

Media Release

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Teenage mums put healthy options on the menu

Teenage mothers at Otumoetai College are creating their own recipe book of healthy lunchbox ideas and easy to make nutritious evening meals.

The Teen Parent Unit Te Whakatipuranga has received funding to include cooking classes as part of its weekly schedule.

“All recipes are evaluated for taste and cost, and at the end of the course we will have created our own college recipe book that the students can take home and use,” says Head Teacher of the Teen Parent Unit Robyn Merritt.

Students take it in turns each week to plan the menu and budget, and then do the shopping.

“We have help from the teacher on good ideas but generally we come up with a lot of the ideas ourselves,” says student Chandra Ram. “It’s fun because we cook in the kitchen where a lot of the mums have breaks, they are always drawn over by the smell of the cooking.”

The course gives the young mothers tips and tricks for how to make nutritious food from scratch, as well as how to include fruit and veggies in their children’s diet, something which has proven to be a challenge for them.

“I never would have thought to grate carrots into homemade hamburger patties, but they taste great. I mix carrots and spinach into most meals now!” says Claudia Kansley.

Overall the cooking classes are very popular with students saying they feel much more confident in the kitchen and are able to take what they've learnt and experiment at home.

"Being healthy doesn't have to be expensive," says Head Teacher Robyn. "We have young mums between 14 and 21 years old, with babies from under six months to toddlers of two and three years old. Being able to teach them valuable life skills early on is an important part of what we do."



Otumoetai College students Claudia Kansley (left) and Chandra Ram decided on fruit kebab sticks with a yogurt dipping sauce for their menu.

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