

Inviting a chef into your school

Planning the session

Decide on how you are going to incorporate the activity into the curriculum. Be as imaginative and innovative as possible in order to have a chance of winning Kenwood cooking equipment. How you take part will depend on factors such as the age of your pupils and whether your school is situated in an urban or rural location.

Contact one of the chef associations or catering organisations we're working with and discuss your plans with them.

- Is it best for the session to be held at the school or at another venue? Ideally you will have a meeting with the chef at the venue. The chef will need to know what cooking facilities and equipment are needed and are available (when describing the facilities and equipment, be as specific as possible e.g. make and size of oven; extent of working surfaces). If the session is to take place in a room separate from the cooking facilities, how far is it from them? Is it realistic to carry food to and from them?
- Agree with the chef his precise role and responsibilities and explain how the cooking session fits in with the curriculum.
- How hands-on should the session be?
- How long will the session be? (We suggest that it should be a minimum of one and a half hours in length, allowing clearing up time.)
- How many children will be in the session? (We suggest a maximum of 30.)
- How many teachers and assistants will be in the room with the class during the session?
- Will there be an assistant available to help the chef to clear up at the end of the session?
- Who is responsible for arranging any additional equipment requirements and purchasing the food?
- Will the chef be reimbursed for his expenses, travel etc?
- Does the cooking session need to take account of any food allergies, intolerances or restrictions for faith or other reasons. (For more information see www.faithandfood.com and www.eatwell.gov.uk/healthissues/foodintolerance/foodintolerancetypes)

Follow up on this meeting by sending the chef a letter of confirmation with a timetable for the day and maybe enclose a map of how to get to the school, if appropriate.

Are there any parents that wish to be involved? They may be able to help with the lesson.

Do you need to seek parental consent for any activities planned? If the session is being held at a venue other than the school ensure that you have parental consent. Ensure that the children have been informed of appropriate behaviour when going on a school trip.

Ensure that adequate insurance is in place for the activity or for the whole trip, including travel, if the cooking session is taking place off the school premises. Enquire as to whether or not you will need to take out extra insurance.

Decide if you wish to make a criminal record check: schools have their own policies on Criminal Record Bureau checks and it is up to individual schools to decide whether to request one. The most important thing is that the chef must never be left alone with children without any adult supervision – even if there is just one child with the chef there must always be another adult there too. For advice on this go to www.crb.gov.uk

Before the session

Create a sense of occasion by promoting the chef and the session in the run up to the event. If the chef has written a book or works in a local restaurant show the children copies of the book or menu.

Consider inviting your local media to cover the event.

Taking part in British Food Fortnight is a good opportunity to gain some local publicity for your school. Many schools taking part in previous years have been featured in their local papers and some have even been featured on television. Media coverage can be a good way of thanking teachers, parents and children for their involvement. All the information you need to help you gain some local publicity – including sample news

releases and a full list of media contacts in each region –

is available on: www.britishfoodfortnight.co.uk > Teacher Zone

Before the session begins, make sure that all children are suitably attired, have washed their hands and are ready on time. What the children wear during the session will obviously depend on how hands-on the session is to be and it is worth giving clothing some thought beforehand: chefs hats and aprons are ideal but try to avoid aprons that are covered in paint or glue! Maybe children could bring an extra top into school? And think about rolling sleeves up before they start so they do not get their cuffs covered in food!

Make sure that the room and equipment is clean: wipe tables before using them and consider putting down a tablecloth – if a paper tablecloth is used children can draw pictures on it of the food they have cooked and use these to form a display.

Offer the chef a drink and show him the staff room and cloakroom when he arrives. If the chef is spending a substantial amount of time at the school, make sure that you are available to host him – swap your playground duty with someone else if necessary. And remember to make suitable lunch arrangements for the chef: some will be happy to eat with the staff and/or children but others may prefer to have some 'time out'.

"If you give children cooking skills, then they can make the choice of how they decide to eat in later life."

Lesley Batterham, Birch Primary School, Colchester

During the session

Give the chef an opportunity to introduce himself and engage with him and the session. It gives the wrong message to the children if you use the time marking books and catching up on other work.

Allocate enough time for the chef and class to evaluate the session, taste the food, if appropriate, and hold a question and answer session.

Engage the whole school in the chef's visit. If the chef is giving a demonstration to one class, maybe he could be persuaded to present a prize to another class who has, perhaps, held a British Food Fortnight poster competition? Perhaps the chef has a book that he could sign and offer as a prize? Make sure that you agree this with the chef beforehand!

After the session

Find an appropriate way in which to follow up on the lessons learnt in the session. Encourage children to talk about the session – about what they liked or did not like, what they learnt about the importance of a balanced diet and a good lifestyle. Also encourage them to talk about these things with their parents and consider sending the children home with recipes for a family meal that they would cook together using in-season produce.

Write and thank the chef for his time and expertise. You could enclose some photographs of the day. Perhaps the children could write reflecting on what they learnt from the day?

