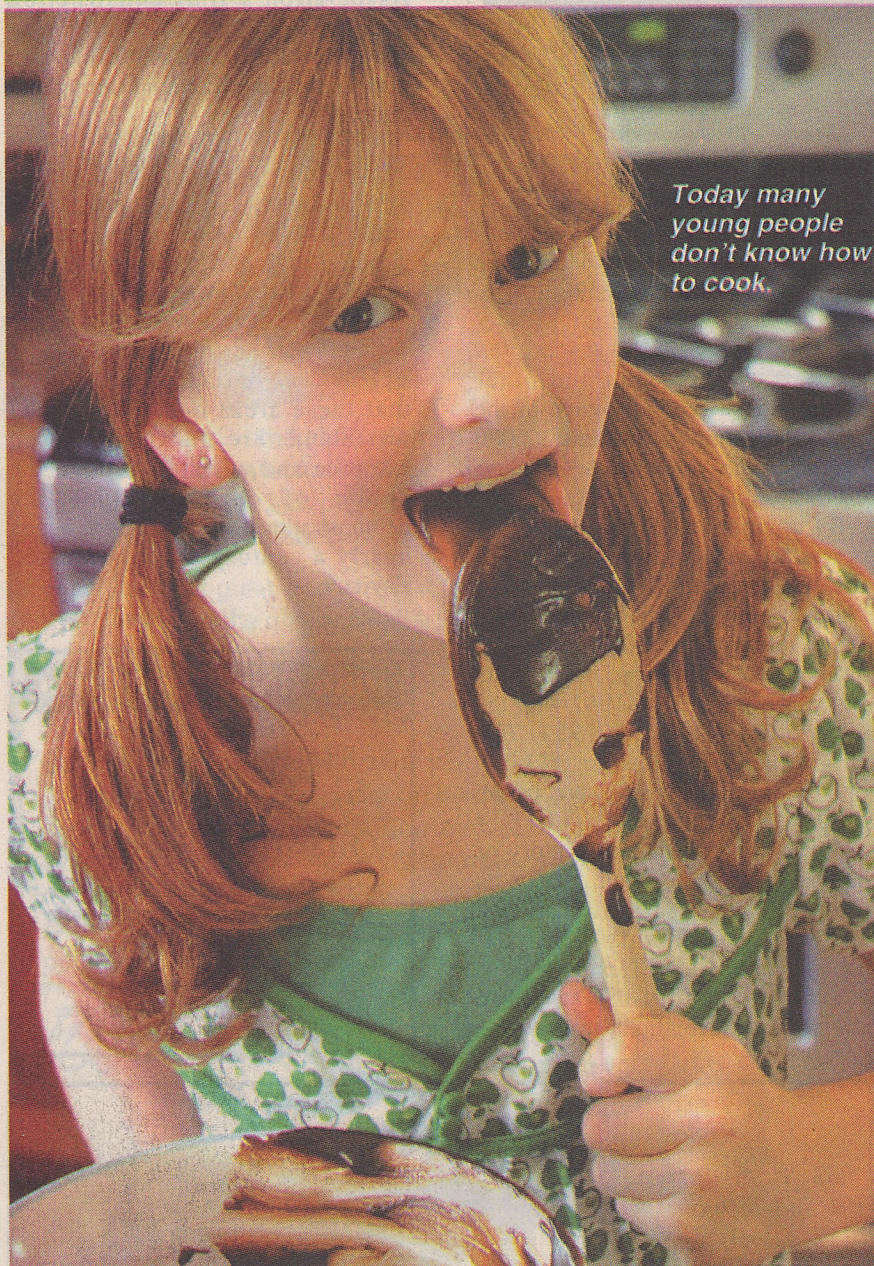


ON THE TABLE

Once learning to cook was one of the signs of growing up but with fewer and fewer people able to cook a nutritious meal for themselves, more and more groups are calling for action

By Emily Manns



Today many young people don't know how to cook.

Boiling an egg isn't rocket science, but it's more than most kids these days can handle in the kitchen.

Between working parents who have no time to cook, and children whose cooking knowledge doesn't

exceed pushing a few buttons on the microwave, families are spending less time in the kitchen preparing nutritious meals and more money on convenient and less time-intensive food options.

This may better suit their lifestyle,

but convenience rarely – if ever – comes without a price, and when it comes to food choices, that price can become quite high, as Huron County Health Unit dietitian Amy MacDonald explains.

“In the long-term, cooking from scratch can be more cost effective, but the issue is the initial investment to be able to purchase all of those ingredients. You can't just purchase the exact amount you need, you have to buy them in larger volumes. It costs less if you know what you're doing,” said MacDonald.

Many people don't know what to do with all of those extra ingredients when they're done cooking, and as a result most of it ends up going to waste. They don't know how to preserve it, and so their only option is to throw it out before it goes bad.

Then, once the hassle of cooking becomes too much, people instinctively fall back on the convenience of the prepackaged and canned alternatives, which may have a lower price tag on the container, but what they don't realize is that they are effectively cutting out a large portion of the daily vitamins and nutrients that you can really only get from fresh foods.

“Food companies have done too good a job marketing convenience and not enough time marketing good nutrition,” said Mary Carver, member of the Ontario Home Economics Association (OHEA).

Carver is a professional home economist (P.H.Ec) who has been with OHEA for almost 20 years, supporting its efforts to improve the quality of home and family life by training professional home economists, equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfill that goal.

The OHEA is also a strong advocate for food literacy in schools,