

What is a Grow Cook Share Cooking Club?



A Grow Cook Share Cooking Club is a four session facilitated cooking program that provides participants with practical hands on experience to develop food preparation skills, confidence and the inspiration to prepare nutritious meals using seasonal produce.

Who runs the Grow Cook Share Cooking Clubs?

Community organisations such as church groups, Neighbourhood Houses, Community Houses and services that are offering community meals or emergency food relief can run a Grow Cook Share Cooking Club.

Each club is facilitated by two leaders that are either volunteers or employees of the host organisation (see role description).

The Cooking Club Leaders run their club using the Grow Cook Share Cooking Club resources. The project philosophy, background, session plans, resources, templates and recipes are all found online; <https://bendigofoodshare.org.au/growcookshare/> Some resources are broadly available and others require password access via the Cooking Club Zone.

Cooking Club leaders familiarise themselves with the online manual and use this to guide them through everything from designing, advertising, facilitating and evaluation their program.

Each organisation can recruit other volunteers who can support the Cooking Club. This might be to do jobs such as harvesting food, growing food if there is a garden onsite, setting up the room, assisting participants or advertising the group.

The Grow Cook Share Project Coordinator will work in partnership with each organisation to establish the Club.

Who attends a Grow Cook Share Cooking Club?

Anyone can attend a Cooking Club but they are predominantly for people who are experiencing barriers to accessing healthy food. This might be due to financial hardship, limited food literacy and cooking skills or lack of enjoyment around food due to social isolation.

Participants are recruited to a Cooking Club by the organisation implementing each club. Opportunity for recruitment could be when people access emergency food relief or attend a community meal. They could be referred from other services or respond to posters at the Cooking Club site. Templates for flyers and posters are available to each Cooking Club in the Cooking Club Zone section on the website.



The number of participants attending a Cooking Club will depend on how many support staff and space that each club has available but will likely be between 6-10 people. The Grow Cook Share project will assist each club in making this decision.

Who are the meals prepared for in a Grow Cook Share Cooking Club?

Participants in the club can be cooking for themselves, their family or cooking to contribute to a community meal where the Cooking Club is held.

It is one of our principles that at the end of each Cooking Club a meal will be shared by all who participate.

As each person will be preparing their own meal, it will be likely that there will always be left over to take home for another day or to be shared with their family.

Where are the Grow Cook Share Cooking Clubs held?

A suitable kitchen will be identified by each organisation. This could be a kitchen onsite, a room set up fit for purpose, or a partnership with another venue such as a local school, community centre, Rotary Club (see Grow Cook Share Kitchen Checklist for basic requirements).

When are Grow Cook Share Cooking Clubs held?

The logistics of each Cooking Club is up to the management of the organisation, the cooking club leaders and their community. The four sessions could be held as one session per week or it could run as a fortnightly program.

The best day for running your club may depend on when you offer emergency food relief or a community meal.

The people that you think will benefit from attending your club will dictate the timing of your sessions. Classes could run in the evenings and end in a shared dinner or during the morning and end in a shared lunch.

Each session is designed to go for approximately 2 hours.

Where does the food come from for each Grow Cook Share Cooking Club?

The sourcing of food will vary to suit the needs and resources of each Cooking Club. The Grow Cook Share project coordinator will assist each Cooking Club to identify their needs and the best ways of accessing food. Each Cooking Club will be encouraged to source and use fresh and seasonal produce where possible. It will be up to each Cooking Club to decide on a recipe that aligns to current seasonal produce and the availability of food from Bendigo Foodshare.



Cooking Clubs may source their food (including fresh produce and staples) through the following:

- the organisation's own food garden or a partnering food garden in close proximity
- the Salvation Army Gravel Hill Garden
- Bendigo Foodshare membership

What equipment does a Grow Cook Share Cooking Club require?

The recipes that are recommended for the Cooking Clubs are intentionally simple, easy to prepare and use minimal equipment. This is so they can be easily replicated by the participants in their own homes.

A basic equipment audit is provided to help Cooking Clubs to determine what they already have and what is required.

Good quality knives and chopping boards are worth the financial investment as they make a cooking experience more enjoyable.

What do participants learn in a Grow Cook Share Cooking Club?

Participants will learn to prepare a series of recipes and take a copy home after each class to replicate at home. Recipes will be chosen by Cooking Club leaders based around a series of cooking skills / competencies that will be provided. Participants will also learn:

- what constitutes a healthy meal and the basics of healthy eating;
- low cost meal planning;
- budgeting;
- correct food storage;
- how to minimise food waste.

What will participants get from a Cooking Club?

- Learn how to prepare healthy meals quickly and cheaply
- Increased confidence in the kitchen and learning of a crucial life skill
- Obtain a growing collection of simple, nutritious, low cost recipes that are aligned with weekly ingredients provided by FoodShare
- Social interaction and enjoyment of sharing a meal with others



- A meal to take home to share with friends and family after the Cooking Class
- Begin an enjoyable hobby

Why would an organisation choose to run a Grow Cook Share Cooking Club?

There is currently a lot of individual effort by local organisations to support families and individuals to budget more effectively and be able to provide nutritious food for their families. There are a number of cooking programs and meals programs that are in operation. All require extensive input and are often run by volunteers who are already over extending themselves.

This program aims to pool resources and create a model that can be easily replicated.

The Grow Cook Share Cooking Club resources include:

- promotion and branding logo and templates to help you to market your Cooking Club to the right audience;
- a simple process for accessing food from FoodShare that includes a variety of fresh produce and staples that can be used in your Cooking Club;
- skills based session plans;
- recipes based on food that is provided by FoodShare and is in season;
- participant handouts on a range of topics;
- evaluation support so that you can gain an understanding of whether your program is effective;
- opportunity to link in and share resources and recipes with other Grow Cook Share Cooking Clubs.