



Who is Cooking Matters?

Cooking Matters inspires families to make healthy, affordable food choices. Our programs teach parents and caregivers of young children with limited food budgets to plan, shop for and prepare healthy meals. We offer organizations who want to implement Cooking Matters education evidence-based and practice-tested curricula, digital resources, messaging, and more. Cooking Matters is a campaign of Share Our Strength, an organization working to end hunger and poverty.

How can Cooking Matters resources be used in the food retail setting?

Grocery stores and other food retailers play a big role in the type of food caregivers of young children are purchasing for their families. As such, in our research caregivers specifically identified the food retail setting as a high interest location for receiving nutrition and food skills education. To better understand how Cooking Matters resources can reach these caregivers at the store, we contracted with the University of North Carolina Food, Fitness, and Opportunity Research Collaborative (FFORC) to use Human-Centered Design methods to surface and develop ideas from both caregivers and food retail stakeholders. The results of that work are summarized in this document



We listened to parents and caregivers...

Caregivers developed visual illustrations of their experience in the grocery store to help us better understand their wants, needs, and goals for their families' health and wellness and uncover potential interventions in food retail settings:



What's important to caregivers?

- COVID-19 safety
- Trustworthy connections in store
- Easy, low-burden experiences
- Planning and budgeting

What do caregivers want?

- Education that reduces crowding and allows for self-paced learning
- Ability to teach kids about food shopping
- To avoid education at check out, which is a high-stress time

...and then parents and caregivers identified some possible interventions.



Caregivers want low-burden, self-paced education opportunities in food retail settings that can include education for their kids and help them avoid budgeting fatigue. They identified two possible interventions based on their needs and wants. These interventions were then vetted with stakeholders from the retail setting and local education partners, and a final core set of interventions was identified that would balance the needs and desires of all:

Meal Box Intervention

- Boxes include ingredients for set-cost, family-friendly meals
- Boxes include recipes and other materials that allow caregivers to engage kids at home
- Must be offered with consistency to reduce planning and budgeting burden
- Builds loyalty with customers and helps store to utilize inventory
- Flexible format to meet store staffing and space capacity
- Local education partners may be able to support with recipe and meal ideas, direct education, technical assistance, and printing costs
- Included recipes can provide ideas for using leftovers, invitations to virtual cooking classes, etc.

Rewards Program Intervention

- Rewards provided to caregivers when purchasing items that support healthy eating and participation in educational activities
- Short- and/or long-term
- Familiar, recurring system can be tiered to offer steady rewards and incentivize sustained participation
- Supports consistent customer interactions with the store and can increase profit
- Could be integrated into a current POS system
- Local education partners may be able to support with direct education that links to the healthy foods on reward, supporting uptake, and provide healthy, kid-friendly recipes

Want to get involved?

Ready to implement some of these interventions in a food retail setting, or to learn more about what we offer that can meet your needs?



For more information, head to cookingmatters.org/community-resources

For the full report, go to bit.ly/3JiGrgB

For additional support, email cmhelp@strength.org