Setting Up a Teaching Kitchen: A Beginner’s Guide

An ongoing educational series on starting your own teaching kitchen.
INTRODUCTION

THE TEACHING KITCHEN COLLABORATIVE (TKC) is a network of thought-leading organizations using teaching kitchen facilities as catalysts of enhanced personal and public health across medical, community, school, and corporate settings.

The TKC envisions a world in which teaching kitchens are everywhere—advancing personal health and the health of the planet.

This document was created with input from TKC members and is intended as a starting point for organizations interested in setting up a teaching kitchen of their own.

Interested in the recipes and multidisciplinary curricula being implemented in teaching kitchens? TKC members have access to the expertise of a wide network of other members, working together to develop and share best practices, curricula and research. Learn more about membership at: teachingkitchens.org/become-a-member.

To learn more about the TKC and other ways to get involved, please visit: TEACHINGKITCHENS.ORG and sign up for our newsletter.
SO...WHAT EXACTLY IS A TEACHING KITCHEN?

WHAT IS A TEACHING KITCHEN?
A teaching kitchen can be described as a virtual learning laboratory for life skills. As envisioned, teaching kitchens offer education in basic cooking techniques in addition to other self-care topics like enhanced nutrition, mindfulness, physical activity, and behavioral health coaching.

While the kitchen itself is an essential component, it is only the “hardware,” while the entire teaching kitchen program can be viewed as the “software” that can be customized for different audiences.

WHY USE A TEACHING KITCHEN?
With dramatic increases in obesity, diabetes, and other lifestyle-related chronic diseases, innovative educational and experiential strategies are needed that will improve the way people eat, move, and think.

A teaching kitchen can be used for a range of goals that must be defined by each organization, but ideally all aim to enhance personal and public health through the adoption of healthier eating and lifestyle habits.

Research is currently underway to better understand the potential for teaching kitchen programs to predictably alter personal behaviors, clinical outcomes, and the costs of health care (and the maintenance of health and wellness) for a variety of populations.

TO LEARN MORE, VIEW SOME DISCUSSIONS AT: TKRESEARCHCONFERENCE.ORG

WHO SHOULD USE A TEACHING KITCHEN?
A teaching kitchen is suitable for many groups, including (but not limited to) students of all ages, e.g. K-12, college students, patients, health professionals, employees, community members, retirees, veterans, etc.

The audience and unique goals for each specific audience will inform the design of the teaching kitchen and related programming.

TO READ MORE DESCRIPTIONS OF TEACHING KITCHENS, HEAD OVER TO HARVARD’S NUTRITION SOURCE
(https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/2017/05/23/more-than-cooking-teaching-kitchens-as-learning-labs-for-life-skills/)
THE ELEMENTS OF A TEACHING KITCHEN

INTENTION
Overarching organizational goals and vision for how teaching kitchen fits in
Definition of target audiences

BUSINESS CASE & BUDGET
Business case and return on investment (ROI) calculation for leadership buy-in
Upfront & ongoing equipment investment
Variable costs per program
Recurring revenue streams

RESEARCH & IMPACT
Change in behavior you are aiming to encourage
Data collection & outcome measures

FACILITY
Type of facility & functionality
Legal & safety equipment
Food & supplies

PROGRAM
Class length & structure
Competencies & curricula
Marketing & promotions

TEAM
Hiring teachers & support staff
Training & certification
Participant outreach
BEFORE ALL ELSE, WE MUST **DEFINE** THE GOALS OF THE TEACHING KITCHEN

**WHO?**  
Who is the target audience?  
What are the issues facing this group?

**WHAT?**  
What exactly do you want to help this group change?  
What is the overall intended impact for your organization?

**HOW?**  
How can you best accomplish the intended impact?  
→ What budget do you have to work with?  
→ What is the optimal facility to accomplish goals?  
→ What program and people best suit your objectives?

**FINALLY, WHAT OTHER ELEMENTS SPECIFIC TO YOUR ORGANIZATION MATTER MOST?**
CONSIDERATIONS WHILE DESIGNING A TEACHING KITCHEN PROGRAM

1. DEFINE YOUR VISION
   How does a teaching kitchen fit into your organization’s broader goals?

2. KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE
   Who will be participating?
   How does this affect your kitchen/program design?
   Do they have any barriers?
   What foods do they have access to?
   What recipes will be culturally appropriate?

3. UNDERSTAND YOUR BUDGET AND RESOURCES
   What physical space and finances do you have to work with?
   What is your forecasted budget, including fixed and variable costs?

4. CREATE AN OVERARCHING FINANCIAL PLAN
   What is the potential revenue such as class fees, fundraising events, and insurance reimbursement?
   What ROI are you hoping to achieve?

5. SET YOUR DESIRED IMPACT
   What outcomes are you hoping to achieve?
   How will you get buy-in?
DETERMINE OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

How can the components of your teaching kitchen be repurposed from existing resources? How can you use your teaching kitchen to support other elements of your organization? Would it be helpful to form partnerships with other organizations in your community such as food banks or farms?

SELECT YOUR TEACHING ENSEMBLE
Whom should you hire? What credentials should they have? How should you train the trainers?

DEFINE YOUR FACILITY
What type of kitchen facility and functionality will work best for you, given your goals/resources?

DEFINE YOUR CURRICULUM AND PROGRAM STRATEGY
What types of classes and curricular components will best achieve your program goals?

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REMEMBER, TO GET STARTED WITH YOUR OWN TEACHING KITCHEN:

**FIRST**: Review the key steps for designing a teaching kitchen.

**THEN**: Gather information and data (budgetary, legal/regulatory) to inform decision making.

Now you’re ready to convene stakeholders and decision-makers and create your space.

Use our guides to help you tackle each element of your teaching kitchen: vision, business case & budget, research & impact, facility, program, and people.
For additional information about the TKC, please visit: www.teachingkitchens.org

TKC members will have access to more in-depth information by accessing the member portal on the TKC website.