

NACUFS (2025)

Outreach & Education Program of the Year

Explore, Learn, Share - A Teaching Kitchen Brings Life to the Dining Program

Montclair State University

Introduction:

"Can you take a picture of me with my dish?? I need to show my Mom!"

You know your program is successful when it warrants a call (or Facetime) home.

The fully stocked and functional space allows for chefs and dietitians to provide intuitive and exciting weekly classes, whereas many operations struggle to host even monthly events. Our dedicated space (and lots of it) allows us to host these consistently on a weekly basis, something that would be hard to keep up without the proper resources, enthusiasm, and space!

Essay:

We were honored to meet the challenge when a professor of an inclusive postsecondary program for students with intellectual disabilities suggested TK to build student cooking skills. We built a lesson plan tailored to support independent living goals.

TK is known to lure groups of friends or athletic teams to cook together and enjoy a shared meal. This space encompasses culinary skills and community bonding, all while promoting health and wellness from our selections handpicked by the dietitians.

Wellness is also echoed and celebrated in Mindful Eating classes held by acclaimed celebrity chef, Jehangir Mehta. Students embrace the chance to focus on being in the moment and savoring food sensations with the Chef.

Not only do students and faculty benefit from learning new healthy recipes, culinary skills, and bonding with the campus community, they also can meet face to face with our dietitians, providing great exposure for our free nutrition resources and benefitting the campus community's health overall. From the spectator window, one can observe the buzz of students looking on as a friend cooks, following along with a how-to video on their phones, or enjoying a fresh, golden Belgian waffle any time of the day.

Introduction:

Vibrant promotional flyers showcase our recipe of the week, thoughtfully encompassing seasonality. When visitors drop by during a live teaching session, our dietitians and chefs create an irresistible pull, encouraging guests to dive in. Marketing interns capture and curate live footage, featuring standout summaries across all social media platforms, encouraging participation in the consistently calendared TK Thursdays. Dietitian relationships with athletic teams builds even more word of mouth for the program.

Essay:

"Woah, look what they're doing in TK this week!" We know we're hitting the right notes when we overhear that statement on a regular basis. Taking cues from online trends, global flavors and seasonality, we work to build Teaching Kitchen (TK) programming that continuously excites and inspires. If the tantalizing smells of cooking don't draw you in at the door, eye-catching digital screens and flyers greet potential participants, giving a taste of what's to come.

Our recipe of the week is circulated throughout campus community to advertise our TK via flyers, social media posts, and word of mouth. Collaborating the Dietitian Instagram account with our campus-wide dining account gains maximum exposure for the event.

Events are welcome to all in the dining hall. Several special TKs, such as our Valentine's Day Date-Night Series, operate through sign-ups. Once an event wraps up, we unleash a flood of lively photos and videos across social media channels, spotlighting skills learned and the recipes used. "TK Student Chef of the Week" posts on Instagram help capture the triumphant faces of accomplished students throughout the week. TK recipe cards are also designed for the students to follow in dorm-friendly portions.

Introduction:

Teaching Kitchen (TK) is a melting pot. Bringing together culturally diverse, time crunched, athletic, nutrition-minded, and others to whip up something to suit their preferences. A unique opportunity to reduce stress and create joy, guests appreciate full control of their ingredients and the chance to share their skills or a taste of home with friends. For less experienced or looking for trends, TK classes led by dietitians and chefs offer a great start for students sharpening their skills in the kitchen. Early morning omelets through late night chicken mac n cheese, the TK's hours flex to meet all needs.

Essay:

A study of first-year college students found cooking frequency was associated with increased fruit and vegetable consumption. And for that reason and many others

TK has become a highly sought-after destination for engaging programming and versatile campus group offerings. Whether it's students discovering the joys of cooking, professors enhancing life skills, athletes fueling up before practice, or faculty seeking team-building opportunities, TK has proven a valuable and enriching educational experience for all.

TK brings experiential learning to dining, drawing students for cooking, wellness, and mindfulness. Chefs and dietitians hold TK classes weekly, merging nutrition and culinary education. Dietitians ensure science-based talking points regarding ingredient nutritional value and seasonality. Students are able to apply real-world skills and nutrition knowledge in culinary decisions.

Food holidays and seasonality are celebrated with flair. In the fall, students cut fresh pasta for creamy Butternut Squash Alfredo sauce. Spring infuses vibrant mint into a healthier “Shamrock Smoothie”. Miso Caramel Glazed Sweet Potato, Mushroom Risotto, and French Socca Chickpea Pancakes elevate students’ palates.

Introduction:

In Pixar’s Ratatouille, Chef Gusteau said: “Anyone can cook...”-- but how can a dining hall also inspire students to explore, collaborate, and grow their skills in ways that reflect their diverse tastes and creativity?

When a renovation brought Teaching Kitchen (TK) to Montclair State, it was the beginning of a beautiful chapter of student engagement and education. Six induction burners atop gleaming counters, wells of 20+ ingredients and jars of fresh herbs spark culinary creativity; available cookbooks span global to dorm-friendly fare. The smoothie station is a highlight for creations for fun, to fuel before practice, or to share.

Essay:

Establishing TK as the educational center of the dining room, the space was thoughtfully designed featuring a spectator window with stool seating and an island of equipment calling to the culinary minded. Friends, professors and even parents come to observe dietitian and chef-led cooking classes and campus-wide culinary competitions!

TK is accessible to all who enter the dining hall . Extended hours from the early morning to late-night allow busy students on varied schedules healthy meals tailored to their preferences! Pre-prepped ingredients and chef-ready cooking equipment inspire students to produce endless culinary creations of their choosing. This is especially important for dorming students with limited access to kitchen space. Best of all, they don’t have to wash dishes!

Our dietitians use TK as a real-life skill-building tool in their robust nutrition and wellness programming. The dietitians hold TK classes weekly, where students gain evidence-based nutrition knowledge while learning about trending topics in a fun atmosphere. Posted atop the counters are dietitian-created tips and recipes designed to accommodate Gen Z tastes and skills.

Log in to nacufs.awardsplatform.com to see complete entry attachments.

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TK

<https://www.instagram.c...>

Attachment name
TK 2

<https://www.instagram.c...>



Attachment name
TK 3


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Attachment name
Student Chef of the Week

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Attachment name
Student TK testimonial

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