



Spicing Up Your Marriage: Cooking Date Night

Date Night Description

Spice up your relationship while you enjoy learning and practicing cooking techniques as a couple and then enjoy eating your creations. *Delizioso!*

Suggested Take Home Relationship Tool

Love talk starters: 275 questions to get your conversation going by Les and Leslie Parrott (2004).

2,002 romantic ideas: Special moments you can share with the one you love by Cyndi Haynes and Dale Edwards (2005).

Number of Couples

This type of date would be ideal with 8-12 couples, although more or less could be accommodated, depending on the space available.

Cost to Couples

Depending on the food prepared, the cost could be approximately \$20-30 per couple. This should cover the recipe ingredients, facilities, and refreshments. Add additional cost for relationship tools, unless covered by another funding stream. Consider partnering with Extension specialists, Food Sense instructors, etc., to provide instructors, facilities, and/or promote other Extension programming.

Materials/Preparation

- Ingredients, supplies and equipment necessary to make recipe. Some ideas for cooking theme include making salsa, marinating/grilling recipes, pizza night, etc. Look for recipes where many people can get involved in the preparation of the food that appeals to both men and women.
- Secure facilities appropriate for chosen recipe.
- Copies of chosen recipes.
- Take-home relationship enhancement tool.
- Evaluations and pens/pencils (optional).

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Activity #1 Discussion

Sometimes individuals may feel like they are so busy that they don't have time to connect with their partner. The focus of this date night is to discuss some of the ingredients to building intimacy that can lead to a feeling of greater relationship satisfaction.

Each ingredient in a recipe by itself may not seem like much; however, when combined, it can create a culinary masterpiece. When it comes to relationships, individuals may often feel life is so busy that it is challenging to give those they care about the time and attention they deserve. Similar to the ingredients in a recipe, small efforts can add up and help us feel closer to loved ones (Parrott & Parrott, 2006).

Consider sharing some of the following ways to increase intimacy in relationships (Doherty, 2001; Parrott & Parrott, 2006):

- **Saying hello and goodbye.** How individuals greet or say goodbye to loved ones sets the tone for what follows. Set aside other concerns and give full attention to greetings and farewells. Create a special phrase or way to greet each other that has special meaning in the relationship.
- **Connect through conversation.** One way to build a feeling of closeness with a partner is to share details of life with each other. When dating, individuals often know details of each other's lives; however, over time, it is common to get busy and stop discussing some of those details with each other. Knowledge of each other's lives not only helps individuals feel closer but also allows them to better support each other and cope with challenges that arise (Gottman, 1999). Establish a set time every day to check in with each other, with no discussion of money, children or chores that need to be completed. Ask open ended questions about the other partner's world and listen.
- **Make the everyday tasks count.** Help each other with making dinner, folding laundry or cleaning up the yard. These opportunities may not be as exciting as a night on the town, but they can give opportunities to talk and to lighten each other's load.
- **Unplug.** Plan a time to take a break from the electronics that often distract from conversations and opportunities to more deeply connect with each other. Turn off the TV, computer and cell phone.
- **Make the moment memorable.** Don't wait for a memorable experience to happen, make it happen! For example, stop to watch the sunset on the way home from running errands or make a silly face on each other's pancakes, just for fun. Be silly and laugh together. Take a picture of the fun to make it even more memorable.
- **Have a nightly routine.** Go to bed at the same time. If that is not possible, take the opportunity to spend a few moments together at the end of the day.
- **Share the love.** Let each other know how much he/she is cared about or appreciated. Leave a note where it will be found, send a text, or send an email.
- **Give the gift of self.** Make the effort to be fully present, mentally as well as physically; e.g., unplug from electronic gadgets and entertainment.



- **Make a date.** Having fun together is a great way for couples to remember why they are together in the first place and to increase their feelings of love for one another.

Activity #2 Cooking Instruction

Have the instructor provide the cooking demonstration and instruction. Encourage the couples to be involved in the cooking process.

As couples cook, encourage them to incorporate some of the relationships principles that were discussed. For example, have couples focus on connecting in conversation, being fully present during this time, and making the date night memorable.

Final Thoughts

Provide couples with the relationship enhancement tool evaluations (optional) and pens/pencils. Encourage couples to implement tips discussed during the date night in order to create greater intimacy in their marriage.

References

- Doherty, W. (2001). *Take back your marriage: Sticking together in a world that pulls us apart*. New York, NY: The Guildford Press.
- Gottman, J. & Silver, N. (1999). *The seven principles for making marriage work*. New York, NY. Three Rivers Press.
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- Parrott, L. & Parrott, L., (2006). *Your time starved marriage: How to stay connected at the speed of life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
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