



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Expert Culinary Health Educator for Kid's Launches Chef-K**

*Culinary Health Education Program for Kid's available to Program Instructors of organizations looking to offer fun and healthy cooking classes to children.*

ALAMEDA, CA — April 25, 2008. Laurie Zerga, founder of Laurie Zerga Culinary Education, The Culinary Camp and Culinary Camp 4 Kids, has been renamed Chef-K™ to offer culinary health education programs for kids which can be offered at schools, youth organizations such as the Boys & Girls Clubs, to provide healthy cooking classes. The programs, which use a train the trainer model, will be unveiled at the National Boys & Girls Clubs annual conference taking place in San Francisco, May 6th-9th. Chef-K programs offer youth organizations and schools an instructor's guide a teaching and curriculum package, five days of training, and a two-year limited license for the organization to offer the programs at their location.

"The culinary program delivered by Chef-K exceeded our expectations," said George Phillips, executive director of the Boys & Girls Club of Alameda. "The curriculum, developed by Chef-K founder Laurie Zerga, is easy to understand and fun. Focusing on nutrition, hygiene, safety, and basic food preparation, it has increased participation at our club. Additionally, this program has stimulated interest from current and potential donors while engaging our staff and enriching our members," he continued.

The programs that will be offered by Chef-K include:

**Chef-K Get Cooking 1 and Get Cooking 2:** These are each six-week culinary education programs available for kids aged five through eighteen. Each of these programs is ideal for an after school activity for twelve to fifteen members meeting once a week for two hours. Only a sink is required for these programs. Organizations offering this program will teach participants about the following topics: senses and flavors, nutrition basics, food and kitchen safety guidelines, menu planning, food groups, and more. Members enjoy a snack as part of each class lesson.

**Chef-K Now We're Cooking!** This is a six-week culinary education program, ideal for an after school activity as a follow-on to the first two programs. It's also designed for kids aged five through eighteen for twelve to fifteen members meeting once a week for two hours. This program requires an oven with cook top and sink. Organizations offering this program will teach participants fun cooking techniques like pan grilling, roasting and sautéing, and recipes will include soup, pasta, chops, and sandwiches. Members enjoy a light meal as part of each class lesson.

Program instructors participating in Chef-K training will receive five days of instruction, a student curriculum, teaching guide, and a two-year limited license to offer the program at their organization for a onetime fee. Chef-K will also offer consulting services including reviewing plans for establishing and funding culinary and nutrition programs; setting up kitchens for operating a program; developing grant proposals; and creating custom curriculums.

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“Our goal is to bring nutrition and health education to community youth organizations such as Boys & Girls Clubs. We accomplish this by using food sources and teaching culinary techniques while embracing and celebrating family traditions,” said Laurie Zerga, founder of Chef-K. “Our vision is to develop nutritionally sound programs using tips, hints, and techniques that will help children, teens, and their families understand healthy eating habits.” Zerga is particularly concerned with the increase in childhood obesity, type 2 diabetes, and other diet-related health issues. With proper information, participants can build a lifelong foundation of healthy eating through the practice of the culinary arts including cooking and entertaining.

For more information about Chef-K, please visit: [www.chef-k.com](http://www.chef-k.com)

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## About Chef-K™ Culinary Health Education For Kids

Chef-K™, formerly Laurie's Culinary Camps, grew out of a vision held by Laurie Zerga to bring nutritionally sound programs to children, teens, and their families to help them understand and develop lifelong healthy eating habits.

Chef-K develops, trains, and licenses culinary health education programs for organizations to offer to kids aged five through eighteen. These programs are developed to heighten awareness of the connection between diet and health issues such as the increase in childhood obesity and type 2 diabetes. With proper information, participants can build a lifelong foundation of healthy eating through the practice of the culinary arts including cooking and entertaining.



**"Our goal is to bring nutrition and health education to community youth organizations while embracing and celebrating family traditions."**

***Laurie Zerga, founder, Chef-K***

Chef-K programs combine nutrition, the science of food safety, cooking instruction, and table etiquette and are offered as train the trainer packages that include five-day training sessions for instructors, all the teaching materials needed, and a limited license to offer the program.

The Chef-K client base includes organizations that support youth and families and include public schools such as the San Francisco Unified School District, private schools, and non-profit organizations such as Boys & Girls Clubs of America and Boys Scouts of America.





## **Chef-K™ Culinary Health Education Program**

<u>Course length</u>	<u>Needs</u>
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### **Get Cooking 1**

**6 2-hour lessons in 6 weeks      sink only**

Teaching curriculum includes: senses and flavor, nutrition basics, food group overview, food and kitchen safety guidelines, menu planning, and aesthetic food presentation. Seasonal recipe options included.

### **Get Cooking 2**

**6 2-hour lessons in 6 weeks      sink only**

Teaching curriculum includes: a different food group each week as well as additional kitchen safety such as knife safety. The curriculum builds on Get Cooking 1 and also includes seasonal recipe options.

### **Now We're Cooking**

**6 2-hour lessons in 6 weeks oven cook top, sink**

Teaching curriculum includes: fun cooking techniques such as pan grilling, roasting, and sautéing; advanced details on menu planning; and table etiquette. Recipes will include soup, pasta, chops, and sandwiches. Members enjoy a light seasonal meal as part of each class lesson.

### **Italian Table**

**5 sessions**

**oven cook top, sink**

Teaching curriculum includes: history, culture, ingredients, techniques, and recipes from Italy such as sauces for pasta, antipasti and scaloppini. Members enjoy a light seasonal meal as part of each class lesson.

### **Asian Persuasion**

**5 sessions**

**oven cook top, sink**

Teaching curriculum includes: history, culture, ingredients, techniques, and recipes from Japan, China, Southeast Asia, India. Menus and recipes are provided so participants can enjoy food from each area such as sushi, stir-fry, and noodle dishes.

### **All American**

**5 sessions**

**oven cook top, sink**

Teaching curriculum includes: history, culture, ingredients, techniques, and recipes from the US including jambalaya, barbecue, and fruit crisp.

### **It's Greek**

**5 sessions**

**oven cook top, sink**

Teaching curriculum includes: history, culture, ingredients, techniques and recipes from Greece. Menus include pastitsio, Greek chicken, Greek salad, and more.

### **Health & Nutrition**

**5 sessions**

**oven cook top, sink**

Teaching curriculum includes: portion control, diets governed by health conditions such as glucose and lactose intolerance or diabetes, and other special diets such as vegan and vegetarian.



## Chef-K Quick Start Kit

**\$250 per kit**      **sink only**

This fun, hands-on course teaches children and teens to prepare very simple recipes with limited kitchen knowledge. This ready-to-use package includes 6 one-hour teaching curriculum including instructor's guide as well as tips and hints. Each one-hour class includes hands-on food preparation and tasting session—which gets the participants in the kitchen without the extra expense of the more formalized lesson plans. Each class includes recipe, shopping list, tool list and setup.

A kitchen is required. Simply provide a sink and tables or a common work area to accommodate the number of students expected.



## Preschool Cooking Kit

**\$300 per kit**      **sink only**

This ready-to-use package includes a two-hour teaching curriculum for pre-school aged kids.

**Vegetables** and **Fruits** are two different programs offered. Each teaches about different vegetables or fruits and familiarizes children with the cultivation and uses of each. Both kits include a parent component containing tips, hints, and shopping and cooking activities to do with the pre-school kids.

## Chef-K™ Consulting:

Chef-K™ offers culinary health education consulting services including:

- ◆ Reviewing plans for establishing and funding culinary and nutrition programs
- ◆ Setting up kitchens
- ◆ Developing grants
- ◆ Developing custom curriculums
- ◆ Developing teacher and instructor job descriptions
- ◆ Hiring and placing teachers and instructors
- ◆ Customizing instruction in USDA safe food handling principles for specific operations

Pricing available on an hourly, project, or retainer basis.



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## Testimonials



***George Phillips, executive director, Alameda Boys & Girls Club***

The Chef-K™ Culinary Camp 4 Kids program delivered beyond our expectations!

Laurie's easy-to-understand and fun curriculum focuses on nutrition, hygiene, safety, and basic food preparation and has increased participation at our club.

Additionally, this program has stimulated interest from current and potential donors, while engaging our staff and enriching our members.



***Bob Johnson, Sr., executive director, Boys Scouts of America***

Laurie started a culinary venture scout crew (young men and women aged 14-21). I was very impressed with Ms. Zerga's professionalism and approach to culinary education and her positive, upbeat attitude.



***Kim Levine, program manager, School Health Department, San Francisco Unified School District***

When I met Ms. Zerga, I knew she was the right candidate to help pilot our Chef in the Classroom program. The students, the staff at the site, and I were very happy to work with her; she's very professional and an obvious veteran in the field.

***Saeeda Hafiz, central nutrition coordinator, San Francisco Unified School District***

I am happy to say that Laurie Zerga's professional expertise has set the tone for how we set up the SFUSD Chef in the Classroom program. She was able to design friendly and interactive lessons to keep all of the elementary school students engaged while teaching the students about health and the culinary profession. We are very honored to be working with Ms. Zerga.

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## ABOUT LAURIE ZERGA—Chef-K™ Chief Culinary Officer

Laurie Ongaro Zerga, chief culinary officer of Chef-K™, comes from a long family history of great Italian cooks and recipes. Both her mother's and father's families were from Italy and she learned at an early age to chop, dice and prepare meals for large groups at a family guest ranch in Napa. All year round she helped grow food for the family table. "One of the most significant traditions I learned growing up on a farm was the importance of fresh and seasonal ingredients," she said. "We raised vegetables and animals for meat, eggs, and, milk. My family taught me to use only fresh and in season ingredients."



Some of the most popular Chef-K recipes are the same recipes from Laurie's generations of Italian heritage, which includes stuffed zucchini; bruschetta, and Laurie's great grandmother's dried mushroom gravy recipe for pasta.



While raising two daughters, Laurie was also a full-time executive at Charles Schwab & Co, Inc. "My priority was healthy eating at home. I created meals for my family that were nutritious, fast and easy while I was climbing the corporate ladder." What she realized is that while more and more women were getting into the workforce, the food industry offered easy and convenient foods with nutrition as a low priority. "There were so few healthy prepared food options on the market that it became a passion for me to create easy to prepare, fresh and healthy meals taking lessons from my family heritage."

"It really has gone full circle," she says. "With the rising rates of childhood obesity and diabetes, we are seeing the food industry getting back to basics with better healthy options and more and more consumers demanding fresh ingredients. Chef-K was my answer to the loss of home economics in schools, and teaching the basics of healthy eating. My vision is to provide children culinary education programs to learn the basics for healthy eating habits that support their self reliance, pride, and a positive outlook."