

RELEVANCE

Foodborne illnesses are a public health burden and contribute a significant amount to the cost of health care each year. Foodborne illnesses are preventable and typically underreported. Many cases go unreported due to people not seeking medical care for mild cases. A small percentage of foodborne illnesses are the result of identified foodborne outbreaks. These illnesses certainly pose a public health risk, but can present certain populations with many challenges.

- **Children under 5 years old** have the highest incidence of lab-confirmed infections from some foodborne pathogens.
- **Pregnant women, adults over 65 years old and those with compromised immune systems** are at higher risk of hospitalizations and death from foodborne illnesses.

The **Texas Health and Safety Code, Texas Food Establishment Rules** states that food establishments handling, preparing, or serving exposed time/temperature control for safety foods, are required to have a **certified food manager** on staff at all times. These rules also state that **all food employees** should complete an accredited food handlers program within 60 days of employment. In many cases, well-trained food handlers are more valuable employees.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Food Protection Management program was developed to meet the need for quality food safety education in Texas retail food establishments. Our hands-on *Certified Food Managers course* equips employees with the latest in food safety principles and practices, and prepares them for the National Certified Food Manager's Exam. The 2-hour *food handler program* is accredited by the Department of State Health Services, and trains front-line food service workers on the basic principles of food safety. The *Cooking Up A Cottage Food Business* one-shot program discusses the Texas Cottage Food Law and Cottage Food Business basics.

RESPONSE

Family and Community Health Committees and **residents across District 2** have identified the need for food safety education programs. An agent team of *Family and Community Health Agents from Lubbock, Hockley, Floyd, Hale and Lamb Counties* and *Health Agent from Castro, Hale and Lamb counties* joined together to offer Food Managers Courses across District 2. We were able to offer **four food managers courses** in the year 2023. The agent team hosted **one Cooking Up a Cottage Food Business class** in Lubbock County (as requested by community members). Individual agents were also able to offer **food handlers courses in their home counties** as shown in the results section.

Target Audience

- These programs targeted potential Food Managers, Food Service Workers and Cottage Food Business Owners.

Partnerships & Collaborators

Certified Food Manager's Course

- Lubbock Restaurant Association
- Texas DSHS Public Sanitation & Retail Food Safety Supervisor
- Burger King Regional Manager

Food Handlers Course - Lubbock

- South Plains College Biology Dept.
- Plainview High School
- Cottage Food program participants
- Wild S Eats restaurant

VALUE STATEMENT

Food Safety Education

Both those who work in food-service establishments and those who simply cook in their own kitchens benefit from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension's food-safety education programs. The resulting improvement in safe food handling benefits consumers by helping prevent food-borne illnesses and the public health care costs they cause.

1 IN 6

AMERICANS

get sick from a foodborne diseases each year in the United States

31

known pathogens that can cause foodborne illness

\$15.6 BILLION

estimated cost of foodborne illness each year in the United States



RESPONSE EXAMPLE

Certified Food Managers

Using the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension "Food Safety: It's Our Business" course book, handouts and curriculum, the District 2 agent team was able to offer **four in-person Certified Food Manager courses**. This course is designed to be delivered using a team-teaching approach and utilizes *handouts, videos, guest speakers, PowerPoint presentations and a printed course book*.

The Certified Food Manager course consists of **two days of intense education and training**. Participants also complete the National Restaurant Association **ServSafe Exam** at the end of the second class day. Once a participant passes the ServSafe exam, their certification is valid for five years.

Food Handlers

Utilizing the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Food Handlers curriculum, agents are able to offer education and training to food service workers in their counties.

The food handlers curriculum is a **two-hour training course**, designed for in-person delivery, but can be completed online too. The course uses *PowerPoint presentations, handouts and real-life examples* to teach the importance of safe food handling procedures. Upon completion of the Food Handlers course, the participant's food handlers card is valid for two years.

Cooking Up a Cottage Food Business

Utilizing the presentation and handouts developed by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Food Safety Department the District 2 agent team was able to offer a **3-hour course** in Lubbock County. This course provided education related to **Texas Cottage Food Law** - what can and cannot be sold, packaging requirements, recipe requirements and Cottage Food business basics. *Food Handler Certification* was also offered to these course participants. The DSHS Sanitarian was guest speaker and available for question-and-answer session with the participants.

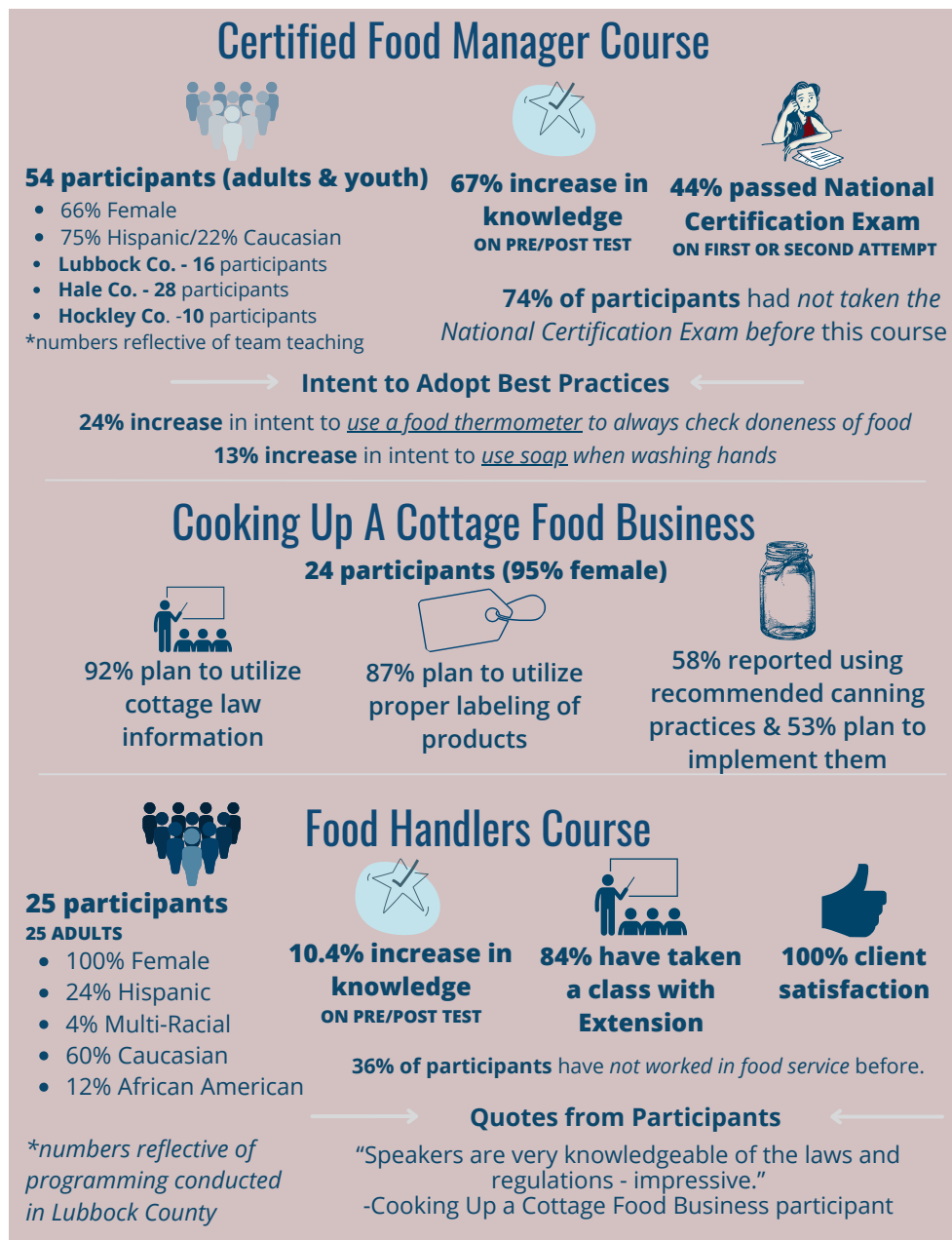


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EVALUATION STRATEGY

- The **Certified Food Managers course** offers a **pre/post test** to evaluate the amount of knowledge gained and intent to adopt best practices. **Passing the ServSafe Exam** also demonstrates knowledge gained.
- The **Food Handlers course** is evaluated using a **pre/post survey** to measure the amount of knowledge gained.
- **Cooking Up a Cottage Food Business** is evaluated using a **post-survey** to measure participant intention to use best practices under Cottage Food Law.

RESULTS



FUTURE PROGRAMMING

I will continue to offer Food Handler trainings upon request. We will offer another Cottage Food Training in the Spring of 2024. Our District 2 Food Safety Agent Team will continue to offer Certified Food Manager trainings across the district in 2024 as well.