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# Final Community Project Report

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## **Group 16: Gordon Neighbourhood House Pay-What-You-Can Community Lunch**

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## **Introduction**

The aim of our project was to work collaboratively with Gordon Neighbourhood House (GNH) to plan, prepare and serve a healthy, low-cost meal to 25-30 patrons at the Pay-What-You-Can (PYWC) community lunch. We prepared two nutritious and sustainable meals that increased variety in their menu and may serve as a template for future meals.

Inadequate physical, social or economic access to food creates a state of food insecurity, which limits access to food that meets individual's cultural, health, and food preferences (FAO, 2002). Food insecurity is a public health concern; it affects a household's ability to afford nutritious food which consequently impacts physical and mental health (Vancouver Coastal Health, 2014).

Although GNH is situated in the West End of Vancouver, which encompasses a diverse economy located near fertile lands and water, food insecurity is still a prominent issue (Barbolet *et al.*, 2004; City of Vancouver, 2012). Currently, 10% of Vancouver households experience food insecurity; Vancouver Coastal Health recognizes income as the underlying cause of food insecurity, identifying high housing costs and insufficient government assistance further mediating factors (Provincial Health Services Authority, 2016; Vancouver Coastal Health, 2008). British Columbia's minimum wage remains among the lowest in Canada, forcing approximately 10% of Vancouver's workforce into working poverty (Government of Canada, 2016 & Ivanova, 2016). Additionally, the West End median household income is substantially lower than Vancouver's overall average and a larger percentage of the population are in low-income households (City of Vancouver, 2012). Due to such circumstances, individuals in this area may experience food insecurity to varying degrees and may turn to community programs, including those run by GNH, for additional support (Gordon Neighbourhood House, 2017).

GNH strives to eradicate food insecurity and promote food justice by providing community members with dignified access to affordable, culturally appropriate, and healthy local food through many of their lunch programs (Gordon Neighbourhood House, 2017). We were determined to build on their previous successes by focusing on working collaboratively

with GNH to enrich and diversify healthy eating in the Pay-What-You-Can Wednesday lunch programs.

Our work with GNH was distinct, at the time there were no other collaborative projects working to expand their PWYC community lunch menu. Past collaboration with the GNH PWYC lunch program and LFS 350 evaluated menu changes and discovered that improving the perceived quality of the meals leads to higher patron satisfaction (LFS 350 Fall 2016 Group 16, 2016). As a team, we worked to increase the perceived quality and satisfaction by adding variety in the GNH lunch program.

### **Objectives and Inquiry Questions**

#### **Our objective was to:**

1. Develop, prepare, and serve a low-cost, nutritious and sustainable meal for the Gordon Neighbourhood House Pay-What-You-Can (PWYC) lunch program.
2. Evaluate the success of our intervention by conducting surveys on March 8th and 15th with the PWYC lunch patrons.

#### **Inquiry Questions:**

1. How satisfied are the GNH patrons with the new alternative meal?
2. In terms of nutrition, cost-efficiency, sustainability and being culturally appropriate, how realistic is the proposed menu plan for the GNH PWYC program?

### **Research Methods**

Before we planned our interventions, we first visited the PWYC lunch to better understand the program and identify the assets, needs, and preferences of the volunteers, staff, and meal patrons. These visits equipped us with the context and information needed to provide a suitable menu plan. Collectively, we decided a nourish bowl would be an effective option to diversify the menu. We utilized seasonal vegetables grown in their garden, current inventory, and local donations currently available to them. Thus, we effectively developed an appropriate, realistic, and sustainable meal plan which strategically utilized the community's assets while meeting their needs (Hamm and Bellows, 2003).

## Intervention



Figure 1. (a) Thai peanut chickpea nourish bowl (Thai bowl) prepared on March 8th, and (b) the Mongolian tofu nourish bowl (Mongolian bowl) prepared on March 15th.

Due to the limited space in the kitchen, we split up into teams for the test run of our menu outline. Splitting up also allowed us to support GNH and its volunteers more effectively in the process of implementing change, ensuring they were comfortable with the new menu plan.



Figure 2. The cozy kitchen Gordon Neighborhood House has to prepare the PWYC community lunches (Photo credit: GNH Student Intern Lauren Shykora)

## Data Collection

After preparing each of our meals we administered an anonymous survey to all patrons to assess how the meal was received (Appendix 1). Our survey produced both nominal data on whether the community members were satisfied with the meal and qualitative data regarding which aspects they enjoyed. Obtained data about the sustainability and feasibility of our menu came from personal communications with our community partner, Joey.

### **Analysis**

All results from both surveys were compiled into an excel spreadsheet for analysis. The results were tallied in order to be transformed into graphical representations for each meal. Qualitative data was coded to pinpoint recurrent themes that could be utilized to assess whether our intervention successfully met our objectives. The data was highlighted using colors to differentiate codes.

### **Ethics**

All group members completed the TCPS tutorial and made sure that the core principles were integrated into our community project. All community members were treated with respect during data collection by the provision of an anonymous survey which allowed opinions to be freely spoken.

### **Results**

The survey results from each intervention are shown in Figure 3, overall we received a high positive response rate. From the open feedback section we discovered the patrons were pleasantly surprised with how much they enjoyed the new menu. Most frequently mentioned reasons were the fresh ingredients, healthfulness, and color. 13 people (62%) commented on the healthy and/or tasty variety. For meal one, most of the constructive feedback received through personal communication mentioned the sauce was a bit too salty. The constructive feedback received from 39% of respondents for meal two, was that the rice was too bland and the bowls needed more sauce. Overall the majority of community members seemed excited for the new change to their current menu. It is worth noting that the average response rate between the two meals was 63%; while a few community patrons declined to complete the survey, most of the people who ate the meal but did not complete a survey were the workers and volunteers.

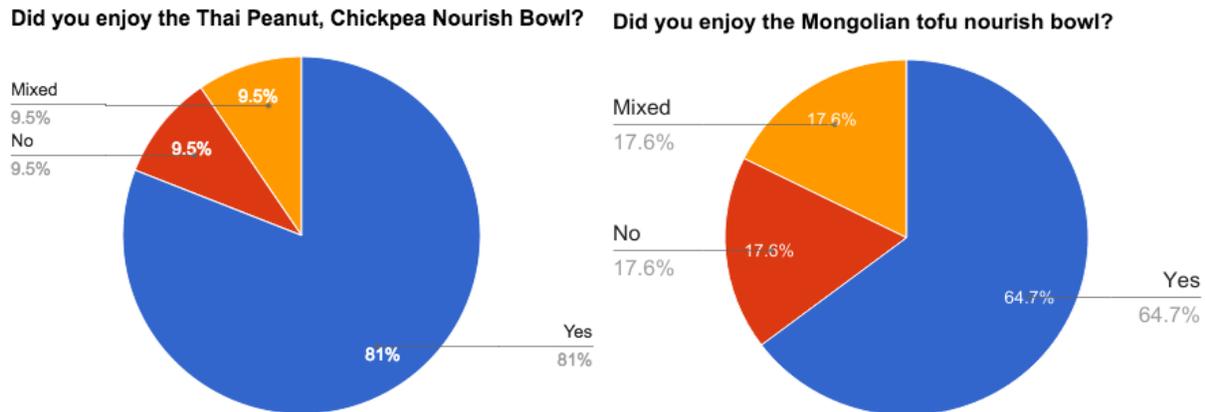


Figure 3 (a). Survey results from meal one conducted on March 8th, with 21 respondents (b). Survey results from meal two conducted on March 15th, with 17 respondents

The menu plan was deemed to be highly feasible and sustainable within the budget and timeframe for cooking. We were able to develop a shopping list that our community member was comfortable with in order to easily prepare and serve the meals on time. The GNH plans to use it as the basis for the PWYC community lunch program going forward.

### **Discussion**

Overall, the survey results validated our belief that we increased patron satisfaction with our new menu plan. As we had hoped, many spoke of perceived increase in the quality of ingredients when discussing their satisfaction. Our meal was also received by more community members compared to last term's LFS 350 project (LFS 350 Fall 2016 Group 16, 2016).

Since we did not have a specific budget set and did not conduct the shopping, we cannot speak directly to the cost-efficiency of our meal. However, we aimed to keep cost effective by utilizing the assets available to GNH including existing GNH inventory and some of the nearby fertile lands, incorporating produce grown on GNH gardens. Given the template variety and diversity of ingredients provided on the proposed menu plan we believe the nourish bowls are a sustainable and realistic alternative for the GNH PWYC program year round. Our improvement from the first service exhibits the concept in the Freakonomics Podcast "Failure is Your Friend"

that failures lead to success because by learning from our mistakes during the first service we made the second service more successful (Cohn, 2015).

Since we were utilizing plant-based proteins, we strategically combined foods to create complete proteins. Appendix 4 describes the vast assortment of different proteins and vegetables which can be utilized to ensure the meal follows the basic principles of food group variety, and diversity from Canada's Food Guide, ensuring a balanced and nutritious meal (Health Canada, 2007).

Though we can't speak directly to how we improved food security, we are confident that the new PWYC lunch menu will foster an environment that increases the variety of healthy, low-cost meals available to the West End community. Our menu plan (Appendix 4) is an attempt to continue to help GNH address and conquer the food insecurity in the surrounding community.

### **Conclusion**

We were able to offer low-cost nutrient dense meals which contributed to the battle against community food insecurity, while also being enjoyed by the majority of the patrons, as confirmed through data analysis. The data also confirmed that the nourish bowls increased quality and variety in comparison to the previous menu option. By following our strategic menu plan, GNH is able to plan and create future nourish bowls. We were able to demonstrate that money is a barrier for healthy eating that can be strategically overcome. By doing so, we hope this will empower community members to be conscious and mindful in their decisions to ensure their meals are both nutrient-rich and cost-effective.

Going forward, GNH could offer temporary volunteer spots in the kitchen so patrons could learn how to make the dishes, which then can be replicated at home. For each meal, they could also offer the recipes for patrons to take home. Continuing to offer these low cost, nutrient dense meals each week, and supplementing each patron with the recipe creates a cascading effect of battling community food insecurity.

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**Appendix 1: Survey**

Sample Community Member Survey

Did you enjoy the meal?

Circle one:                      Yes                      No

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Explain which aspects you were most pleased with? (if applicable)

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How would you suggest the meal to be improved for next time?

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

Updated Sample Community Member Survey (Used for meal 1 & 2 feedback)

Did you enjoy this meal?

Circle one:                      Yes                      No

Why? (if applicable)

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What did you like most about the food served today?

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What changes would you like to see in this meal next time?

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Do you enjoy the current soup and sandwich meals? Why?

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

## **Appendix 2: Critical Reflections**

**Student 1:** I am so thankful that the CBEL aspect of LFS 350 gave me the opportunity to work with GNH. Previous to this course, I was not aware they existed. However, throughout the course of the project I have gotten to know who they are and what they're about, and I could not have asked for a better community partner. Working with GNH has shown me how well asset based community development can foster a sense of community in diverse groups. While working with such a large group proved to be challenging at times, by the end of it each of them felt like partners in my learning experience. This project taught me how challenging yet exciting community based project can be, and that immense persistence is required to see your plans come to fruition. Though my group only utilized one flexible learning time, past group projects have given me an appreciation for how hard it can be to find a common meeting times. Luckily all of group was available on Wednesdays for our intervention.

This course was my first experience with flexible learning and e-lectures, and I have to say it definitely takes some adjustment. I personally felt that it only added to the confusion of the course. However, I did prefer being able to submit work via the online course platforms.

I wish that a standardized summary of the pertinent tutorial information was released, it was easy to miss information given by the TA if groups were talking.

**Student 2:** This CBEL experience at GNH was a great learning experience to integrate knowledge learned in the classroom and adopt into the community. It was a bit of a challenge finding a time for all of us to work together on projects, however, the use of Google docs made this part of assignments much easier to achieve. Luckily, with the space limitations in the kitchen at GNH, it forced us to split up into groups for our cooking days, so we were not all required to be there. Our flexible learning sessions gave us the extra time we needed to meet with our community partner and to discuss strategy. A great moment of significance for me was when we were in the kitchen on our intervention day, the moment we had been planning and preparing for months. I was worried that not everyone would enjoy our meal and we would ruin the whole plan for diversifying the previous menu option. However, my worries were washed away as our group, the current volunteers, and our community partner all worked together as a team in the kitchen. After execution of the meal and the surveys were handed out, there was a huge sense of gratification when reading the positive feedback about our meal. This experience made the

whole project worthwhile. It was a very rewarding experience to be a part of this CBEL at GNH, and has taught me how to integrate course knowledge into practical skills.

**Student 3:** I thoroughly enjoyed the CBEL and LFS 350 experience for it has allowed me to work with a wonderful organization and community partner. The experience was not entirely smooth sailing and moments of frustration did occur. For example, during the initial meetings, there seemed to be a misalignment between our community partner's understanding of our time commitment with our understanding of our overall project deadline. However, we persevered through the challenges by actively communicating and compromising with one another. As for group work, I am thankful to have worked with intelligent peers who motivated one another to stay positive and keep on track. Although, working with new individuals was awkward and tough at first, we luckily avoided any major conflicts and instead made invaluable friendships. I thought the flexible learning opportunities were excellent and allowed time to reflect on knowledge gained in class/ tutorials, and provided set time to work with our community partner, however we only utilize the time once due to our project occurring on Wednesdays. Luckily, Wednesdays worked in our schedules and no conflicts arose. I thought the TED talks and guest lecturers were intriguing and made me see issues in different perspectives. I also appreciated the convenience of online platforms to submit our project progress. Overall, I value this experience for I have grown more as an individual and gained practical work knowledge. Looking forward, I hope future LFS 350 students will be able to continue working with the GNH to improve the PWYC lunch program.

**Student 4:** The CBEL project of this course was an amazing experience, which for the first time allowed me to really take my learning outside of the classroom to make a difference. Through my project, I feel I have really done something practical in the real-world and have for the first time applied my learnings as a LFS student. Since then, it has really enhanced my learning experiences in the faculty and I see it to have the same lasting effects. The difference between sitting in a classroom, learning terminology that describes current issues and actually implementing a change in the community that will address these issues. Doing this within a group, further enhanced my learning experience as it brought new challenges and situations. Being able to do a project, not just alone, but coordinate amongst a group of six was a great experience where I had to exert greater teamwork and interpersonal skills than I have in my other courses thus far. The structure of the course really enabled me to engage with my community

partner, with our entire group attending normal volunteer shifts post intervention, and again after to prepare our new meals. It was my first time having a class with flexible learning, but I thought they were used very effectively in this course. They were placed in weeks so that we could do the readings and content in our own time, whilst having time to really focus on our CBEL project. In the end, I really hope our steps into successfully changing the menu of the meal program will continue to be developed by both GNH and potentially future students who get assigned the program.

**Student 5:** I felt so honored to be part of the CBEL project. I truly enjoyed that how LFS 350 made us leave the university, go out to the community, and try to apply theory knowledge into practice. At the beginning of the term, I was so eager about our project, although after few weeks I was overwhelmed by so much uncertainty and hesitation. After each meeting with our community partner, I was more enthusiastic and motivated by witnessing how engaged and committed she is to GNH. Collaborating with her made me realized that gaining food justice for all the members of the society can begin at smart scale.

During our project, we were able to prepare a nutritious meal for patrons to improve food security. This project taught me how communication and collaboration with different people and perspectives can be tough sometimes, however rewarding at the end. The flexible learning experiences, such as blog posting helped us to stay on track with our project goals and deadlines. At the same time, they were available to our community partner, which helped us to communicate and inform her about our accomplishments and obstacles.

Moving on, I deeply hope that PWYC project would be carried on by the next year LFS 350 students to burden their understanding of food literacy, and also improve food security for Vancouverites.

**Student 6:** Having the opportunity to partake in such a meaningful CBEL experience at the GNH was rewarding in such a diverse set of ways. This was the first time I worked with a community partner to achieve an ultimate goal, which has enriched my knowledge in professional communication skills. Furthermore, reaching out to the community and utilizing the information I have acquired throughout my undergraduate studies allowed myself to have a better understanding of what the “real world” entails. Unforeseen obstacles were prevalent and spurious, testing my ability to consistently be highly adaptable and level-headed. I am very

content with our overall success as we truly did make a meaningful difference in the surrounding community of the GNH. This particular CBEL experience has shaped myself to acquire skills and knowledge that is not attainable in a classroom setting. Therefore, I am extremely thankful for taking on this challenge and ensuring to make the most out of it. Looking forward, I am going to continually strive to get involved and reach out to the community. I feel that I learn life lessons that have a greater meaning and will be carried with myself for the rest of my life. I am determined to continually make a difference in the lives of others, just as we did in this respective CBEL experience. Lastly, I hope our project will serve as another stepping stone for the future LFS 350 class that will continue our progress at the GNH.

### Appendix 3: Raw Data & Data Analysis

Meal 1= Thai peanut, chickpea nourish bowl.

Meal 2= Mongolian tofu nourish bowl

Meal 1	Yes	No	Mixed	Total no. of responses
Number of responses	17	2	2	21
Meal 2	Yes	No	Mixed	Total no. of responses
Number of responses	11	3	3	17

Significant results analyzed and recorded in open-ended responses

- 3 people (62%) from meal 1 commented on the variety of ingredients being something they liked as it was healthy and tasty
- 9 people (53%) from meal 2 expressed liking for the meal because it was healthy.
- 8 people (39%) from meal 2 commented on the rice being too bland and dry, and needing more toppings or sauce.

## Appendix 4: Future Menu Plan & Recipes

The goal of the nourish bowl framework listed below is to strategically combine fresh seasonal vegetables and protein sources to create a well-balanced meal with each new nourish bowl combination. The framework below gives a step-by-step guide to assembling a new and exciting meal and gives several example recipes. A great amount of variety is possible while still following the template below, it also allows flexibility based on what is available to GNH kitchen at the time.

### 1. Protein

The first step to creating a wholesome nourish bowl is selecting protein sources; choosing a meat, eggs or tofu ensures a complete protein, otherwise skillful combinations are required. A meal with a complete protein contains all the essential amino acids (building blocks of proteins), meaning that we must obtain it from the diet. As shown in the diagram below, there are endless combinations that can create a complete protein, offering many vegetarian and vegan options. As shown below possible combinations are (a) nuts or seeds with legumes (b) legumes with grains and (c) grains with dairy. It is important to note that while a tasty combination of nuts or seeds with dairy do not create a complete protein.

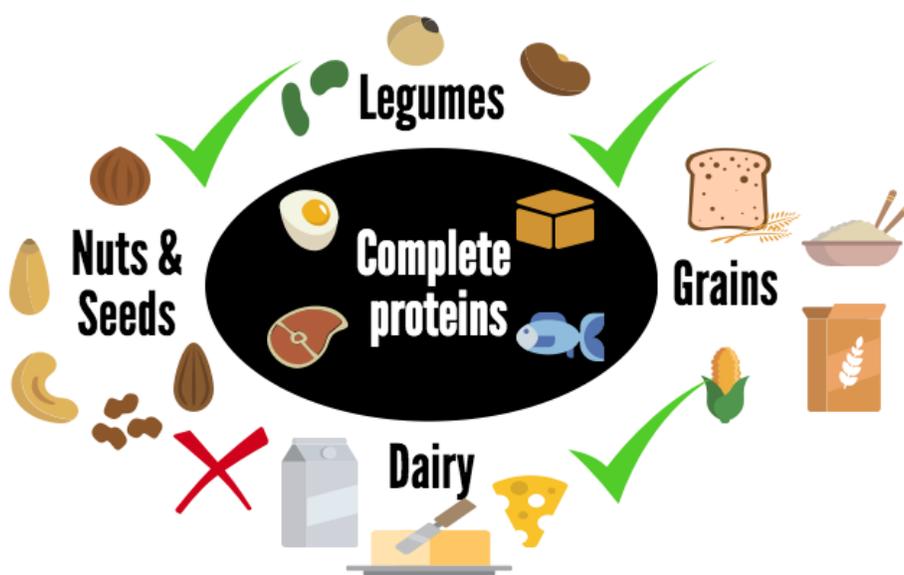


Figure 4. Creating Complete Proteins

**Possible combinations:**

While it may seem somewhat restrictive, there is actually a lot of flexibility when developing complete protein combinations. Combinations can be created that include the sauces, carbohydrate or main components of the bowl. For example, a dish with a legume could be topped with a peanut garnish to create a complete protein (see example recipe 1 below). Alternately a grain can be topped with a dairy based sauce (see example 3 recipe below). Be as creative as you want with your combinations to influence diversity and to keep things new and exciting amongst your new complete protein meal ideas. There are also a few plant based proteins that can be used on their own and do not need to be combined to complete a protein.

Other combinations include:

- Black beans and sesame seeds
- Cheese and corn
- Coconut and lentils
- Chickpeas and cashews
- Brown rice and beans
- Bread and nut butter
- Brown rice and lentils
- Chickpeas and brown rice

Plant based complete protein:

- Soy - Edamame, Tofu
- Quinoa
- Buckwheat

**2. Carbohydrates**

The next step in building your nourish bowl is choosing which carbohydrate you want to use as the base. They generally fall into the grains section of figure 1 above and can be useful in combining to complete the protein. Also keep in mind if you are using quinoa or buckwheat as your base, you do not need to use any other protein source as they are complete already.

Examples:

- Rice: white, brown,
- Pastas: wheat noodles, buckwheat soba noodles,
- Breads
- Yams
- Quinoa

### 3. Sauce

Next, decide on a sauce which will ensure that the nourish bowls are delicious and might inspire you on deciding on the type of vegetables you want to integrate into your dish. Sauces can be served hot or cold depending on its contents and the style of bowl. Also keep in mind that your sauce choice, such as the Thai Peanut Sauce below, may serve as an easy and cost efficient way to complete the protein.

#### **Sauce Recipes (35 servings)**

Thai Peanut Sauce:

9 cloves of garlic

1 ¼ cup sesame oil

1 ¾ cup smooth natural peanut butter

⅓ cup grated ginger

1 ¾ fresh lime juice

1 ¼ cup low-sodium tamari

Mongolian Sauce:

⅓ cup cornstarch

1 ¾ cup reduced sodium soy sauce

⅓ rice wine

¾ cup sesame oil

¼ cup minced garlic

1 ½ tbsp grated ginger

½ cup oyster sauce

**Teriyaki Sauce:**

- 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups rice vinegar
- 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups low-sodium tamari
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cups sesame oil
- 18 cloves of garlic
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup grated ginger
- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp red pepper flakes
- 3 tbsp cornstarch

**Coconut Curry:**

- $\frac{1}{2}$  coconut oil
- 18 cloves of garlic
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup cumin seeds
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup grated ginger
- 2 tbsp ground turmeric
- 2 tbsp ground coriander
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp red pepper flakes
- 6 cans light coconut milk

**4. Veggies**

Last but certainly not least, vegetables! A seasonal variety of vegetables ensures the bowls are packed with lots of micronutrients. Generally, a choice of around 4 vegetables creates a great mix without being too cumbersome to assemble. You may choose on preparation style or mix and match from below.

Some options include but are not limited to:

- Spinach
- Kale
- Carrots
- Beets
- Zucchini

- Squash
- Yams
- Cauliflower
- Tomato
- Cabbage
- Celery
- Pepper
- Bok Choy
- Green Beans
- Corn
- Mushrooms

Mix and match at least four different vegetables and decide how you want to cook them. A mix of cooking varieties, such as raw and sautéed vegetables with a grated garnish, ensures a combination of textures to increase flavor and diversity.

Preparation methods:

(a) Chop and serve raw

(b) Bake

Pretty much any vegetables can be baked together on one tray if they are cut to a uniform size. Mix with vegetable oil and spices, place on a cooking sheet in one flat layer and bake for 25-45 minutes, stirring every 15 minutes until desired tenderness is achieved. Baking hearty vegetables require a little more time in the oven so make sure to get them in early!

(b) Boil

Boiling is a quick and easy way to soften up vegetables to ensure everyone is able to enjoy them. Similar to baking, a uniform size is desirable. Add to a boiling pot of water and cook until softened.

(c) Sautee

Sautéing is another great way to cook vegetables quickly but requires a little more attention. A great way to add extra flavour is to start with oil warmed in a pan and add spices, which infuses the spices in the oil. Thus, the vegetables that are subsequently added will soak up all the flavours of the spices. Onions, garlic and/or ginger can also add lots of flavour to sautéed vegetables.

(d) Finely chop or grate for garnish

- Herbs: cilantro, green onion
- Nuts: Peanuts, Cashews, Almonds
- Seeds: Sesame, sunflower

Once you have decided on all your ingredients, build your nourish bowl and enjoy!

## Appendix 5

### **Budget**

The goal of the GNH community lunch program is to serve cost-effective meal that does not compromise quality or nutrition. Our teams goal was continue this service while adding some variety to the menu. We aimed to keep the cost of our meal low so that it could be served regularly. This was achieved by selecting low-cost ingredients from their current inventory as well as utilizing available harvest produce from the GNH farm.