



IMPACT REPORT

DISTRICT 2 4-H GRILLING GAMES

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INSPIRATION

During the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown, I began watching “Pitmasters,” a reality television series which follows cooks as they compete in barbecue cooking competitions. I felt this would be a good project to offer 4-H members, especially during a time when restaurants were closed, and families were having to prepare meals at home.

PROGRAM PLANNING

A task force was created to plan, implement, and evaluate the grilling competition. The first charge was to write contest rules and scoresheets and then create project goals. Goals were to:

- Implement safe food handling practices.
- Observe and demonstrate basic rules of kitchen safety.
- Select appropriate seasonings.
- Identify nutrients in pork, beef, and bell peppers.
- Operate a grill correctly.
- Differentiate between various grills and cleaning methods.

To help purchase awards and decrease registration costs for participants, the task force applied for a Texas Farm Bureau Clover Cash Grant. Since there were COVID-19 restrictions in place related to gatherings, the task force chose to utilize Facebook to promote and educate. To expand my knowledge, I attended a one-day grilling school conducted by Junior Urias, a “Pitmaster” champion. I spoke with Junior after the grilling school and he provided several tips and tricks for conducting the contest.

PARTICIPANT EDUCATION

Forty-eight posts were made in the “District 2 4-H Grilling Games” Facebook group. Posts included short videos and fact sheets. Education partners included: Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Path to the Plate; Texas Pork Producers; Better Living for Texans, Lubbock County; Texas Tech University Meat Science Department; The Outdoor Chef, Lubbock, Texas; Texas Department of Agriculture; and Lamb County 4-H members. Currently, there are 127 members of the Facebook group. There was an average of 70 views on each resource.

SHOWCASE OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

For the inaugural grilling games, 33 4-H members entered representing eight counties in District 2. We had ten seniors (grades 9-12), twelve intermediates (grades 6-8) and eleven juniors (grades 3-5). Upon arrival, all competitors built their fires on a variety of grills, with parental supervision. They were provided a pork chop, steak and/or two bell peppers. For each category, competitors were given 45 minutes to season, cook, garnish their boxes, and submit for judging. Each age group and category were blind judged by three volunteers.

OBSERVATIONS

During the showcase, an Extension employee went live in the District 2 4-H Grilling Games Facebook Group. Knowledge and skills observed were: use of thermometers to check meat temperatures; correct use of knives and cutting boards; covers being placed on knives; use of disinfecting wipes to control cross contamination; placing foods on ice to keep at appropriate temperatures; 4-H members grilling as parents were simply observing; fire management; and wearing gloves.

SPONSORS/PARTNERS

Better Living for Texans, Lubbock County- educational videos

Lubbock County- provided facility at no cost

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, District 2 County Extension Agents and 4-H Specialist- provided support on showcase day

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Path to the Plate- aprons for volunteers

Texas Farm Bureau- \$1,500 grant

Texas Beef Council- thermometers, aprons, and educational pamphlets

Texas Pork Producers- caps, seasonings, educational pieces

Texas Tech University Animal Science Department students- served as judges

Texas Tech University Meat Science Department- one educational video

The Outdoor Chef- four educational videos

FEEDBACK

Every competitor completed a Google Form to provide input for data and quotes.

How many times did you practice for Grilling Games?

33% 7 + times, 5% 5-6 times, 23% 3-4 times, 25% 1-2 times, 14% none

Did you practice...? 54% with an adult, 33% with an adult and by themselves

To help you prepare for Grilling Games, what resources did you use?

60% combination of the Facebook group and my own resources, 17% resources from the Facebook group, 16% my own resources, 7% didn't use any

Did you learn more about food safety while grilling? 86% yes, 14% no

Once you prepared your practice items, did your family incorporate those items into family mealtime? 82% always, 9% sometimes, 9% never

Will you continue to grill at home? 94% yes, 6% maybe

QUOTES

"My experience at the Grilling Games was awesome. Being a first-time griller was hard, but with practice and patience, it became easier. I loved to be able to go to the Grilling Games and show off my skills. I can't wait until next year. I would recommend Grilling Games to all ages 8 and up." Ava R, 8 years old.

"Yes, my child was able to learn a new skill and help with family meals. She truly enjoyed being able to cook a steak. She is excited about learning to cook new things she hasn't before."

"I love that this was an event for our dads to be more involved in. Our family will be grilling much more often now. Thank you for this fun event and all the work and planning that went into it. I really enjoyed judging and getting to see how hard the kids worked."

"This was so much fun and practical! Great way for dads to be involved! This has increased his confidence; skills like problem solving, following the steps."

"Grilling Games engaged a completely new audience of parents. It provided family bonding time through grilling at home." Caitlin F, County Extension Agent

CONCLUSIONS

The inaugural Grilling Games accomplished all project goals, provided family bonding time and parental support, with a focus on dads, gave opportunities for 4-H members to take charge of the project and 4-H members parents, and agents are excited for next year, with many of those volunteering for next year's event.

FUTURE PLANS

The Second Annual District 2 4-H Grilling Games will be held in October. The Task Force is providing a one-day grilling school. The categories for entry include hamburger, chicken, pork and corn. Donors have been secured for two of the categories. For more information, contact Robert Scott at 806.775.1740.

