

Library Programming, or If You Feed Them, They Will Come

Creating programmes around food is a good way to bring young adults into the library, especially if you can offer them something new or different. The presence of food can draw teens in to Teen Advisory Board meetings, book clubs, coffeehouses or other programs. Because of their growing bodies, teens are usually hungry. Food also presents an opportunity to socialize with other teenagers and relax. In addition to having food present at events and programs, programs have been developed that feature food as the main attraction. Many of these food centred programs involved two of teens' favourite foods: pizza and chocolate (chocolate-centred programs are especially popular during Valentine's Day and Easter). In addition to simply feeding the teens and providing opportunities for fun and socialization, teens can also discuss books, learn how to cook, and learn about different cultures. Here are a few examples of programs that various libraries have developed that are sure to draw teens into your library.

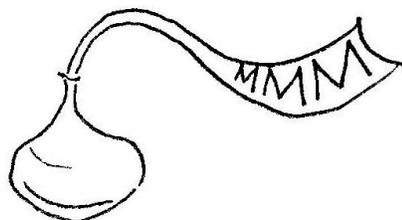
Chocolate and Pizza

- "A Piece of the Pie" – The Leesburg Public Library in Florida sponsored a Pizza taste-off where the first fifty teens to show up to the event were selected to be pizza "taste testers", judging pizza samples from local pizza parlours. The testing experience also included a chance to try out the library's *Dance Dance*

Revolution game.

www.lakeline.lib.fl.us/news_and_events/newsdetail.aspx?IDNewsEvents=169

- "Chocolate Royale" – This event was organized by the Lane Library YA Department in Hamilton, Ohio and took place near Valentine's Day. In addition to chocolate taste testing, it also provided an opportunity for teens to discuss teen romance books. lanepl.org/teens@ham.htm
- "Chocolate Making Just in Time for the Holidays" – This program was organized by the Lynbrook Public Library in New York and was a chocolate making workshop led by a professional chocolatier, presumably in preparation for Easter. www.nassaulibrary.org/lynbrook/teens.htm
- "Chocolate Festival" – Wayne Public Library in New Jersey organized a festival which included making ice cream sundaes, "Chocolate BINGO" (where chocolate candies or Hershey's Kisses serve as bingo markers), Chocolate Fondue and more. www.waynepubliclibrary.org/teens/teen_stuff.html



Other Food-related Programs

- “Food Fear Factor” - North Liberty Community Library in Iowa as well as several other libraries (Bastrop Public Library in Texas, Lansing Library in Illinois), designed a food eating competition of items such as whole raw oysters, clam milk shake (a blend of ice cream and minced clams) and chocolate covered crickets and ants. The teens could choose to just watch or participate and they could choose at any time not to participate any more. The prize was a basket of snacks and movie passes. These libraries seem to be taking advantage of the popularity of TV reality programs like Fear Factor to draw in teens. I would personally be concerned about the reaction of the parents since the librarian mentioned that several teens almost threw up afterwards. However, the extreme events aspect and the opportunities for hilarity and excitement would certainly make this a popular event. I would just caution any teen librarian who tries this to keep a close eye on the participants and give them an easy out if they no longer want to continue in the contest.

midhudson.org/program/ideas/

[Fear Factor Program.htm](#)

- Eat it Up! Cuisines of the World Food Competition – The Texas State Library suggested a program where teens are invited to cook and bring in their favourite dish from their family’s culture. They can also bring in the recipe and write a little blurb about the

family history of the dish. As well as providing teens delicious things to eat, this program also allows them to learn about different cultures and cuisines. At the end of the program, a simple recipe book can be made from the different recipes and placed in the library. www.tsl.state.tx.us/ld/projects/trc/2002/manual/ya/programfive.html

- Iron Chef – This program from Ocean County Library in New Jersey takes advantage of the popularity of the Food Network’s *Iron Chef* TV show where teams of chefs prepare dishes from a secret ingredient within an hour. As long as there are not high expectations and the secret ingredient is relatively simple, this could be a fun program that would allow teens to work together and interact. Your teens could also surprise you and come up with culinary masterpieces.

www.oceancountylibrary.org/Teens/TEvents.htm

