



Cook what you love, love what you eat  
**IS WEALTH GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH?**

*Grades 7 - 9*  
**Week 3**



**Stop! Have you watched our training video yet?** This workshop series covers subject matter that requires basic knowledge of anti-oppression and anti-racist concepts. Facilitation of these workshops must be undertaken with thoughtful consideration of the content. Before you start, make sure you've watched our training video and read through the lesson plan in its entirety.

**Learning objective:**

Participants will engage in conversations about the landscape of hunger in Canada, unpacking common myths and misconceptions about its prevalence, causes, and impacts.



**Workshop length:** 2 hours



**Recipe:** Creamy coconut chickpea curry



**Curriculum links:** Health and Physical Education; Language; Geography



**Topics covered**

- What is “structural poverty?”
  - Who is impacted most?
- Decent work and poverty
- The impact of geographic inequities on food insecurity
- Why the “charity model” won’t end hunger



**Workshop materials**

- Envelopes
- Different coloured/shaped game pieces
- Sharpies or other markers
- Chart paper
- “Budget Bites” tips and tricks handouts
- Neighbourhood maps and “Food Outlet Labels”
- Access to tablets and/or laptops



**Cooking materials**

**Tools**

- Cutting boards
- Knives
- Large saucepan
- Wooden spoon
- Measuring cups
- Stockpot (if making rice or potatoes)

**Ingredients**

- Refer to [supporting documents](#) for recipe details

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## Key Reminders



### Group & Land Acknowledgement

FoodShare acknowledges that the sacred land in which we operate is situated upon the traditional territories of the Wendat, Haudenosaunee (Ho-den-oh-sho-nee), the Anishinabeg (Ah-nish-in-nah-beg), and the Mississaugas of the Credit. This territory is covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Anishinabeg and Haudenosaunee allied nations to peaceably share and care for the lands around the Great Lakes. FoodShare recognizes the many Nations of Indigenous People, who presently live on this land, those who have spent time here and the ancestors who have hunted and gathered on this land known as Turtle Island.



### Equity, Diversity & Social Justice

#### Notes:

Brainstorm ways in which you can avoid marginalization due to participants' race, ethnicity, sex, age, physical or mental ability, culture, ancestry, language, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic background or due to stereotypes. How can you make space for all learners?

### Key Terms

**Structural poverty** – Refers to the ways that the systems that organize our lives (both economic and social) privilege certain groups, giving them a head start, while other groups are left behind facing a range of barriers to “moving up.”

**Precarious work** – Work which is poorly paid, unprotected, and insecure – this could be work that lacks labour rights protections (e.g.: no minimum wage, no breaks, etc.); jobs that don't have health coverage or benefits; or, gig-work (short-term contracts) that offers little stability or security.

**Charity model** – Top-down approach to addressing food insecurity, focuses on immediate need of emergency food aid (e.g.: food bank, drop-in meal).

**Grassroots initiative** – Community-led initiative that takes a bottom-up approach to addressing issues in the community. Driven by the voices of community members, grassroots initiatives use collective action to make social and political changes.

**Food desert** – Neighbourhood or area of an urban city where affordable or good-quality fresh food is hard to find.

**Food apartheid** – Refers to the [intentional lack](#) of availability of fresh, affordable food in low-income, racialized neighbourhoods in cities. *We prefer this term instead of “desert” because it recognizes the societally-constructed systems at the root of the problem, rather than associating it with a natural phenomenon.*

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### (Un)fair trade (15 minutes)

**Before the workshop:** Prepare envelopes for each participant with different coloured or shaped objects (candies, game pieces, cut-out shapes work) in each: one of the envelopes should have an already matching set at the beginning, a couple with mostly matching, many with a mix of various ones, and two envelopes with nothing inside.

- Hand out envelopes to participants, and direct them to move around the room chatting with one another to make trades. The goal is to have a matching set of objects.
  - Once they have a matching set, have them take a seat or move to the other side of the room.
  - Allow this to go on until there are only a few people left standing.
- Debrief, asking participants what they felt about their experience with the activity.

**Ask:** Was this game fair? If we kept playing, would everyone eventually be able to finish? Or would there still be some people left standing?

- Draw attention to the fact that one person had a matching set to begin with, while another had an empty envelope.
- **Talking point:** We can use this game to understand how “structural poverty” works. Wealth is not distributed evenly from the very start, which makes it very difficult to “move up” or gain wealth if you are not dealt with a “good hand” to begin with.

**Ask:** Who is most impacted by structural poverty? Why is it so pervasive?

- BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) Communities; People with Disabilities; Seniors; Women (particularly single mothers); Queer Communities; Migrant Workers – groups that have intersecting “social identities” with less power.
  - These communities have less access to resources (like health and social services, education, etc.) – compare this to the envelopes with a matching set vs. those with less or no candies.
  - These groups also often work jobs that are low-income or “precarious” (temporary work, work paid in cash, part-time work, ‘gig economy’ jobs that involve short-term contracts, no health benefits like dental coverage).



### Poverty and food insecurity (15 minutes):

Use the previous activity to segue into a discussion about poverty and food insecurity. Invite participants to think about the game within the context of purchasing food.

**Prompt:** Imagine that in order to purchase your groceries for the week, you had to end up with a matching set of candies.

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**Ask:** What kind of food options do you think the people who sat down first would have? What about those who were last to sit down? How would the people without a matching set get their food?

**Talking points:**

- People who have more privilege and power (those who sat down first) have many options – they have buying power and a number of different ways to purchase their food (grocery store, farmer’s market, subscription boxes, etc.).
- People who have less privilege and power (those who sat down later) have limited options – less money to spend on food due to lower income, and less choice in where or how they get their food (i.e.: they don’t own a car and there is only one grocery store within walking distance).
- People who have the least privilege and power (those who didn’t sit down) might have to rely on emergency food support programs or assistance, like a food bank or drop-in meal.
  - Our current economy relies on there being a group of people doing precarious work to serve and benefit others (i.e.: people working in non-profit organizations).
  - These interactions only help the people being served in the short term, filling an immediate need, while making society think that something is being done to solve the problem.
  - In reality, this model only generates temporary or “band-aid” solutions to big problems, instead of actually changing the structures that create these power imbalances to begin with.
  - This model keeps people stuck in place by forcing them to continue relying on the “charity” of others.
- The level of privilege and power you have also impacts the actual food choices you make – fresh produce is expensive (and often unavailable in racialized, low-income neighbourhoods), which might mean that someone living in a low-income household eats more fast food, even though they may prefer to make a different choice.

**Take-home message:** Poverty is a root cause of food insecurity. How much money you have impacts what food you can buy, where you can buy it, and how you buy it.

- 62% of Canadians who experience food insecurity have jobs – it’s not that people aren’t working hard enough, but a lack of decent work means they don’t have enough money to buy the food they need.
- 70% of households reliant on social assistance are food insecure. Social assistance does not lift people out of poverty – these rates are too low for people to even meet their basic needs.

**Ask:** Do you think the “charity model” works?

- **Big picture:** Pushing for sustainable solutions that address the root causes of food insecurity (like poverty) is important.
  - This would include *systemic* and *structural* changes, like universal basic income (where the government would provide everyone with, say, \$1000 a month to help cover their cost of living) or increasing the minimum wage to a wage that people could actually afford to pay their bill and live comfortably with.
  - Food banks, which work using the charity model, are important for making sure that people have access to food *right now*, but they are not a long-term fix.

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- **On-the-ground:** Grassroots initiatives led by communities that address food insecurity on a local scale are an important part of a long-term solution
  - There are so many powerful food projects happening in communities here in Toronto. These ground-up initiatives are examples of “**food justice**” in action.



### Food justice league (5 minutes)

#### This is a take-home activity!

We hope that this activity will inspire the next generation of food activists! The goal here is to highlight the incredible work already happening on the ground in communities.

*Who's in your food justice league?* Ask participants to form small groups and pick a food justice initiative that they are interested in learning more about.

- Depending on the participants, you can provide them with a list of groups or projects for them to choose from (*found in supporting documents*) or have them do their own research and pick.

Have them do some research on the initiative before the next session. If you can, set aside some class time for them to do this.

- Research questions: What is the initiative? What is their mission? Goals? Where is it based? Who is involved?
  - Encourage them to think critically about their initiative – **Ask:** Does this initiative see poverty as the root cause of food insecurity in their neighbourhood? If so, how do they respond to it? If not, what is another root cause the initiative focuses on and how do they respond?

In Week 4, there will be time allocated for quick presentations of the groups' chosen food justice initiatives. Nothing too lengthy – frame it as a show and tell-type pitch about their initiative.



### Let's cook! (1 hour)

**Refer to supporting documents** for “Creamy coconut chickpea curry” ingredient list and recipe.

Once in the kitchen, review any safety rules that apply to that space:

- Hairnets/gloves;
- Handwashing;
- Knife handling;
- Cross-contamination;
- And, how to use stovetops, ovens, and other appliances.

Divide the class into small teams. Hand out the recipe and show each team their prep station. Ask participants to organize who will complete each prep duty and help by demonstrating. Duties could include: reading the recipe, measuring, washing, cutting, mixing, etc.

**Tip:** Hand out a sign-up sheet for cleaning duties now to expedite the clean-up at the end.

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Why did we pick this recipe for today? **Talking points for chickpea curry include:**

This dish is made with low-cost ingredients - using canned staples like chickpeas and incorporating frozen veggies into your meals are great ways of sticking to your budget when you grocery shop.

- When families are living on low-incomes, food is often the first thing to go. People often are forced to 'get creative' with their grocery shopping, saving money wherever they can while still providing their families with filling and nutritious meals.
- **Talking point:** Although it is important to learn about and share these tips, it is also important to acknowledge that these are ways to *manage* food security, not to *solve* it!
  - Management or coping is a way to reduce the weight of the experience of food insecurity (i.e.: growing your own lettuce because it's not affordable at the grocery store).
  - To solve it, there needs to be a systemic change that addresses the structural causes of poverty (i.e.: basic income; raising the minimum wage).
- Share our "[Budget Bites](#)" tip sheet with the group for more ways to reduce your spending on food.
- **Ask** participants if they have their own tips or tricks that they would like to share with the group.

**Ask:** Do you have your own tips or tricks for saving money on food? Have you used any of the ones listed before?

Yes, you can! - Canned foods are often stigmatized or seen as 'less than,' but that couldn't be farther from the truth!

- Canned vegetables are more affordable and accessible than fresh veggies in many stores, and are just as nutritious and delicious! They also last longer on your shelf, which helps avoid food waste.
- When you're buying canned goods, it's important to know how to read food labels. Food labels are a good way to make sure you're making informed choices about what's in your food and the nutrients you're getting. [Canada's new food guide](#) has resources available to help you better understand food labels!



### **Conclusion and consolidation:**

**Enjoy your meal together!** Serve the chickpea curry with your chosen side. Set up a space where everyone can eat together and chat during the meal. To prompt conversation while you eat, you could ask:

- Have you had curry before? Have you made it before?
- What other types of curry do you know? What's your favourite kind?
- *Debate:* Curry chicken or chicken curry?
- What was your favourite part of being in the kitchen today?



**Food mapping (10-20 minutes, can be continued as a follow-up activity)**

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- Pick two neighbourhoods with different income levels in Toronto (refer to [City of Toronto Neighbourhood Profiles](#)).
- Provide participants with a large map of both neighbourhoods and iPads to use. Hand out reusable **food outlet labels** (refer to supporting documents for these).
  - **Modification:** If there is minimal technology available to you, you can opt to provide participants with a set of Google maps of the selected neighbourhoods with different key search words inputted (i.e.: “grocery store” or “fast food”).
  - You can also print out the “[Food by Ward](#)” neighbourhood profiles for each area to use as an additional resource in this activity.
- Invite them to work together to map out the food resources in each of the neighbourhoods using the labels.
- As a group, open up a discussion about the two maps.

**Ask:** What do they notice? What are the differences? What kind of food resources appear most often on each map? What is missing?

- Prompt a conversation about disparities between neighbourhoods in terms of food access.
- If the group is comfortable sharing, you might invite them to talk about food access in their own neighbourhoods.

#### Talking points:

- Where you live does matter – not every area of the city has the same level of access to food.
- Low-income and racialized communities often have less fresh food outlets and more fast food restaurants.
- It is also more difficult to find affordable fresh produce in these neighbourhoods. This is not a natural phenomenon, but is a problem created by the built environment – we call this “food apartheid.”
- Tie this back to the ‘(Un)fair trade’ game; communities with more power/privilege have more access to resources and more options to choose from, while areas with less power/privilege are often under-resourced.

#### Take-home messages:

- End the session with a quick group debrief. You can either do this as a large group (popcorn style) or in smaller teams (with reporting back).
- Ask participants to list the three most important or interesting things they learned during the session, and then invite them to share this with the group.
- Review responses as a large group, adding in any key take-home messages from below that might have been left out:
  - Poverty is a root cause of food insecurity, and it is a structural problem.
  - Poverty disproportionately impacts people with marginalized social identities.

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- Not all neighbourhoods are created equal – racialized, low-income areas lack access to food.
- Sustainable solutions to food insecurity need to address poverty as a root cause.
- There are so many incredible grassroots food justice initiatives that communities have organized themselves as a response to these structural and systemic issues.
- **Option:** have participants complete the [Kahoot quiz](#) now, or provide them with the link to complete after the session.

**Clean up!** Using the sign-up sheet handed out at the beginning of cooking, have everyone help out with the basic cleaning duties (clearing tables and plates, loading the dishwasher, putting foodstuff away).



## FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES (OPTIONAL)

### What Toronto Eats

Use this activity as a follow-up in class after this session as a way to continue the conversation around poverty and food insecurity. Using the activity sheet, prompt discussion around the ways that income and labour are embedded within the narratives shared.

You might also add on the meal planning activity, inviting participants to plan and cost out a week of meals for the person whose narrative they read. Provide them with tablets or laptops so that they can research and compare prices. Invite them to utilize any of the 'budget bite' tips and tricks discussed to save money in their meal plan.

[What Toronto Eats Activity outline](#)

[What Toronto Eats Supporting documents](#)

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## RESOURCES

**Resource:**

[Canada's New Food Guide](#)

*Tips and tricks for meal planning and preparation.*

**Resource:**

[Food by Ward](#)

Interactive mapping tool that tells the story of unequal distribution of food assets across Toronto.

**Resource:**

[Poverty in Toronto Infographic](#)

Helpful infographic breaking down some key numbers and facts about poverty in the city.

*\*Published in 2015, so the numbers are not reflective of 2020, but the data is still relevant.*

**Resource:**

[Poverty and food security in our new COVID-dominated reality, rabble](#)

**Educator resource** on the links between poverty and food security in Canada within the context of COVID-19.

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