



Cook what you love, love what you eat  
**EVERYBODY FOR EVERY BODY**

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



**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 explore the concept of 'body positivity' during this session. This workshop will invite participants to engage with the assumptions we make around food, and to reflect on how these judgements might contribute to body policing. The goal will be to reframe these ideas, and participants' relationships with food, within the framework of body positivity.



**Workshop length:**  
2 hours



**Recipe:** Cornbread and mood-booster super salad



**Curriculum links:** Health and Physical Education; Languages; the Arts; Science and Technology



**Topics covered**

- Food choices and value judgements.
- What is body positivity?
  - Re-defining 'health.'
- Food as more than fuel.
  - What else can food do for us?
  - Food as a tool for self-care.



**Workshop materials**

- "Food Labels" activity materials
- Sticky notes
- Pens or pencils
- Chart paper
- Sharpies or other markers
- Collage materials (magazines, construction paper, scissors, glue, markers, etc.)



**Cooking materials**

**Tools**

- Cake pan
- Mixing bowl
- Measuring cups/spoons
- Wooden spoon
- Cutting boards and knives

- Salad bowl

**Ingredients**

- Refer to **supporting documents** for recipe details

**Workshop updated September 2020.**

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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

**Health** – According to the [WHO](#), health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. Within the frame of body positivity, everyone has a right to define what that state of well-being looks like for them and how it is measured.

**Body policing** – Body policing is a process that imposes restrictive societal norms about bodies on people. It relies on messaging from many sources (e.g.: media, family, community, doctors, etc.) that tell people what their body should look like, what they can or cannot do with their bodies, and how they should feel about their bodies.

**Body positivity** – Body positivity means that everyone determines how they want to feel about their body, what foods they want to eat, and how they determine their health (physical, emotional or psychological).

**Mindfulness** – Practice that involves focusing your awareness on the 'now' – emphasizes recognizing and accepting how we are feeling – both physically and emotionally – in the present.

**Self-care** – Practicing self-care means doing the things that you need to do to maintain your own physical, mental, and emotional well-being. It looks different for everyone based on our personal needs and wants.

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## Food 'labels' (15 minutes)

Before the session, set up a table with a number of food items (or packaging) relevant to participants. Alternatively, you can print off and use the images of food included in the supporting documents for this activity.

Print and place the food 'labels' (found in supporting documents) on the table with the food items. Include some blank 'labels' (sticky notes will work), too.

Invite participants to explore the table and use the food 'labels' to categorize each food item.

- For the blank 'labels,' ask participants to fill them in with any negative stereotypes associated with the foods, things people might say about that food ("are you really going to eat that?"), etc.

Once food items are 'labelled,' give participants another set of blank 'labels'; invite them to begin covering up the 'judgement' sticky notes with new ones that are filled with different meanings associated with the food items.

**Prompt questions:** Is there a good memory you have associated with this food? When did you first eat this food? Who does it remind you of? How does this food taste to you? How does eating this food make you feel?

Once participants have finished re-labelling foods, gather the group around the table for a guided conversation. Use this discussion time to prompt participants to think about challenging the ways we associate values with food.

**Ask:** Why do you think we're doing this activity? Where do these preconceived messages about food come from (values, assumptions, judgements)? What is the point of replacing them with our own stories and feelings?

Talking points:

- These messages come from many different sources – popular culture, family members, coworkers, teachers, health professionals, or even strangers in the grocery store.
- Messages like these reduce our food choices to 'good' or 'bad,' which can make us feel guilty or embarrassed about eating certain foods we like.
- Covering up these binary (good/bad) judgements, and rewriting the 'meaning' of food with our own stories and experiences can help us reframe food and our relationship with it.
- Food is never just *good* or *bad*! We don't need to attach these values and judgments to what we eat.
- Food choices should be free of shame or guilt! *Food is more than just its nutritional content* – it's a reflection of our cultures; it's a source of comfort; it's a part of our identities.

Use this activity as a jumping-off point for diving into a deeper conversation about body positivity. See *the following section for talking points*.

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### Who defines “health?” (15 minutes):

You can use a large sheet of chart paper to facilitate the conversation popcorn-style in a large group, or hand out sticky notes for participants to write ideas on individually first, followed by a group conversation.

Using the “food labels” activity, prompt participants to make connections between the meanings we associate with food and value judgements about bodies. **Ask:** Do you think that these preconceived ‘good’ and ‘bad’ messages about food shape the ways that we think about our own bodies?

**Prompt:** What do these messages tell us a ‘healthy’ person is? What does a healthy person look like? How do these messages measure this idea of ‘health’?

- Draw a circle on a piece of chart paper. Write the word “healthy” in the centre. *When writing “healthy” during this activity, use the quotes ‘-’ around the word to signify that you are challenging this term.* Write participants’ answers inside this circle.
  - Participants will likely come up with answers like *weight, size, shape, how your skin looks, etc.* – physical descriptors
  - **Talking point:** So, if we were to base our definition of “health” solely on these messages, that focus on physical assumptions of health, we end up with a very one-dimensional way of thinking about people’s lives – one based mostly on the way you look.
    - Most of these measures are very restrictive because they work using the binary opposition of good/bad or healthy/unhealthy.
- Complicate the discussion by drawing a connection between physical health and mental and emotional wellbeing.
- Draw a much larger circle around the original circle. **Ask** participants: What are some ways of measuring health that weren’t included in the first circle? Write their responses inside this new larger circle.
  - Encourage participants to think of alternate physical measures (i.e.: feeling nourished; eating what you love; feeling comfortable; having energy; feeling confident), as well as mental and emotional ones.
- Ask if any of the measures of health in the original circle need to be crossed out in our new expanded definition of health. **Ask** is there anything in this smaller circle that we want to remove or edit given our new expanded definition of health?
  - The goal here is to prompt students to develop a body positive understanding of health – one that is expansive and moves away from binary thinking.
  - You can use FoodShare’s [Body Positivity](#) statement here to support this discussion.

Once the larger circle has been filled, point to the area outside the circle. **Prompt** participants: So now that we’ve reimagined how we define health, imagine this circle is a person, and all of these things are happening inside them. **Ask:** Do you think anyone from outside of this circle can tell if this person is actually healthy?

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### Talking points:

- **No!** It's impossible for someone outside of this circle to tell whether or not someone is healthy. **That's because someone's health can only be defined by the person themselves.**
  - So with this body positive understanding of health, we know that we are all the experts on our own bodies.
- **Ask:** How is this different from the first circle we drew?
  - **Talking point:** the types of messaging in this first circle reinforce the idea that there is only one way of being 'healthy,' and that you can tell if someone is healthy or unhealthy by looking at them.
  - Messages like these contribute to "body policing" – body policing refers to **when people are told what they can and cannot do with their bodies, and how to feel about their bodies.**
  - The people who face this the most are those with intersecting social identities (see Week 3 for more details on intersectionality).
    - This means that people who identify as fat, racialized, trans, queer, gender non-conforming, or disabled, are most often told who or what they are because of their bodies.
  - These types of messages are harmful, and we know that they simply are **not true!**

Conclude the activity by having participants summarize the discussion. **Prompt:** In 2-3 sentences, write a body positive definition of health.



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

**Refer to supporting documents** for "Cornbread" and "Mood-booster super salad" 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.

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

What makes 'comfort food' comforting?

- In North America, particularly in the South, cornbread is often viewed as the *ultimate* 'comfort food.'
  - Cornbread's roots as comfort food can be traced back to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade – "Slavery destroyed families. The only thing that remained the same was the dinner table. Your

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*fellow slaves sometimes became your family. A meal brought comfort to the slaves, not so much as nourishment but by keeping the family together.”<sup>1</sup>*

- Over the years, cornbread has retained this label as a traditional ‘comfort food’ across the continent. What made it a comfort food in the first place, though, was the associations that Black folks who were enslaved had with the food.
  - Research has shown that comfort food is all about memories and nostalgia.
  - “Your favourite comfort foods are a product of where you come from, where your parents come from, and, as palates become more global, where your neighbours come from, too.”<sup>2</sup>
  - Food has the power to make us feel comforted – like a big hug from the inside out – just based on the memories that we associate with it!

#### There’s no such thing as a bad food!

- Cornbread itself is loaded with delicious carbs! Carbohydrate-based foods can help “increase serotonin levels in our brain, which in turn, helps us feel happy and comforted.”<sup>3</sup> That’s why we often crave carb-heavy foods like pasta, dumplings, or bread!
- Sometimes we might hear people tell us to avoid eating these types of foods, but it’s important to remember that we are the experts on our own bodies!
  - We decide for ourselves what makes us feel good.
  - *What if someone says my favourite food is unhealthy?* Just remember that there’s no such thing as a bad food!
    - It is helpful to learn more about the food that we love so we can better understand the nutrients and vitamins that help fuel us.

#### **Talking points for mood-booster super salad include:**

#### Green makes you happy!

- Food is **more** than just nourishment – what we eat also has a big impact on how we feel!
- Plant-based foods are a great food to turn to if you’re looking for a mood boost.
  - Beets have got lots of folate, which is great for fighting depression.<sup>4</sup>
  - Spinach is full of mood-boosting B vitamins.
  - The vitamin C in citrus fruits can reduce distress.
  - The flavonoids in lemon juice are good for your brain!
  - Basil is full of antioxidants and anti-inflammatories and can help reduce stress.<sup>5</sup>
- The more that you learn about food and how it can help heal and support our bodies, the better you can use food as a tool for self-care.

<sup>1</sup> <https://deepsouthmag.com/2012/12/03/the-real-roots-of-southern-cuisine/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/food/the-plate/2015/10/26/comfort-food-nostalgia-in-a-bowl/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://nationalpost.com/health/food-that-soothes-how-comfort-food-cravings-work/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://greatist.com/happiness/25-meals-boost-your-mood#salads>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.whfoods.com/genpage.php?tname=foodspice&dbid=85>

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## Conclusion and consolidation:

**Enjoy your meal together!** Serve generous slices of cornbread with salad on the side. Set up a space where everyone can eat together and chat during the meal.

Try out a mindful eating activity while you enjoy your meal together! This will help to reinforce the message that food is more than just nutrients – it is connected to our mental well-being, too. Canada’s new food guide includes mindful eating as a practice for creating awareness around our food choices, and reconnecting to the eating experience. Guide participants through the meal with this script:

### Activity sourced from [Mindful Schools](#)

Give your full attention to the whole experience, from observing the appearance and presentation of food to eating it carefully to fully experience its various flavours. If you do this, you may find that a common meal becomes a richer experience.

- Start by looking at what you are planning to eat. What do you notice visually?
- Now, smell the food carefully. What do you notice?
- If applicable, do you notice any sounds? If you’re eating something like a raisin, try holding it close to your ear as you squeeze it gently. Or if you’re unwrapping a chocolate, listen to the crinkles of the wrapper as you unfold it.
- What do you feel with your fingers? Is the food warm or cold? Is it smooth, rough, or sticky?
- Now, put the piece of food on your tongue, but don’t chew on it yet. Just leave it on your tongue and notice how it feels in your mouth. Do you taste anything yet? What activity do you notice in your mouth?
- Start chewing it, very slowly, just one bite at a time. Notice how the tastes change as you chew.
- Try to notice when you swallow, and see how far you can feel the food into your body.



### A love letter to my favourite food (15 minutes)

If you have time after your meal, have participants end with this creative activity. Set up a table with collaging materials for participants, including magazines, construction paper, markers, glue, scissors, etc.

Ask participants to write “love poems” to their favourite foods; some might want to do a haiku, an acrostic poem, or do their own thing. Invite them to decorate their poems with the provided materials.

The purpose of this activity is to prompt participants to start to reframe the relationships they have with food, using new and different points of view. Encourage participants to think about all of the things that food does for us, besides its nutritional content. How does food fuel us, heal us, connect us, etc.? Ask participants to think about these questions as they work on their poems.

Depending on how much time you have left, invite participants to share their creations with the group if they want to at the end of the session.

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### 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). You could do this while participants are working on decorating their poems.
- 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:
  - Food is more than just its nutritional content – it’s what fuels us, brings us joy, and connects us!
  - Food choices should never be associated with shame or guilt.
  - Body policing tries to tell people what they can or can’t do with their bodies, including what they can or can’t eat.
  - A body positive approach to food and health means that everyone determines how **they** want to feel about their body, what foods they want to eat, and how they determine their health (physical, emotional or psychological).
  - We can practice self-care with food!
- **Option:** have participants complete the [Kahoot quiz](#) now, or provide them with the link to complete after the session.



### Food justice brainstorm (10 min)

- Once everything has been tidied up, you can facilitate this series wrap-up activity. Remind participants of the brainstorm activity from the first week – introduce this activity as a follow-up on that.
- On a sheet of chart paper, write “food justice” in large block letters; pass out sticky notes and pens/pencils to participants.
- Invite them to jot down ideas that come to mind when they hear the term “food justice.”
  - **Ask:** What do you think food justice means? What other words do you associate with “food justice?”
  - Prompt them to use the experience and knowledge they’ve shared and gained over the course of the series to shape their responses.
- Once they’re ready, participants can post their sticky notes onto the chart paper sheet.
- After everyone has posted their ideas, bring out the chart paper sheet from the first week for comparison.
- Debrief with the group, discussing how their ideas have changed, grown, and evolved over the 7 weeks. **Ask:** What new knowledge will you be taking home about food justice?

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**Before you finish up today's session, have participants fill out the post-workshop survey.** Please forward the results from your group's post-surveys to us at FoodShare. This will help us measure the impact of these workshops, and guide us in shaping future lesson plans. Results can be emailed to Brooke, our Community Food Programs Manager at [brooke@foodshare.net](mailto:brooke@foodshare.net)

**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).

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## FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES (OPTIONAL)

### **Food, media & marketing**

To deepen the connections between body policing and media messaging, you can lead participants through this FoodShare lesson plan, which explores the techniques and influences of food media and marketing.

[Food, media & marketing](#)

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## RESOURCES

**Resource:**

[Canada's New Food Guide](#)

Tips for practicing mindful eating on a daily basis.

**Resource:**

- [Podcast: Rebel Eaters Club](#)
- [Podcast: White World, Black Body](#)

**Resource:**

[How to stay body positive during the coronavirus pandemic, NOW Magazine](#)

**Educator resource** making links between media messaging, food choices, and body policing within the context of COVID-19.

**Resource:**

[Food education programs that focus on “obesity” do more harm than good, Toronto Star](#)

**Educator resource** on why body positivity is important in food literacy and education.

**Resource:**

[Health at every size, Shameless Magazine](#)

**Educator resource** exploring the ‘health at every size’ movement.

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