



# Spoons Cooking Club

A food and nutrition program for children  
from Spoons Across America.

**What is Spoons Cooking Club:** Spoons Cooking Club is an eight-session food and nutrition literacy program for children 8 to 13 years old in summer day camps, after-school programs, and community centers. Engaging hands-on activities include opportunities for children to learn culinary skills, kitchen science, nutrition, food origins, and more!

**What activities will children participate in this program?** In each session of Spoons Cooking Club, children explore the individual ingredients in a recipe, learn about the nutritious aspects of the dish, and then prepare the recipe to share with their friends. Each one-hour session focuses upon a selected theme and recipe that encourages children to explore, prepare and taste healthy foods.

**Where can Spoons Cooking Club be implemented?** The program is designed for summer day camps, after-school programs in schools or community centers, and other education-based facilities. Programs may be taught by a teacher, instructor, camp counselor, group leader, site coordinator, or anyone responsible for working with groups of children.

**What age group is recommended for this program?** Spoons Cooking Club can be adapted to work with most age groups, although younger children will need more adult direction and support. In some cases, older children have worked with younger students after participating in their own sessions. Training and materials include suggestions for how to adapt the program for children of various ages.



**How is Spoons Cooking Club implemented?** Program sessions can be implemented according to the needs and schedule of your program. Some sites choose to teach classes once a week for 8 weeks, others implement the program monthly or bi-monthly over a longer period. The Spoons Cooking Club Curriculum Guide will provide all the information needed for sites to implement the program independently.

**What is the cost of the program and what materials are included?** The program cost is **\$350.00** which helps Spoons Across America bring our school-based programs to disadvantaged communities in NYC and across the US. All the information, lessons, and materials that your staff will need are included. (Sites provide food for lessons and paper goods). Materials include:

- **One Spoons Cooking Club Curriculum:** Implementation guide, session plans and background information for instructors, program template materials (parent letters, handouts for kids, etc.), food and supply lists, and other lesson-related materials.
- **One Food Explorer Cooking Kit:** 25 Cutting mats, 25 child-safe chef knives, 5 measuring cups, 5 measuring spoons, and 1 carrying bag.

**How does my site or organization get involved? Ready to go? Please fill out the form on our website with your information and we will contact you with the next steps for how to purchase the Spoons Cooking Club Program.**

## About Spoons Across America

**Our Mission:** Spoons Across America®, “*the recipe for healthier children*,” is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to educating children, teachers, and families about the benefits of healthy eating. We work to influence the eating habits of children through hands-on education that celebrates the connection to local farmers and the important tradition of sharing meals around the family table.

### NYC School-Based Food Literacy Programs

- 1**  **Spoons Food Explorers:** Spoons Across America's food and literacy curriculum begins in the 1st grade where children actively explore a variety of fresh, healthy foods using all their senses: sight, smell, touch, hearing, and of course taste! Children fill out their “Food Passports” as they follow a “sensory map” on their healthy food adventure.
- 2**  **Farm to Book®:** Our programs continue in the 2nd grade with Farm to Book®. This program gives children the opportunity to further explore new and unfamiliar tastes. They also learn about the source of their food – how it is produced, grown, and transported from farm to table. Children's literature is used to make these concepts accessible and fun for young children.
- 3**  **Take a Taste with Spoons:** Building upon the themes of exploration and discovery established in the younger grades, this program for 3rd graders gives children the opportunity to delve deeper into the discovery of taste, develop increased vocabulary around food and flavor, learn more specific information about nutrition and healthy choices, and make some simple recipes.
- 4**  **Spoons Recipe Days:** Children continue their exploration of food and healthy eating in Spoons Recipe Days, our program for 4th graders. Each session focuses upon a selected theme and recipe that encourages children to explore, prepare and taste healthy foods. Children use their food discovery skills and developing food curiosity, honed in our earlier programs, to explore more complex flavors, recipes, and concepts.
- 5**  **The Dinner Party Project®:** After completing 4 years of Spoons Across America's programming, 5th-grade children are ready for The Dinner Party Project®. These children are responsible for planning, preparing, and hosting a multi-course dinner for their families in the school cafeteria. In this program, children further explore taste concepts, expand their understanding of nutrition, the difference between a “diet” and a “healthy diet”, food safety, meal planning, and cooking.

### National *Spoons at Home* Programs

- 3-5**  **The Food Exploration Project: Homeschooling:** Children engage in activities about fresh ingredients and hands-on cooking experiences. They learn about nutrition and taste. They also discover how food weaves its way through daily life as it travels from the farm to the market, and to the table. Each of the nine sessions builds on the previous one and focuses on a selected theme. It includes a recipe that encourages children to explore, prepare, and taste healthier foods. In the last lesson, children use the healthy eating skills they have learned to prepare an “A Dinner Party” for their family. Sessions are presented with opportunities to learn culinary skills, kitchen science, food origins, and more. The Project is available for a small cost.
- 1-2**  **Farm to Book Storytime:** Storytime is a video series for children that uses children's literature to teach children about food from the farm to the table. Children learn about the sources of their food – how it is produced, grown, and transported from farm to table. We make these concepts accessible and fun for young children by using children's literature read by a Spoons Across America Food Educator. In each video, there are foods that we encourage children to taste and explore, and we provide activity sheets that correlate to the book. Storytime is free to join.
- 3-5**  **Food Explorers Club:** Designed to be done in the home, the Food Explorers Club is for parents who are seeking quality ways to provide their children with engaging healthy eating activities. Children engage in activities that center around fresh ingredients and hands-on cooking experiences. After signing up for this free program, parents receive an email every other week with a new activity that focuses on a selected healthy eating theme. A recipe is included that encourages children to explore, prepare, and taste healthier foods. The Club is free to join.

## **Spoons Across America's History**

***Over-processed. Mass-produced. High fructose. Superfoods. Sustainable. Locally Sourced.***

These are all words that people, today, commonly associate with food packaging and the food industry overall. They are common in our lexicon and well understood by millions of Americans.

Yet, it was not always that way. From the advent of fast food, the microwave, and TV dinners, Americans for decades became more and more disconnected from their food sources and the healing power of simply prepared, fresh ingredients.

Spoons Across America formed in 2001, born of an initial program called Days of Taste that launched in 1995, when a group of educators, chefs, and food professionals created a discovery-based curriculum for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>-grade school children. The idea was to reconnect kids to the source and value of everything they ate—from a plate of broccoli to a package of chips to a slice of meat.

"It was clear that our children were losing the connection between the land and their food, and we needed to do something about it," said educator Julia V. Jordan, Days of Taste founder.

Jordan was an early advocate of early childhood food education and as teachers, chefs, and professionals joined her cause, the group spearheaded a conversation about food and wellness that was also happening globally at the time.

The conversation centered on food as health. Healthy foods can counteract inflammation, decrease the need for medication and ultimately lead to stronger social connections and a longer life. In 1998, the American Institute of Wine & Food (AIWF) adopted the Days of Taste program, and it became a national AIWF program.

Building upon their earliest successes, Days of Taste morphed into a whole new program. With the same dedicated mission, but an expansion to reach a wider range of children, Spoons Across America officially launched in New York State in 2001.

"Children who lack proper nutrition are more susceptible to limited growth, restricted brain development, reduced immune function, and limited cognitive development," said Jordan. "A Cornell University study showed that children who have had hands-on opportunities to explore and prepare new and nutritious foods, will be more likely to eat in a healthy way."

Chefs took notice! Julia Child spoke out in favor of Spoons Across America, saying: "In this age of fast and frozen foods, we want to teach school children about real food—where it is grown and how it is produced. So, they can develop an understanding and appreciation of how good, fresh food is supposed to taste."

***Texture. Mouthfeel. Umami. Bitter. Nutritious. Wholesome.***

These are all words Americans now associate with food, whether they work in the food industry or not. It is partly due to this adventurous, engaging, early childhood education.

The holistic, nutrition-based curriculum that Spoons Across America has carried out in classrooms (mainly in NY up until now) for more than 100,000 children in 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade means they are not leaning over textbooks, but over cutting boards. The courses taught proper knife skills, how to sauté, what goes into mass-produced breads and how the wheat and corn industries work. From eschewing high-sugar soft drinks and reaching for fresh fruit and carbonated water to setting a table and entertaining loved ones around it, each aspect of a healthy, life-long positive approach to food is covered in these courses to ensure that children are empowered to make independent healthy eating choices.

Chefs have continued to support and bolster the cause and curriculum, from television personalities like Rachael Ray and Andrew Zimmern to one of the world's most esteemed fine-dining Master Chefs, Jacques Pépin—who remains the National Spokesperson for the organization.

Now, in 2021, Spoons Across America is all new once more. This year we took our programs out of the classroom and into homes and communities across America.