

Tis the season....for choice

We underestimate the value of choice. Choice empowers individuals and gives every person a sense of independence and dignity. The ability to choose is an important part of physical and mental health.

Healthy eating and physical activity have traditionally been considered an individual lifestyle choice. Unfortunately, for those living on low income, choice doesn't exist. When living in poverty, after paying for housing and transportation, there's very little money left in the budget to buy food. This isn't because of poor budgeting or lack of skills to

prepare meals at home. It's simply that people cannot afford the cost of living on minimum wage jobs, precarious employment or inadequate social assistance.

Most of us assume food charity fills the gap and stops hunger in our communities. While food charity is crucial as an emergency response, people who use food banks and community meals are often still going full days without eating.

Without adequate food access, physical and mental health is compromised. The most recent

data in York Region (2016) shows that more than 24,700 households are food insecure. This equates to tens of thousands of people in York Region.

We need to make sure people have enough money in their pockets to buy food.

To give people the power of choice over what goes into their baskets and bellies, this holiday season York Region Food Network has launched the Gift of Choice Campaign to buy grocery cards to allow people to make their own food purchases.

Give the Gift of Choice this Holiday Season and Create Change!

This giving season, please support our Gift of Choice campaign and take the extra step to show you care about everyone in our community by telling our politicians to address food insecurity. While we give people a fresh choice with grocery cards, this will not solve food insecurity. You can do this by signing a letter to our federal leaders at:

https://www.odph.ca/what-can-you-do#form_letter_final

We wish you happiness and joy this holiday season.

Peas and love.
Joan Stonehocker,
Executive Director



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Chicken Vegetable and Chickpea Skillet Meal

Wondering what to make for dinner? Look no further than the leftovers in your fridge! #Loveyourleftovers

Prep Time: 10 mins

Total Time: 30 mins

Serves: 6

Directions:

1. Heat a deep skillet over medium heat. Add olive oil and saute the onion and garlic until soft and translucent, about 5 minutes.
2. Add mushrooms to the pan and saute for 5 minutes more, until they soften and begin to brown.
3. Stir in paprika, oregano and cumin, to the onion mushroom mixture. Then add the tomatoes and continue to stir frequently until the tomatoes begin to break down and become saucy, about 5 minutes more. Add the broth. Allow to simmer for another 5 minutes.
4. Stir in chicken, chickpeas and broccoli florets. Cover the skillet with a lid and allow to simmer for about 10 minutes, until liquid reduces by half. Add the kale and stir until it wilts. Season with salt and black pepper as needed.
5. Serve over a bed of cooked quinoa or rice and crumble some feta cheese on top.

Ingredients:

3 cups	Cooked quinoa or Long grain rice
2 cups	Cooked chicken, pulled off of the bone
2 cups	Chickpeas, drained and rinsed
1½ cups	Vegetable Broth
1 cup	Kale, shredded
1 cup	Mushrooms, sliced
1 cup	Cooked broccoli, cut into small florets
2	Roma tomatoes, diced
½ cup	Onion, small diced
2 cloves	Garlic, minced
1 tsp	Oregano, dried
1 tsp	Cumin, ground
2 tsp	Paprika
2 tbsp	Olive oil
½ cup	Feta, crumbled (optional)
Salt and black pepper to taste	

Chef Maxine Knight, RHN, Culinary Program Director

2019 Community Garden Recap



After an incredible season, our Community Gardens have been put to bed for the winter. With funding from United Way Greater Toronto, we were able to maintain and support 5 community gardens within York Region.

Our London & Main Community Garden in Newmarket

created opportunities for high school volunteers to learn gardening skills, a site visit from the Maple Leaf Beaver Scouts, weekly visits from a special education class at Dr. J.M. Denison Secondary School and a monthly Pop-Up Art Hive.

The Mulock Community Garden in Newmarket provides plots for 106 gardeners and community organizations such as Rose of Sharon, Community Living and the 108 Health Promotion Association for Seniors. Gardeners generously donated their produce each week to the nearby Food Pantry at Tom Taylor Place. Talk about keeping it local!

Our Aurora Community Garden has 55 plots and is the site of our 3 bin compost system - a closed loop system where food scraps from our kitchen programs are added to the bins - for gardeners to use for their plots. Some gardeners generously donate their produce to the Aurora Food Pantry and to our kitchen programs.

The Growing to Give Community Garden, located on the site of Vaughan Fire Station 7-1, has been an incredible source of donated vegetables for various organizations, families and individuals in the community. In the 2019 season, the gardeners harvested and donated a total of 287.9 kg of food, reaching 55 individuals/families and 9 organizations, including Krasman Centre, Loft Community Services and the Out of the Cold Program.

The Vaughan City Hall Community Garden volunteers are mostly seniors from the Maple Glen Seniors Residence. One gardener, Jerlena, often shares about how the garden is her happy place where she can get out of her apartment to spend time with friends.

Macqui, another gardener, tells us he credits the garden for helping him get through a stroke he suffered last year. His wife, Flor, kept him connected to the garden by taking photos to show him while he was in the hospital. We are happy to share that Macqui has had a full recovery and returned to being one of our most dedicated gardeners! He often refers to the garden as the "Farm-acy" and says that the garden provides medicine in the form of community, connectedness and healthy foods.

Community gardens touch the lives of so many people and create opportunities for gardeners to build connections, share with the community and put freshly grown food on their dinner tables. We are already looking forward to Spring 2020 when our gardens start to awaken again!

Jessica Tong, Urban Agriculture Coordinator

Community Cooks for the Community




Piloted in 2016 with an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant and currently funded by The Regional Municipality of York, Community Cooks is about building community by cooking in community to serve the community.

Every week at York Region Food Network, participants come together to create seasonal menus that highlight our local produce and celebrate cultural diversity found throughout York Region. Participants learn about kitchen safety, food handling, basic cooking skills, preparation and techniques in a fun kitchen environment. As well as enjoying a meal with each other, food gets portioned out into ready-to-eat meals which are then shared .

It is always so incredible to hear comments from participants whose daily lives have been impacted by the program. Karl, a regular participant, has recently shared how delighted he is to be a part of the program.

Karl's wife recently passed away and he didn't know how to cook because his wife did the cooking. Karl was willing to learn to cook instead of relying on his son and the doggy bag that would be waiting for him when he visited his grandkids each week. Attending Community Cooks helped Karl gain confidence in the kitchen and he can now cook 5 different meals with salads, and he is happy to say



presents

WinterFresh

8th Annual
Trivia Challenge


Friday, January 31st, 2020
At 6:30 pm
Doors open at 6:00 pm
Cardinal Golf Club
2740 Davis Dr W, King City

An evening of community gathering, delicious food, fun and entertaining trivia to raise funds for awareness and food programs in our communities.

With QuizMaster
John Taylor
Mayor of Newmarket

Tickets - \$60 per person
Includes 3-course dinner (Cash bar)

For tickets contact Kim Arseneault
kima@yrfn.ca or 905-841-3101 x201 or online at
<https://winterfresh-2020.eventbrite.ca>



that he is no longer relying on doggy bags from his son! Such a proud moment to hear how impactful Community Cooks has been for Karl!

Would you like to be a part of this program? Weekly registration is required to participate and no previous experience is necessary. If interested, you can register by contacting Chantal McCallum, Community Cooks Coordinator at chantalm@yrfn.ca or by phone at 905 841-3101, Ext 205

Chantal McCallum
Community Cooks Coordinator

SEEDY SATURDAY

SAVE THE DATE

SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 2020

YRFN has lending libraries!

Lots of people use public lending libraries for books and movies. Everyone understands the principle; borrow an item for a short while, then return it in good condition so that others can do the same.

We have a lot of cooking/diet/food/health/gardening books in our YRFN lending library but we also have a whole lot more! We have big and bulky kitchen items that you don't need every day. They are mostly seasonal and, with a big season coming up, you might find something that could come in handy!

It is easy to access the YRFN library of things, just ask any member of staff for the item you want, then, when you have it, sign it out in the blue binder (library checkout).

In Spring the busiest part of our library is the SEED LIBRARY, it works in a similar way "borrow" some seeds, plant them, then at season's end, bring some seeds back!

David Lightwood
Good Food Hub Coordinator

Our Lending Library Includes:

- Home canning starter kits
- 16 quart size roaster oven
- Food slicer
- Food dehydrator
- Electric chafing pans
- Cookie oven
- Slow Cookers
- Popcorn popper (small domestic)

Many of the items in our library were donated. If you have an item you no longer need why not consider donating to YRFN so that others may enjoy it?

Thank you to our funders



Join York Region Food Network's Fundraising Campaign

I support YRFN's work to improve access to affordable, nutritious food for all people of York Region.

I have enclosed my donation of: \$50 \$100 \$250 Other

Please make cheques payable to York Region Food Network.

YRFN will issue a charitable tax receipt for all donations over \$25. Registration 87044 7315 RR0001

Name: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____

To make monthly donations or to donate by credit card, visit our website at www.yrfn.ca and click on the link to CanadaHelps.org, a secure website where you can make a tax deductible credit card donation to YRFN.

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