



Brooke Thomas, center, teaches Healthy Hands cooking classes for kids in Mooresville.

Eating the Colors of the Rainbow

Brooke Thomas makes nutrition fun for kids (and adults)

Inside a Mooresville home it looks like a kid's birthday party. Bright colors. Laughing children. Snacks. But there is a serious purpose behind the fun. In this Healthy Hands Cooking class, nutrition is the real lesson. Healthy Hands is a training and support company that provides cooking instruction certification for adults and healthy cooking classes for kids.

The teacher is Brooke Thomas, the founder of 360yourlife.com. Brooke shifted her life 360 degrees after she was diagnosed with cancer while pregnant with her first child. Brooke says, "If people are not educated on what food does to our bodies or how certain ingredients affect us, then we're just going to eat whatever looks good."

Today, super hero veggie faces are on the menu. One child laughs as she discovers sprouts. Another isn't sure of raw zucchini, but she's willing to try it

again with hummus.

Eva Rumble sees a difference in her kids. "They're empowered now to look in the produce aisles. They're trying new foods," she says. "They're loving them, and they're encouraging me."

Brooke calls it eating the colors of the rainbow.

The classes have helped Denise Fiore's 6-year old make better choices. "There's kind of that peer pressure when you go to parties to chose something full of sugar," she explains. "This has given her more confidence to choose an alternative."

— Allison Andrews,
photography courtesy of Brooke Thomas

THE SCOOP

Healthy Hands Cooking offers an eight-hour core program, tasting classes and birthday parties. To become a certified instructor or register for a class, visit www.360yourlife.com.

In the Kitchen with Jill Dahan



Photography courtesy of Elke Talbot

Lemon Parmesan Spaghetti with Asparagus and Basil

This pasta dish is full of fresh, zingy flavors and takes 20 minutes or less from cupboard to plate. Packed with Vitamin C and heart healthy oil, it is the perfect solution for a relaxed yet speedy summertime dinner.

Ingredients

Juice of three lemons, about 1/3 cup
 1/2 cup (4 ounces) extra virgin olive oil
 1 1/4 cup (5 ounces) Parmesan cheese, grated finely
 1 large garlic clove, crushed
 1 box (8 ounces) fettuccini (I like DeBoles made with Jerusalem artichoke.)
 1 cup of basil leaves, torn
 1 large bunch of asparagus, woody ends snapped off and cut into pieces
 Freshly ground pepper

Instructions

Combine lemon juice, olive oil and garlic in blender. Then add Parmesan until thick and creamy. (For best taste, Parmesan should be freshly grated.) Set aside. Cook pasta in boiling salted water for 8-10 minutes or until al dente. Add the asparagus to the pot of pasta for the last two minutes of cooking. Do not overcook. Drain thoroughly and return to the pan. Add sauce to the asparagus and pasta, stir, cover and let the pasta absorb some of the sauce for 3-5 minutes. Add basil and fresh ground pepper if desired. It's great with cooked shrimp, chicken or broccoli mixed in, too. Serves 4-6.

Jill Dahan lives in Cornelius and is the author of *Starting Fresh! Recipes for Life*. She also teaches cooking classes at Earth Fare in Huntersville. You can learn more about her at www.jilldahan.com.