



Food is a basic human need.

The **You Can Cook** handbook is our way of helping people feel good about cooking and being able to have healthy meals.

Cooking together to save time and money is a very old idea. In many cultures in the past, families worked together to make meals. It was more fun and much less work.

The idea

In today's world, many people live away from their families. Cooking together is no longer possible for them. So, in 1991, a group of people from Nanaimo, BC formed a 'community' and set out to fix the problem.

The first idea was to create 'cooking families' by bringing people together to make meals. With so much ready-made food, many people have gotten away from knowing how to cook. The next step was to find healthy, easy to follow recipes and to teach our families how to prepare these meals quickly and for less money.

The start

Local churches offered the use of their kitchens for this project. Our 'cooking families' were invited to come together once a month to make meals. The program was a big hit. As well as learning how to make meals for less money, people found new friends, had fun, and felt good about the new skills and ideas they learned.

The Society

Nanaimo Community Kitchens became a Society in 1993. By becoming a registered society, we can now raise funds to pay for food costs, child minding and leadership of the cooking groups.

And more ...

In addition to the monthly cooking groups, the Nanaimo Community Kitchens Society now works with other community agencies to help clients learn to cook.

For example, we work with *The Good Food Box* program to prepare recipes using food in the box. And we work with the *Loaves and Fishes Food Bank* to teach people how to cook using healthy and easy to make foods.

Story of You Can Cook

Food is a basic human need. We hope that this book will help you to make meals and snacks for those in your home. We have included basic cooking terms and tips, as well as easy recipes to try. We hope that it will be a well used kitchen survival guide.

This book took over a year to make. Here's how it came to be:

- A meeting of community groups concerned about food for all was called by Foodlink Nanaimo. At the meeting held in the summer of 2005, a need for a “how to cook book” was talked about.
- It was felt that the book should :
 1. be written in plain language
 2. use basic foods found in most kitchens
 3. have clear steps on how to make recipes
 4. use recipes low in cost
 5. be available to all on the internet

A proposal to fund the project was written with the help of the City of Nanaimo Social Planner. The City of Nanaimo approved the proposal and sent it to the Union of BC Municipalities Community Health Promotion Fund.

- The Nanaimo Community Kitchens Society took responsibility for the project in Dec. 2005 when funding was confirmed. Community partners were asked to assist in the work. An Advisory Committee was formed and met regularly throughout 2006.
- Partners included:
 - Literacy Nanaimo
 - Vancouver Island Health Authority; Nutrition Program, Connections Program
 - Tillicum Lelum Society
 - Foodlink Nanaimo
 - Supportive Apartment Living
 - St. Phillips By the Sea Anglican Church, Casserole Ministry

- Focus groups gave the structure to the book. Several times during the year they met to:
 - Guide what should be in the book
 - Test recipes
 - Give feedback
 - Help name the book

- Help was hired to do some of the specific tasks of the book production including coordinating of recipes and tips and typing and posting of the book to the Web.

- Literacy Nanaimo checked for plain language.

- The Web based version of the book was completed in November 2006.

- Many hands have made this resource available. Everyone can cook!

Partners in You Can Cook

Literacy Nanaimo



Literacy Nanaimo's mandate is to promote literacy for all individuals. We participated in this project by providing focus groups and plain language workshops. Literacy Nanaimo coordinates: an adult volunteer tutor program in partnership with Malaspina University-College; a program where volunteers go into elementary schools and read with children in early grades; and a computer recycling program where we provide computers to families who could not otherwise afford them.

Supportive Apartment Living

Supportive Apartment Living helps adults with developmental disabilities prepare for independent living. We support people to use their talents to connect with and contribute to their community. One connection was contributing to this important handbook.

Several clients of Supportive Apartment Living took part in the focus groups and testing of recipes for this handbook. Some people had no cooking skills, but learned by making the recipes. Crystal has fond memories of baking pies and cookies with her mom. Alfred loved to eat and was thrilled when he learned to cook Gorshki. Dan loves to cook Stroganoff. Sara created the Add What You Wish Rice Dish. Ron enjoyed learning easy recipes to try at home. Some of these clients are also clients of Literacy Nanaimo.



The Social Planner for the City of Nanaimo was involved with this project from the early stages of development. City Council passed a resolution supporting the project. A member of Nanaimo's Social Planning Advisory committee sat on the You Can Cook advisory committee.

Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Center



Participants from two programs helped in the focus groups and recipe testing. These were My Parents are Cooking and the Diabetes Prevention and Education Program.

Casserole Ministry

The Casserole Cooking Ministry takes place at St. Philip's-by-the-Sea Anglican Church in Lantzville, BC. It is a group of mainly Single Seniors who cook together as a "Community Kitchen". Participants cook casseroles to put in the church freezer. These meals are taken to people in the parish and wider community who are just out of hospital or are having trouble preparing meals for themselves. Each participant also takes home several meals for themselves. Since starting this program in Oct 2005 it has become so popular that there are 2 active groups who enjoyed testing recipes for this Handbook. Many people have used the recipes in their own homes.



Participants in the Connections program helped in focus groups and recipe testing. Connections offer weekly drop-in groups run by Vancouver Island Health Authority staff. They support young women and men through pregnancy and the early years of parenting.