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Food Topic 2014. Additional material.

First, see the main Learning Guide for the Food Topic, on our downloads page.

Make your own...

Our next activity is very hands-on. You could do one or more of these, depending on your time and energy in the group. Cooking together as a group is always a great experience, so don't worry if things don't work out perfectly the first time around. Practice is the only way to perfection!

Alternative 1 - Making bread – 20 min

As a basic skill for healthy living, it is useful to learn how to make bread from simple high quality ingredients with minimised additives. This simple recipe involves only 4 ingredients and can easily be prepared in the group. You can either have people take the dough home to bake the next day – or do the activity at the beginning of an extended class and bake buns at the end, for everyone to enjoy (allow 2 hours in between for the dough to rise and then another 15 min to bake the buns).

You'll need:

- 500 g flour (wholemeal or white or mixed, organic preferably)
- 2 tsp dried yeast (check the 'use by' date)
- 2 tsp iodised salt
- 350 ml of water
- A mixing bowl
- A strong mixing spoon
- A smooth kneading surface (clean kitchen bench or a large bread board)

Instructions:

Mix flour, yeast and salt in the bowl. Add water and mix with the spoon until it just sticks together. Turn onto your kneading surface and start kneading with your clean hands. Your goal is to create a smooth, stretchy, elastic, not too sticky dough with no lumps. Kneading should take about 10 minutes for optimum texture of the bread.

You can tell that you have kneaded enough when the dough is springy and bounces back when pushed in. Form a ball and return the dough to the bowl. Smooth a little bit of cooking oil on the surface to stop the dough from drying out when rising. Cover the bowl with a plate and let it rise at least 2 hrs. This can easily be done overnight, leaving the dough on the counter – it doesn't need a warmer place if given enough time. For most busy people, it works well to make the dough in the evening and then bake the next morning.

To bake, transfer dough into a loaf tin or shape into a loaf form on a lightly oiled baking tray. Place in the COLD oven and turn to 200 degrees. Bake for 40 minutes or until the bread sounds crackly and hollow when you knock the surface.

If you are in a hurry, you can shape smaller loaves or buns (buns take about 15 minutes to bake).

Note:

Breadmaking is an art more than a science. Measurements therefore are more of a guideline, what matters is the consistency you achieve. If the dough is too sticky, add more flour – if it is too dry, add some water to a bit of flour in the bowl, mix and then knead into your dough.

Your goal with kneading is to stretch and extend the gluten molecules in your dough. Kneading is therefore a stretching motion, rather than a poking/slapping/pushing/grabbing motion. A good demonstration can be found here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dWj8oHMPFm0>.

Note:

This is a basic recipe and can be varied easily as follows:

- Add up to 8 T of seeds (flax, sunflower, pumpkin etc) – mix in AFTER kneading
- Replace some water with milk for a softer crust
- Add olive oil to make a richer loaf or for pizza dough
- Add herbs or spices
- Add some sugar for a bread with a fluffier texture / larger holes
- Add eggs, butter, sugar and milk for a French 'brioche' style result (requires longer kneading time...)

Alternative 2: Yoghurt making – 10 min inc. explanations

Yoghurt making is easy and can supply you with a healthy breakfast food at a much cheaper cost than store-bought. Most supermarket yoghurts also contain additives and lots of sugar, so you are better off with your own creation. To make 1 litre of yoghurt, you need:

- 2 Tbs of a natural, no-additive 'live' yoghurt (e.g. Zany Zeus, Biofarm, Cyclops, Clearwater)
- 1 l of milk, preferably organic
- A suitable glass jar or type 5 plastic food container to keep the milk in
- A chilly-bin or insulating blanket

Heat the milk to 80 degrees to sterilise it (which is when it starts steaming, but is not yet boiling. Use a thermometer to be safe.) Cover and let it cool to room temperature. Mix in the yoghurt. Pour into a jar, bottle or other suitable container. Your challenge now is to keep the mix warm-ish for the next 12 hours. Placing it in a chilly bin over some boiling water (place jar on an upturned bowl above the water level) is one option. The old commercial Easy-yo containers with the insulating outer that you pour boiling water into work well for this (can often be found at op shops). Or just wrap the closed container in part of an old duvet or blanket and place in the hot water cupboard.

After 8-12 hours, place in fridge.

Make sure you retain 2 Tbs of your yoghurt to start off the next batch. Only re-use if the yoghurt was good tasting and smelling: a change in flavour or smell can indicate that unwanted bacteria are gaining the upper hand!

Alternative 3 - Making mozzarella – 40 min

Cheese making is true kitchen magic. And it doesn't have to be complicated if you stick with simple cheeses like this delicious mozzarella. Try this in class – and have some red ripe tomatoes, basil and some olive oil ready for the full 'caprese' food experience afterwards!

You'll need:

- 2 l of milk, preferably organic
- Salt
- Citric acid
- Rennet
- Two nesting pots (for a water bath)
- Milk Thermometer

What to do:

To 2 l of milk, add ½ tsp salt and 1 tsp citric acid. Heat Milk to 31 degrees using a water bath, then add ½ tsp rennet dissolved in ½ tsp water (2 ml rennet to 2 ml water). Stir well and leave to set for 15 to 20 minutes.

Once curd has set, cut curd with a knife into cubes. Slowly heat to about 40 degrees, forming the curd into a ball with a slotted spoon as it gradually comes together.

In a smaller pot, heat some water to between 60 and 70 degrees. Divide the 'ball' of curd into three smaller pieces, then place them one by one into the hot water to warm.

Stretch and then roll each piece of curd into balls again to make the right mozzarella consistency.

Plunge cheese into cold iced water to cool and maintain their shape. The cheese is ready to use and enjoy immediately or may be kept in a sealed container in the fridge for (only) a few days. Is tasty in salads or as a pizza topping.

Alternative 4: Growing sprouts – 5 min

What you'll need:

- 1 large jam or Mason or Agee jar
- Sprouting seeds, e.g. mung beans, radish, mustard or other brassica seeds
- 1 square cotton cloth to fit over the mouth of the jar, or a metal mesh screw-on lid
- A rack to drain your jar on

Place your seeds or beans in the jar to a maximum of 1/6 full. Add water to cover the seeds and place your cotton square over the opening of the jar, fix with a wire or rubber band. Let stand in the water over night.

The next morning, drain the water through the cotton lid, rinse with fresh water and place the jar upside down on a shaded rack to drain the water off. Leave upside down and rinse every day with fresh water until sprouts emerge. Once beans or seeds start appearing, you can place the jar on a sunny window sill to boost chlorophyll development (the sprouts go green). Use within a few days.