Secondary (13 to 18 years old – Year 8 to 13)
Life Skills and Health Education

Healthy Cooking with Potatoes

Instructions

Materials Needed:

- Fresh potatoes
- Cooking utensils (knives, peelers, bowls, etc.)
- Baking sheet, oven, or stove
- Ingredients for healthy recipes (e.g., olive oil, herbs, vegetables, low-fat yoghurt)
- Paper towels or napkins for cleanup
- Recipe cards or handouts with instructions
- Optional: measuring cups, spoons, and nutritional information charts

Setup:

1. Prepare the cooking space with all necessary ingredients and utensils.
2. Ensure all safety precautions are in place, such as the use of child-friendly knives or supervision when using hot equipment like the oven or stove.
3. Have nutritional information available to discuss with students after cooking.

Activity Instructions:

1. **Introduction to Healthy Cooking:**
    - Start by discussing the health benefits of potatoes. Emphasise that potatoes are a great source of fibre, vitamins, and minerals (like vitamin C and potassium), especially when prepared in healthy ways.
    - Talk briefly about the nutritional differences between various cooking methods (e.g., baked vs. fried), and how making healthier choices can support overall well-being.
2. **Choosing Healthy Potato Recipes:**
    - Present several healthy recipes for students to choose from (or let them pick one together). Ideas include:
        - **Baked Fries:** Slice potatoes into thin strips, toss with olive oil and seasonings, and bake until crispy.
        - **Potato Salad with Vegetables:** Cube boiled potatoes and mix with fresh veggies (like peas, carrots, or bell peppers), a light dressing (like olive oil and lemon), and herbs.
        - **Mashed Potatoes with Herbs:** Mash boiled potatoes and mix in herbs like rosemary, garlic, or parsley, adding a small amount of low-fat yoghurt or olive oil instead of butter.
3. **Cooking Time:**
    - **For Baked Fries:**
        - Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F).
        - Wash and slice potatoes into thin strips.
        - Toss the potato strips with a small amount of olive oil and your choice of seasonings (e.g., salt, pepper, paprika, garlic powder).
        - Spread the strips on a baking sheet in a single layer and bake for about 30-40 minutes, flipping halfway through, until golden and crispy.

- **For Potato Salad:**
  - Boil the potatoes until tender, then drain and allow them to cool.
  - Chop the potatoes into bite-sized cubes and mix them with diced vegetables.
  - Add a light dressing made from olive oil, lemon juice, and a pinch of salt.
  - Stir in fresh herbs or a sprinkle of pepper for extra flavour.
- **For Mashed Potatoes:**
  - Boil potatoes until tender, then drain and mash them.
  - Add low-fat yoghurt or olive oil, along with herbs and seasonings, to enhance flavour.

4. **Encourage Student Participation:**
   - Assign students specific tasks based on their age and skill level (e.g., chopping, mixing, mashing).
   - Encourage them to experiment with different herbs and seasonings to discover new flavour combinations.
   - Discuss portion sizes and the importance of balancing carbohydrates (from potatoes) with other nutrients (like proteins and vegetables).
5. **Eating and Discussing:**
   - Once the dishes are prepared, let students enjoy the meal they've created.
   - Discuss how the recipes they made are healthier alternatives to traditional, heavier potato dishes (e.g., French fries or mashed potatoes with butter).
   - Encourage students to reflect on how they can make other meals healthier by using similar cooking techniques (e.g., roasting, steaming, or using herbs and spices instead of salt).
6. **Wrap-Up and Nutrition Reflection:**
   - After the meal, review the key nutritional benefits of potatoes and other ingredients used in the recipes.
   - Discuss the importance of making healthy food choices and how cooking from scratch can help control what goes into meals.
   - If applicable, ask students to create a list of other healthy potato-based recipes they could try at home.

Safety Note:

- Ensure safety when using knives and hot equipment. Demonstrate how to handle cooking utensils safely and supervise students at all times.

Learning Outcomes:

- **Cooking Skills:** Students will develop basic cooking skills, such as chopping, mashing, and baking.
- **Nutritional Awareness:** Students will understand how to prepare healthier versions of traditional potato dishes.
- **Healthy Eating Habits:** Students will learn how to make healthier food choices, balancing potatoes with other nutritious ingredients.
- **Creativity in Cooking:** Students will have the opportunity to experiment with seasonings, herbs, and new cooking methods, encouraging culinary creativity.

By creating healthy dishes with potatoes, students will develop practical cooking skills while also learning about nutrition and how simple changes can make meals healthier.

Secondary (13 to 18 years old – Year 8 to 13)
Life Skills and Health Education

Nutrition Label Analysis: Potato Products

Instructions

Materials Needed:

- Various potato products (e.g., chips, fries, hash browns, mashed potatoes)
- Nutrition labels from each product
- Pens, paper, or digital devices for note-taking
- A whiteboard or chart for comparison
- Calculator (optional, for students to calculate percentage differences)

Setup:

1. Gather a selection of commercially available potato products (chips, fries, hash browns, etc.). Ensure that the products vary in terms of preparation method (e.g., fried vs. baked) and flavouring.
2. Provide students with access to nutrition labels for each product or, alternatively, project them for class discussion.
3. Have a chart ready to record findings (either on a whiteboard or digitally).

Activity Instructions:

1. **Introduction to Nutrition Labels:**
    - Begin by explaining what nutrition labels are and how they provide valuable information about the content of the food we eat. Discuss the common components found on nutrition labels, such as:
        - Serving size
        - Calories
        - Total fat (including saturated fat)
        - Sodium
        - Carbohydrates (including dietary fibre and sugars)
        - Protein
        - Vitamins and minerals (e.g., vitamin C, potassium)
    - Briefly introduce how different cooking methods (baking, frying, etc.) can alter the nutrient content of food, especially processed products like potato snacks.
2. **Group Activity – Nutrition Label Comparison:**
    - Divide the students into small groups and provide each group with a set of potato product labels. If you have digital resources, students can use a tablet or computer to search for the labels.
    - Ask the groups to compare the nutrition labels for each product, focusing on key areas like:
        - Calories per serving
        - Total fat content and type (saturated vs. unsaturated)
        - Sodium (salt) content
        - Carbohydrate content and any added sugars
        - Nutrients (fibre, vitamins, etc.)
    - Each group should record their findings, paying particular attention to which products have higher or lower levels of specific nutrients.
3. **Class Discussion – Effects of Processing:**

- Once the groups have analysed the labels, bring the class together for a discussion. Highlight how processing methods, such as frying or adding preservatives, can increase calories, fat, sodium, and other additives in potato products.
- Compare healthier options (like baked fries or mashed potatoes with minimal additives) with processed versions (like potato chips or hash browns).
- Discuss the impact of added salt, fats, and preservatives on health and why it's important to make informed choices.
- If applicable, encourage students to calculate the percentage difference in calories, fat, or sodium between different products using simple arithmetic (e.g., what percentage more sodium is in fried chips compared to baked chips?).

4. **Healthy Choices Discussion:**
   - Guide students to consider healthier alternatives. For instance:
     - Choosing baked or air-fried potato products over deep-fried options
     - Opting for products with lower sodium or fat content
     - Making homemade versions of chips or fries with controlled ingredients
   - Encourage students to think about how they can make healthier potato-based snacks at home, such as using olive oil instead of butter or seasoning with herbs rather than salt.
5. **Wrap-Up – Personal Action Plan:**
   - Ask students to reflect on what they've learned and how they might apply it to their food choices in the future.
   - Provide an opportunity for them to share their insights on healthier eating and making better food choices in daily life.
   - Optionally, have students design a snack plan based on their findings, selecting healthier alternatives or proposing ways to make processed foods healthier at home.

Learning Outcomes:

- **Nutritional Literacy:** Students will understand how to read and interpret nutrition labels to make informed food choices.
- **Impact of Processing:** Students will learn how food processing methods (like frying or freezing) can change the nutritional profile of foods, particularly increasing unhealthy fats and sodium.
- **Healthy Eating:** Students will identify healthier alternatives to processed potato products and understand the importance of balancing nutrients.
- **Math Skills:** By calculating differences in nutrition data, students will practice basic mathematical skills like percentage calculations and comparisons.

This activity allows students to make connections between food processing, nutrition, and health, helping them make better food choices in their everyday lives.

Secondary (13 to 18 years old – Year 8 to 13)
Life Skills and Health Education

Planning a Potato-Based Meal

Instructions

Materials Needed:

- Paper and pens/pencils for meal planning
- Access to nutrition information (printed resources or internet for research)
- Example potato recipes for inspiration
- Plates or posters for presenting meal plans (optional)
- Food pyramid or plate models (optional for visual reference)

Setup:

1. Provide students with a brief introduction to the importance of balanced meals and the role of macronutrients (proteins, fats, and carbohydrates) in nutrition.
2. Display an example meal plan or food pyramid/plate model to help students understand how to balance food groups.
3. Distribute paper and pens/pencils for students to write down their meal plans, or provide digital tools if available.
4. Have access to example potato-based recipes (e.g., mashed potatoes, baked potatoes, potato salad, potato soup) and additional information about potato nutrition to guide the planning process.

Activity Instructions:

1. Introduce the task: Each student will plan a balanced meal where potatoes are the central ingredient.
2. Discuss the food groups (protein, carbohydrates, fats, and vegetables) and how potatoes can be part of the meal, either as a main dish or side.
3. Have students consider adding a source of protein (e.g., beans, chicken, fish, tofu), healthy fats (e.g., olive oil, avocado, nuts), and a variety of vegetables (e.g., leafy greens, carrots, bell peppers) to make the meal nutritious.
4. Students will create their meal plans, considering portion sizes and variety. They should make sure to include at least one potato-based dish, like mashed potatoes, baked potatoes, or potato wedges.
5. After planning, each student will share their meal plan with the class, explaining how their choices provide balance and nutrition.
6. Optional: As a class, discuss how different cooking methods (boiling, baking, frying, etc.) affect the nutritional value of potatoes.

Safety Note:

- If cooking or tasting is part of the activity, ensure proper food safety procedures are followed, including washing hands and avoiding cross-contamination.
- Remind students to consider food allergies when selecting ingredients, especially if anyone has a specific dietary restriction.

Secondary (13 to 18 years old – Year 8 to 13)

Life Skills and Health Education

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will learn how to plan a balanced meal, incorporating key food groups for a nutritious, well-rounded dish.
2. Students will gain a deeper understanding of the nutritional value of potatoes and how to incorporate them into a healthy diet.
3. Students will practice meal planning and portion control, understanding how to create a meal that meets dietary needs.

By the end of the activity, students should be able to design their own potato-based meal, balancing nutrients and ingredients effectively for a healthy diet.