

## Growing Health Lunch Club

A Triangle Community Garden project promoting healthy eating to adults with learning disabilities

---

**Background:** In September 2015, the Growing Ability Groups held a harvest lunch. All group members shared dishes containing vegetables which had been grown on the allotment throughout the year. One of the ingredients was an **aubergine** grown by Sean, one of our gardeners. Not many of people had tried this exotic vegetable before, and members of the Growing Health group asked if they could learn to cook an aubergine. So our first lunch was launched: with a borrowed hob, utensils, equipment and pans bought in from home, we were able to make a delicious meal of **ratatouille served with couscous**.

The group continued to make simple healthy dishes for lunch but we soon realised that we often didn't have the equipment needed to make a particular dish. Then we discovered the **CDA Herts Innovation Grant!**

In February 2016 the group was awarded £450 from CDA Herts to equip the Pavilion for cookery. This has allowed the group to purchase 2 induction hobs, a hand held blender, pots and pans, chopping boards, knives, peelers and other essential cooking equipment for cooking healthy lunches.

**The project:** The Growing Health group is now running a 12 week programme of recipes which they are **preparing, cooking and eating** each week with support from staff team Liz and Charlotte. Much appreciated expertise is given each week by Karen Shields, Nutritional Therapist from Life Practice, working here pro bono.



Above left: Giant Couscous with courgette and onion served with a tomato, cucumber and feta salad.  
Above right: Chickpea and chilli cakes served with cucumber yoghurt dip and a salad.

The group has so far made chickpea and chilli cakes, cottage pie with lentils and sweet potato (as well as beef and potatoes), stir fry vegetables with noodles, tomato and basil bruschetta with homemade pesto. We are looking forward to making a salad Niçoise, parsnip and carrot rösti served with poached eggs, falafel made 3 ways with; spinach and feta, chick peas and sweet potato. We will end our programme with a picnic using some of the recipes that we have made in the previous weeks.



Above left: Cottage pie with lentils and sweet potato. Above right: Vegetable stir fry with noodles

**Outcomes:** As well as cooking and preparing the recipes, the group has been learning about **basic health and safety and food hygiene** in the kitchen. The group continues to walk each week and discuss a variety of health topics. Individuals have also been **planting herbs, fruit and vegetables** used in the cookery lessons. This **direct link** with cooking, eating and growing vegetables helps the group to reconnect with where food comes from, helping them to develop a healthier diet.

Recognising what and where the ingredients in our food comes from, can make us appreciate and enjoy the food and will hopefully lead to better, healthier choices when choosing what to eat in the future.

The group will be combining the recipes to make a cookery book which they hope to publish in September.



Liz McElroy, Project Manager,  
Growing Health and the Triangle Community Garden  
16.5.16