



"No-Fuss Food: Easy Cooking for All"

A 20 Ingredient, 20 Meal, Word-Free Cookbook

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PROJECT SUMMARY

The creation of a cookbook that will provide 20 meals ideas utilizing 20 low-budget ingredients that will be able to be accessed by families that have limited reading literacy, limited financial resources and limited kitchen space.

INTRODUCTION

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately 1 in 9 individuals in North Carolina struggled with food insecurity.¹ This number increased during the pandemic as the number of people relying on SNAP benefits rose by 29%.¹ Approximately 15% of adults in North Carolina have below basic literacy skills, which impacts health literacy, communication in society, and the ability to maintain a job.² These factors contribute to food insecurity, and along with a lack of education on meal preparation for a family, can increase financial burdens by encouraging reliance on fast food or premade meals rather than creating low-budget meals in low-resource kitchens.³ This cookbook will serve as a teaching tool to educate individuals on utilizing the same 20 inexpensive ingredients to create meals that can feed a family of four in a financially responsible way. Currently, cookbooks designed for low-income and low-literacy communities without written instructions do not exist.³

MATERIALS & METHODS

Grains and Starches: Penne Pasta, Rice, Oats, Tortillas, Potatoes

Vegetables: Canned Beans, Canned Corn, Canned Peas, Canned Tomatoes, Canned Collards, Canned Carrots

Seasonings and Flavorings: Soy Sauce, Total Seasoning, Texas Pete, Bouillon cubes, Jam, Salsa

Protein: Rotisserie chicken, Eggs, Peanut butter

TOTAL COST: **\$43.68** (Walmart, April 2025)

RESULTS

Following the selection of 20 ingredients based on their versatility, cost-effectiveness, and accessibility, a total of 20 recipes were developed to provide balanced breakfast, lunch, and dinner options for families of four. The cookbook comprises the following recipes:

- Peanut Butter & Jam Oatmeal
- Potato and Egg Breakfast Burrito
- Sweet Potato Breakfast Bowl
- Egg & Potato Hash
- Savory Oat Cakes with Salsa
- Southwest Bean Burritos
- Vegetable Penne Pasta
- Chicken and Vegetable Soup
- Chicken & Veggie Stir-Fry
- Rice and Beans Burrito Bowl

Chicken and Vegetable Soup



Vegetable Penne Pasta



DISCUSSION

This cookbook acknowledges that many individuals in Pitt County and other low-income communities may face significant barriers to meal preparation and food security, including limited access to reliable transportation, clean water, electricity, and stable housing—resources that are foundational to safe and consistent cooking practices.

The intended distribution method for this cookbook is through free health clinics across Pitt County, accessible via QR code. However, this approach also assumes a baseline level of digital literacy and access to internet-enabled mobile devices, which may not be universal.

In the absence of these critical resources, even the most well-meaning efforts to promote healthier and more affordable eating habits may fall short, as individuals struggle to access or safely prepare nutritious meals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCES

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