



Virginia Association of Counties ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 5, 2023.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Franklin County

Program Title: Think Global, Cook Local: Testing a Recipe for Bringing Culinary Literacy Programming to Franklin County

Program Category: Community & Economic Development

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Christine Arena

Title: Programming, Marketing & Outreach Coordinator

Department: Franklin County Public Library

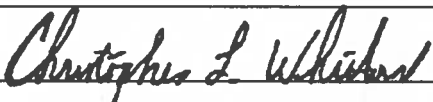
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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Christopher L. Whitlow

Title: County Administrator

Signature: 

Think Global, Cook Local:
Testing a Recipe for Bringing Culinary Literacy Programming to Franklin County

Executive Summary

In 2022, the Franklin County Public Library (FCPL) launched—and has since embedded—its first-ever culinary literacy initiative, **Think Global, Cook Local**, into the library’s standard fare of program offerings. Simply put, culinary literacy is “learning through cooking and learning about cooking.”¹ In 2021, the FCPL used a portion of its allocation through the American Rescue Plan Act as seed funding for culinary literacy programming and for teaching the Franklin County community about healthy cooking, healthy eating, and the local food system. Community health data and library survey data² had already revealed a patent need: Culinary literacy programming for the general public was not available in Franklin County. This data informed the cornerstone of the FCPL’s new culinary literacy initiative.

The aim of **Think Global, Cook Local** is to engage the public in cooking and food education, including skill building, nutrition, international cuisine, and how to access and use local foods. Since the inception of **Think Global, Cook Local** in October 2022, the FCPL has delivered 16 classes to 160 attendees. The program has received rave reviews that would make a Michelin food critic salivate (see page 6). In addition, the FCPL has tested a recipe for developing a brand-new program, built capacity where we had none, and are now positioned to scale up our effort to use food and cooking as a context for learning and community engagement.

¹ Culinary Literacy Center of the Free Library of Philadelphia

² The Franklin County Community Health Needs Assessment by Carilion Clinic has identified that lack of health literacy/lack of knowledge of healthy behaviors are among the county’s top 10 health issues. Gaps include knowledge and skills around nutrition, healthy cooking, and healthy eating habits. In addition, FCPL surveys have indicated that the public wants to learn how to develop cooking skills, adopt healthier eating habits, try different foods, and include local foods in their diets.

Program Description

Patrons of the Franklin County Public Library (FCPL) and other residents of Franklin County had long told us that they are interested in cooking and food education, including how to develop cooking skills, adopt healthier eating habits, try different foods, and include local foods in their diets. Culinary literacy programming³ for the public, however, was not available in Franklin County. Although the FCPL had dabbled in one-off food education presentations, we were unable to establish a regular culinary literacy program because we lacked four key ingredients: funds, equipment, trained instructors, and an in-house teaching environment. Funding was the essential staple.

In 2021, the Institute of Museum and Library Services⁴ and the Library of Virginia⁵ approved the FCPL's proposal to use funds⁶ from its allocation through ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) as seed funding for culinary literacy programming. Our rationale for developing a culinary literacy program was based on county level data. The Franklin County Community Health Needs Assessment by Carilion Clinic found that lack of health literacy/lack of knowledge of healthy behaviors are among the county's top 10 health issues. Gaps include knowledge and skills around healthy cooking and healthy eating. In addition, FCPL surveys indicated that library users wanted to learn about cooking, nutrition, and the local food system. Franklin County boasts a vibrant community of farmers and agricultural producers that raise

³ The Culinary Literacy Center of the Free Library of Philadelphia defines culinary literacy as "learning through cooking and learning about cooking."

⁴ The federal Institute of Museum and Library Services conducts grantmaking, research, and policy development in support of museums and libraries in the U.S.

⁵ The Library of Virginia is a state agency that preserves printed and photographic holdings on Virginia government, history, and culture and provides consulting services to Virginia's public libraries.

⁶ The FCPL used the remaining portion of its ARPA allocation for two other programs not discussed in this application.

nutritional and sustainable food; however, members of our community have reported that they do not know how or why to include locally produced foods in their cooking or diets.

When we first envisioned introducing culinary education, our vision was as ambitious and lavish as an ancient Roman banquet (minus the heady indulgence). We researched how other libraries across the U.S. had added cooking education to their regular programming. One tool repeatedly surfaced: the Charlie Cart, an all-in-one cooking cart that contains the basic equipment and appliances for creating a kitchen learning environment.⁷

Thanks to the ARPA funds, we acquired a Charlie Cart. Designed by The Charlie Cart Project, a non-profit food education organization based in Berkeley, Calif., the carts have been predominately used in K-12 schools for cooking instruction; however, libraries across the nation are increasingly buying them to start culinary literacy programs. That said, the FCPL is only one of two libraries in Virginia with a Charlie Cart.

The Charlie Cart includes a curriculum and teaching model targeted to grades K-5. The FCPL significantly customized the model to design and implement, in October 2022, our first-ever culinary literacy offering, **Think Global, Cook Local**. Customization included:

- 1) ***Adapting the model for ages 18 and older.*** This age group had already asked us to teach cooking lessons with ample opportunity for adults to interact with each other.
- 2) ***Revising the teaching content*** to include fundamental and more specialized cooking and food preparation techniques, such as fermentation and wild game cooking.

⁷ The Charlie Cart was named as a nod to the chuckwagon. Invented in 1866, chuckwagons were mobile kitchens that followed cattle-driving cowboys in the American West. With a Dutch oven and supplies of sourdough starter, preserved meat, beans, and coffee, a chuckwagon could serve three squares a day.

- 3) *Using professional chefs as instructors.* It is common practice among schools and libraries with Charlie Carts to use their in-house staff (namely, teachers and librarians) to teach cooking classes; however, our adult patrons expressed interested in learning from professionals trained in cooking, food education, and kitchen safety.
- 4) *Ensuring our teaching content on local foods showcases the very people who produce them.* We designed our cooking instruction to include Q&A with local farmers and agricultural producers (page 7 lists the ones we have worked with so far.) Attendees have often cited this feature as one of their favorite aspects of **Think Global, Cook Local** (see page 6). In turn, several of our guest farmers have been excited to learn how we use their foods in international recipes or in surprising ways (ask us about our burnt honey dark-chocolate sauce).
- 5) *Celebrating cultural awareness by including international traditions* in our cooking instruction, including information on the history and heritage of food.

An example of one of our recipes and how it reflects several of the above concepts is on page 9.

Financing and Staffing

ARPA funding enabled us to acquire the Charlie Cart and augment it with appliances that are not included with the cart, such as a dishwasher with sanitizing feature, a commercial kitchen-grade fire extinguisher, and a refrigerator and freezer.⁸ The FCPL's programming budget pays for cooking ingredients. This is a core value of **Think Global, Cook Local**. We are putting our money where our mouth is by demonstrating the importance of supporting our community farms and by conveying the value of local foods. Our non-profit Friends of the Library provide

⁸ The appliances were critical acquisitions. Farmers often stop by the library to deliver food that needs safe storage, from frozen beef and chicken to fresh eggs, produce, and dairy products.

honoraria for our guest chefs, and they raise funds in part through the sale of, not surprisingly, donated cookbooks. Library staff manage most back of house operations, including planning educational content, outreach to farmers, food procurement, publicity, and the dish pit.

Implementation

After piloting **Think Global, Cook Local** in August and September 2022, the FCPL launched the program in October 2022 with our most recent offering in June 2023. We have delivered 16 classes to 160 attendees. In addition, the program has received rave reviews (see page 6). **Think Global, Cook Local** is just the first phase of our culinary literacy programming. Although it is a fully-fledged offering, its focus is intentionally narrow, and we have used it in part to test a framework for delivering cooking education. For example, it is based on a demonstration and observational learning model tailored to adults. We are working our way up to expanding our culinary education offerings to reach children and teens and incorporate hands-on learning. In July, for instance, we will partner with Franklin County Cooperative Extension to teach water bath canning. (Participants will make fig jam using locally grown figs.) Although **Think Global, Cook Local** has been operational since last fall, we have used this time to build capacity and document lessons learned. What we have learned about planning, training, equipment, funding, and promotion can be readily shared with entities from other counties. We'll even share some homecooked food and the story behind it.⁹

⁹ We've paraphrased a quote by American author Michael Pollan: "At home I serve the kind of food I know the story behind." An advisor to the Charlie Cart Project, Pollan is best known for his books on the socio-cultural impacts of food, such as *The Botany of Desire* and *The Omnivore's Dilemma*.

Rave Reviews¹⁰

The classes are the perfect way to explore new foods and tastes from around the world. The use of simple, fresh ingredients that can be locally sourced make the recipes appealing and delicious. This series is a win, win!—Keith K., Rocky Mount

I have learned new ways to prepare food, new food choices, and new growers right in my own area. I have met new people who have the same interests as I do. This program is a great service to our community.—Beatrice I., Wirtz

I have gained a richer understanding of growing, harvesting, and serving local farm-to-table offerings.—Barbara R., Rocky Mount

Each class has been unique and educational. We are privileged to have this high-quality program at our library.—Bill & Flo C., Penhook

The recipes have been a delight to make at home. Local farmers have imparted their knowledge, from raising chickens and beef to the complexity of beekeeping.—Lala P., Moneta

We thoroughly appreciate the cooking technique demonstrations. Meeting others and learning through the answers to the many questions we all ask has been wonderful. It is an incredible, valuable, and rewarding program.—Brad & Fran K., Hardy

I have used the program as a starting point for eating less processed food and cooking with more local and in-season ingredients.—JoAnn R., Wirtz

Think Global, Cook Local is an ingenious and innovative way to bring people together to learn about other cultures and to sample and appreciate their cuisines.—Deb B, Hardy

The classes offer varied and exceptionally well-presented information. The chef and staff have combined their creative talents to introduce unique international flavors and involve local food producers. This has been such an enriching learning experience.—Melissa O., Union Hall

We have enjoyed talking about the diffusion of foods around the globe.—Mike L. & Betsy G., Martinsville, Henry County

This has been an amazing series of fun and interactive classes. The insights from food producers on how they raise/grow the food is an innovative complement to the cooking classes. We have learned so much and enjoyed meeting others in our community.—Grant & Nancy T., Union Hall

Think Global, Cook Local has broadened my horizons about food grown in Franklin County and new ways to add nutrition to my family's meals. Many of the cooking techniques and tips have inspired me to be more adventurous in my cooking and selection of food to try. Thank you for offering this innovative and informative program to my county.—Sandra W., Wirtz

¹⁰ Statements edited for length and clarity.

Local Food Purveyors as of July 2023

Lazy Acres Angus, Rocky Mount (beef)

Hen Fruit Farm, Glade Hill (eggs)

Windy Gap Apiary, Boones Mill (honey)

Homestead Creamery, Wirtz (ice cream)

Appalachian Craft Provisions, Roanoke (Franklin County venison)

Fawn Brook Farm, Callaway (butternut squash)

Wild Hare Farm, Ferrum (Hakurei turnips)

Big Lick Brewery, Roanoke (for Irish Venison Stew with Stout)

Robin Ridge Farm, Rocky Mount (chicken)

Powder Mill Farm, Rocky Mount (figs)

Text for VACo Press Releases

The Franklin County Public Library (FCPL) in Franklin County, Va. has established its first-ever culinary literacy program, called Think Global, Cook Local. The Culinary Literacy Center of the Free Library of Philadelphia defines culinary literacy as “learning through cooking and learning about cooking.” The purpose of Think Global, Cook Local is to engage the Franklin County public in learning about healthy cooking, healthy eating, and the local food system.

Franklin County health data and library survey data revealed a gap in the community: Culinary literacy programming for the general public was not available in the county. The Franklin County Community Health Needs Assessment by Carilion Clinic notes that lack of health literacy/lack of knowledge of healthy behaviors are among the county’s top 10 health issues. In addition, the library’s surveys indicate that its patrons want to learn how to develop their cooking skills, try different foods, and include local foods in their diets.

With approval from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services and the Library of Virginia, the FCPL used a portion of its allocation through the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act to purchase a Charlie Cart. Invented by the Charlie Cart Project, a non-profit food education organization in Berkeley, Calif., the Charlie Cart is an all-in-one cooking cart that contains equipment and a curriculum that connects food with health and the environment. Ongoing funding for Think Global, Cook Local comes from the library’s programming budget and the Friends of the Library.

The FCPL has adapted the Charlie Cart learning model for its patrons, particularly in meeting the interests of adult learners and ensuring that the content on local foods showcases the very people who produce them. The Think Global, Cook Local classes include Q&A with local farmers and agricultural producers who explain their role in the food system. This has become one of the program’s most popular features. Said Sandra Webster, a resident of Wirtz, “Think Global, Cook Local has broadened my horizons about food grown in Franklin County and new ways to add nutrition to my family’s meals.”

So far, Think Global, Cook Local has delivered 16 classes to 160 attendees and involved ingredients from nearly a dozen local farmers/agricultural producers. Classes have taught recipes using local beef, venison, pasture-raised chicken and eggs, butternut squash, spring turnips, and honey. Plans are underway to expand the library’s cooking initiative to reach children and youth.

Said Christine Arena, FCPL’s Programming, Marketing and Outreach Coordinator, “We have developed a brand-new program and built capacity where we had none. Think Global, Cook Local is now part of our standard fare of educational programs. We’re looking forward to scaling up our efforts to use food and cooking as a context for learning and community engagement.”

Shakshuka

From: Braxton Naff,
Appalachian Craft Provisions
Servings: 6-8
Prep Time: 15 min
Cook Time: 30-45 min

Instructions

1. In a pan over medium heat, sauté onions, bell pepper, and jalapeño until peppers are soft and onions are translucent. Add garlic to middle of pan and cook briefly, then stir into onions and peppers.
2. Add crushed tomatoes and remaining seasoning ingredients. Simmer covered for 20-30 minutes.
3. Remove pan from heat source. Use a spoon to make a well (depression) in the tomato sauce. Individually drop 6-8 pre-cracked eggs out of a small bowl evenly around pan and spoon sauce over the egg whites.
4. Cover and return to low-medium heat for 8-12 minutes until eggs are poached. Carefully rotate skillet a few times if heat is uneven. Whites are set at 180° F and yolks will start to solidify at 158° F.
5. Ladle individual servings into bowl, and top with cilantro and feta or queso fresco crumbles.

Notes

- ◇ Shakshuka, which translates to “all mixed up,” originated in Northwest Africa and is found throughout North Africa, Israel, and the Middle East. It is often served for breakfast but can be enjoyed as any meal of the day.
- ◇ **This recipe uses pasture-raised eggs from HEN FRUIT FARM in Glade Hill (on Facebook as *Hen Fruit Farm, Glade Hill, Va.*) and honey from WINDY GAP APIARY in Boones Mill (windygapiary.com).**
- ◇ Research by Penn State University has found that eggs from pastured chickens are much more nutritious than any other type of chicken egg. They have greater concentrations of vitamins A, D and E and omega-3 fatty acids and less saturated fat and cholesterol.
- ◇ Honey contains antioxidants, minerals and enzymes that have many health benefits. Medicinally, it is used as an anti-inflammatory, antioxidant and antibacterial agent.

Ingredients

- 1-1/2 28 oz. can whole peeled tomatoes – hand crushed
- 1 bell pepper – diced
- 1 jalapeño pepper – deseeded and diced
- 1 onion – diced
- 3 garlic cloves – diced
- 2 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp coriander
- 1 tsp paprika
- 2 T local honey**
- 1 lemon zest and juice
- Salt & pepper to taste
- 6-8 locally raised eggs**
- 1 bunch cilantro – chopped
- Feta or queso fresco
- Pita, naan, or crusty bread for sopping

Optional:

- 1 tsp Za’atar spice mix (Middle Eastern dried spice blend with sesame seeds, sumac, thyme, etc), or
- 1 T harissa paste (Northern African chili pepper paste with garlic, cumin, caraway, coriander, olive oil, etc)

