

CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT SERIES: ZEST 'N ZING

OBJECTIVE: CREATE A FOODIE AND FARMER EVENT FEATURING A RECEPTION WITH LOCAL FOODS AND BEVERAGES AND A COOKING CHALLENGE USING SPECIAL INGREDIENTS.

OVERVIEW

This event has two major components: a reception featuring local foods and beverages, and a head-to-head cooking challenge between two teams, each comprised of a chef, a farmer and a media personality. A team of celebrity judges - plus one judge selected from the audience - choose the winner.

In the pilot, each team was given an amount of money to purchase items for the food preparation. In addition, they were provided pork and cheese products to include in the creation of an appetizer, an entrée and a dessert. Participants each paid \$25-\$35 to attend. Attendees were encouraged to donate to a food bank. Additional funds donated by sponsors were used to purchase items for “swag bags” presented to attendees.

Prior to planning this event, please review the Steps to Professional Program Planning resource located on the KFB Intranet.

TIMELINE

Months in Advance

- Determine your target audience
 - In urban areas, this may be “foodies interested in learning more about local food and agriculture” in a fun, relaxed environment
 - In a more rural setting, this may be “at-home chefs” interested in a fun night out
- Appoint a committee and assign specific duties
- Set your event date early to allow for adequate planning and promotion
 - Planning a year in advance is recommended
 - Check community calendars for possible conflicts or competing events
- Create a budget/Determine an entry fee
 - Identify local businesses who may be interested in helping sponsor the event
 - A local appliance dealer might provide the appliances your chefs need
 - Determine if celebrities require a fee
 - Consider including a charitable donation to the local food bank
- Select a venue with the audience in mind. If your target is “urban foodies,” the location should be convenient for them
 - Attendance for the first year may be lower than expected. It’s better to have a smaller, filled room than many empty seats in a large room
 - Your audience should be able to see the cooking competition, so a raised stage with mirrors or a camera feed is recommended. It is also recommended space be allowed for the judges to be seated on stage with mirrors showing the foods they are sampling

- Plan a projection screen behind the teams for showing a competition countdown clock and for recognizing sponsors
- Check/comply with local fire codes
- Confirm adequate electrical connections for cooking
- Confirm adequate room for appliances, tables, mirrors, displays, seating, etc.
- Select judges for the cooking competition
 - Pre-select and gain commitment from two celebrity judges
 - Select the third judge from the audience by sending “scouts” to interact with the guests during the reception
- Select the cooking teams and obtain early commitments
- Determine a registration method – online or at the door
 - Advance ticket sales will help you know how much food to order for the reception
 - Obtain email addresses from the registrants for follow-up purposes
- Use a free program such as Canva to create promotional graphics for the event
 - Create a registration form and other promotional materials
 - Design a program booklet with tear-off food and drink tickets and find a way to track them. It may work best to have a ticket punched at various stations

Two Weeks Prior

- Registration closes
- Confirm details with vendors to be featured during the reception

One Week Prior

- Send reminder email
 - Include instructions attendees may need prior to the event
- Confirm ALL details (room rental, teams, judges, volunteers, etc.)

One Day Prior

- Print final roster / name tags
- Set up location (if possible/applicable)
- Secure ingredients for cooking competition

Immediately Following the Event

- Help tear down / clean up location
- Send “thank you” notes to the chef teams, judges and others
- Email evaluations to participants (if applicable)
- Hold a debriefing session to immediately identify items to address at the next event
- Monitor local news outlets, blogs, etc., for coverage of the event

SWAG BAGS

Ask guests to complete a questionnaire about the event that they turn in as they leave to receive a swag bag. Consider insulated reusable shopping bags with the event logo and any sponsor logos printed on them. Items in the bags could include items such as the following:



- An apron with the Zest 'n Zing logo
- An oven mitt
- A roll-up cutting board
- A spatula
- A cheese grater
- A pizza cutter
- Recipes and coupons

INVOLVING YOUR COUNTY LEADERS

Opportunities for your county leadership team and other motivated volunteers of all ages.



Volunteer Opportunities

- Communications team, logistics team, contact team

Micro-Volunteering Opportunities

- Contact potential sponsors/secure donations for swag bags
- Help with setup and/or clean up
- Registration area
- Swag bag area
- Catering and facilities contact
- Backstage and chef assistance
- Celebrity and media assistance
- Food station assistance (serve samples)
- Mingling and selecting the guest judge
- Sharing portions of the event live on social media

PUBLICITY

Focus promotion efforts on your target audience. Bringing farmers and ranchers to such an event would be easy, but you would be “preaching to the choir.”



Tips

- Work with local media personalities to promote the event. This is easier if you also engage them as a chef team member or a celebrity judge.
 - Call into the program and ask for details even though you know them. It will add to the excitement.
- Post flyers at preschools, local “foodie” markets and wine stores.
- If the chefs are bloggers, ask them to include details in their blogs.

Tools to Help Cover Your Event:

- Media Alert – an invitation designed to inform the media about your event and entice them to attend.
 - Provide event details: who, what, where, when and why.
 - Keep it short, no more than one page.
 - Send the alert via email at least 24 hours prior to the event.
- Post-Event News Release
 - A concise summary of the event sent to media.

[How to create a Media Alert](#)

[How to Write a Press Release](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Social media event invitations are (mostly) free and are an easy way to spread your message quickly.



Pre-Event Push

- Create an event and design a promotional graphic using a free program such as Canva.
- Consider paying a little to promote your event.
- Highlight the basics: who, what, when, where and why.

Realtime Sharing

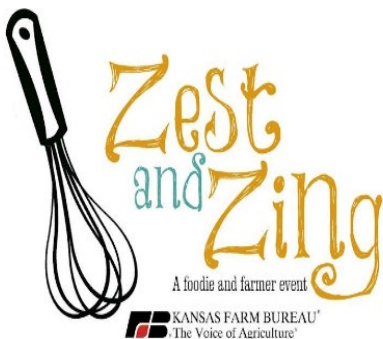
- Post photos, live-tweets, Facebook Live, commentary, etc., as the event unfolds.

Post-Event Follow-Up

- Provide information about the event such as total number of participants, quotes from attendees and what was unique or educational about the event.

IDEAS FOR SMALLER-SCALE PROGRAMS

Start at a pace your budget can handle.



- A Taste of Country
- A Taste of Kansas
- Breakfast on the Farm
- Battle of the Chefs
- Local Farms-Local Foods
- Cooking Local

OTHER



- Plan a registration table for participants to check-in and receive their program and food/drink tickets.
- Set aside an area for informational displays focusing on local food banks and ag commodity groups.
- If planning a reception prior to the event, be sure to have seating available and/or exhibits during this time.
- Maintain high excitement levels with applause, etc. and by selecting an emcee who is good at adlibbing.
- Have farmers and ranchers assigned as greeters and resources at each food station to answer questions. Or have the farmers provide more information during the cooking competition.
- Begin and end your event on time.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Canva.com