



One Year In: How the OFS Teaching Kitchen is Transforming Skills, Confidence, and Community

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Nutrition Education at the Heart of Our Mission

For Operation Food Search, nutrition education is one of the pillars of our work, supporting our mission to create a future free from hunger by empowering individuals and families to prepare nutritious meals on a budget. It's more than teaching recipes; it's giving people the practical tools they need to stretch their resources, try new ingredients, and feel confident in the kitchen.

A Program Built to Share

The OFS Teaching Kitchen was created with these goals in mind. It launched one year ago with a "Make a Dish, Make a Difference" model: every class purchased provides an additional free class to nonprofit partner organizations

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and the communities they serve. This structure ensures that corporate or sponsored classes directly improve access for families, new moms, pantry partners, and others who benefit from free programming designed to reduce food insecurity.

Simple, Budget-Friendly and Fun

Regardless of who attends, the emphasis is on simplicity and fun. Lessons are built around time-friendly, budget-friendly meals using accessible ingredients. Led by Chef Jason Goldman, OFS's Culinary Nutrition Education Manager, the experience is designed to be light, practical, and engaging.

"The enthusiasm of everyone participating has been amazing, and they say it's fun even when they didn't expect it to be," says Chef Jason. "One of the most popular recipes has been kale pesto pasta. Two people from class told me how shocked they were at how good it tasted. They had never considered blending kale into a sauce."



Real Impact, Real Confidence

Participant feedback has been one of the strongest indicators of success. Many share that their cooking habits are shifting because of what they've learned, simply by being introduced to new techniques, flavors, and ingredients in a supportive setting. One participant from a pantry partner agency arrived convinced she didn't like chickpeas or coconut milk, two main ingredients in that day's recipe. By the time she was finished making the Thai coconut chickpea curry, she was shocked to discover she loved it. It was even more meaningful that she used shelf-stable pantry items to create something so satisfying and delicious.

Building Community Through Cooking

The Teaching Kitchen has hosted 67 hands-on cooking classes in the past year, serving 447 participants from across the region. Classes can accommodate up to 16 people, allowing participants to cook side-by-side at individual stations, with plenty of one-on-one interaction with Chef Jason. In addition to groups of employees from local corporations, participants have included community organizations such as Family Forward, SSM Maternal Health, LIV, Almost Home, Urban Sprouts, Epworth, St. Louis County Library and the Community Impact Network. Classes are also conducted for those involved in OFS's Nourishing Healthy Starts program, which connects pregnant women experiencing food insecurity to food, nutrition education, and maternal health advocacy to improve birth outcomes.



One Year In (Continued)

Looking Ahead

As the program moves into its second year, OFS is exploring new opportunities:

- Expanded curriculum according to participant feedback. For example, many have expressed an interest in baking classes.
- New partnerships with additional agency partners and community groups.
- Increased accessibility, including developing video content, so people can learn from home.
- Integration of our new registered dietitian, who will lend additional nutrition expertise to select classes and curriculum design.

Just one year in, the Teaching Kitchen is already becoming a key piece in supporting individuals and families through practical nutrition education. As we look forward to another year of growth, innovation, and new partnerships, what remains at the heart of every class is the belief that good food and good skills help people thrive.

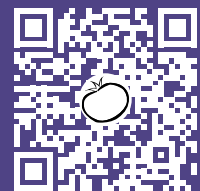
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One of the most popular recipes has been kale pesto pasta. Two people from class told me how shocked they were at how good it tasted.”

– Chef Jason Goldman
*OFS’s Culinary Nutrition
Education Manager*



**SCAN
TO CHECK OUT
OUR RECIPES**



What's Cooking in the Teaching Kitchen

Lentil Chili Recipe

FEATURED RECIPE

Lentil Chili

Scan to View

Recipe and Video →



This affordable take on a winter classic is just in time to warm up the holidays. The recipe substitutes lentils for ground beef. Lentils provide protein but save money at the grocery store. The lentils in this recipe are just 45 cents compared to six dollars per pound for ground beef.

To learn about group cooking classes, contact our Culinary Nutrition Education Manager, Jason Goldman, at jason.goldman@operationfoodsearch.org

2026 Events — Save the Dates!



Party for Packs

Thursday
April 30, 2026

Enjoy the taste of the community while making a difference for the Operation Backpack program.



Golf Tournament

Monday
July 13, 2026

Celebrate our annual impact to heal hunger in our community at Norwood Hills Country Club for the 32nd Annual Golf Tournament.



Feast for Change

Saturday
Sept. 12, 2026

Experience an annual dining experience where you can make a difference in healing hunger.

Make an Impact with Missouri Tax Credits

You can help fight childhood hunger and family food insecurity—and make your charitable giving go even further — through the Missouri Department of Economic Development tax credit programs. Operation Food Search offers **50 percent Missouri tax credits** to qualifying donors through the following programs:

Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP)

With a donation of **\$2,500 or more**, qualifying donors can receive a 50 percent Missouri tax credit. These gifts help OFS expand programs that provide nutritious food and essential resources to families across our community.

Whether you choose NAP or YOP, your generosity helps provide meals, stability, and hope to children and families who need it most. To learn more about tax credits, go to [Operationfoodsearch.org/donations/#state-tax-credits](https://operationfoodsearch.org/donations/#state-tax-credits), scan the QR code, or reach out to:

Mike Foley, Director of Development:

314-944-6151 or mike.foley@operationfoodsearch.org

Ellen Reed-Fox, CFRE, Chief Development Officer:

314-451-1950 or ellen.reedfox@operationfoodsearch.org.

Youth Opportunity Program (YOP):

Gifts of **\$1,000 or more** directly support **Operation Backpack**. YOP tax credits are for **individuals or businesses** and also provide 50 percent of your donation as a credit on your Missouri taxes, allowing you to give more while reducing your out-of-pocket cost.

LEARN MORE
About MO Tax Credits

