embarrassed they do not know what they are doing and find it easier to simply shop for prepacked or pre-prepared foods. But a cookbook gives them a purpose. They can walk into a grocery store and know what they are looking for. Shopping trips like these give students an introduction to what the store has to offer.

My cookbook provides a number of things beyond just recipes. It is a guide for students to make cooking less intimidating. It has pictures of the recipes and step by step instructions so

students never feel lost. I want cooking terms to be explained so each recipe is straightforward. Specific recipe components (such as minced vs. chopped garlic) are explained with pictures. That way students will know the difference and can easily use other cookbooks where these terms are not explained. The cookbook also discusses substitutions or ways to make the same recipe with slightly different ingredients. This will come in handy for when students do not have the right ingredients on hand for certain recipes. It will also start to teach them how to experiment and substitute, a skill that can save both time and money. Also by cooking more frequently, students can learn what basics to have in their pantry, so they do not always have to run to the store for ingredients. Finally, this cookbook has a handful of recipes students can make by only using a microwave in case they are still living in a dorm.

Creating the Cookbook

The cookbook itself consists of thirty-two recipes ranging from recipes for eggs to meat to smoothies to vegetables. Within each recipe, foods that can be found at the Gamecock Pantry are marked with a red apple. This will be helpful for students as they are planning out their shopping trips. There are six hot recipes that can be prepared in a microwave alone. These are denoted in the table to contents with a microwave picture, and those recipes have an estimated cook-time for microwaving. On some of the recipes there are helpful notes that give users ideas on how to edit recipes to fit their needs, ways to cook certain foods in the microwave, and other suggestions that make the recipes easier. In the back of the book there is an index that includes ways to prepare and cook various vegetables, a list of useful cooking materials, and a list of good spices to have on hand. The vegetable index has a total of fifteen different vegetables. Each vegetable has its own page with pictures and descriptions on how to cut it, peel it, remove any seeds and various ways to prepare it. There are images for each step that are there to supplement

the directions. There is a hardcopy of the cookbook located in the Gamecock Pantry so students who are using the pantry can leaf through the book before they select the foods they want. There will also be a PDF copy available on the Gamecock Pantry's website so students can have access to the cookbook at any time.

Things to Improve

Knowing what I know now, there are several other elements that I would have included in the cookbook. Ideally, I would have test cooked every recipe and included pictures for each one. I think pictures help make things clearer, and that is especially important for people who are new to cooking. Another element that could have been improved is the cooking times for each recipe. I based these estimates off how long it took me to make recipes. This time might be longer for someone who is not an experienced cook because prep work such as chopping takes longer when someone is new to cooking. There is a fine line to walk with cook times. Too long and users think it is not feasible for them, but if they are too short, the user does not feel like they can trust other prep times. Finally, I think having meal suggestions or basing the cookbook around meals would have been very helpful. Being able to prepare various healthy recipes is a good step for most students, but it can often be difficult to figure out how to make a meal out of these recipes. Having meal suggestions at the end of each recipe would have been very helpful for students. These suggestions would help them create a nutritionally balanced meal out of the recipes in the book. Elements such as these are ones I would include in another cookbook or ones I would add to this one before attempting to have it published.

Conclusion

In conclusion, diet is a vital part of health. A poor diet can be a risk factor in many severe chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, osteoporosis, and obesity. All

these diseases cannot be stopped entirely through the consumption of a healthy diet, but a healthy diet does go a long way towards preventing their development or spread. College students are a population that are often neglected when it comes to diets and health. They are living independently for the first time and are responsible for their classes, future, social life, and health. It is easy to let one of these slip. In reality, taking care of one's body takes determination and dedication. Often times, students just need to have the tools to make themselves healthy. That is why I think a cookbook can be a great tool to support students. They can gain more than just recipes from a cookbook. A cookbook can teach students many important cooking skills and can help prepare them for a lifetime of cooking for themselves. A cookbook can provide students with the motivation and confidence they need to start eating healthily. It may not solve all of their health problems; they will still need to be active and follow other health guidelines, but a simple cookbook can go a long way in helping students to achieve their optimum health.

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