

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: A PRACTICAL COOKERY PROGRAMME FOR INDIVIDUALS LIVING WITH EARLY-ONSET DEMENTIA



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INTRODUCTION

- Early-onset dementia is associated with functional nutrition-related impairments beyond malnutrition risk
- Executive dysfunction affects planning, sequencing, attention, and time management in food-related tasks
- Impairments impact shopping, meal preparation, and meal organisation
- These challenges contribute to reduced independence, frustration, and social withdrawal
- Functional and socially supportive nutrition interventions remain limited in dementia care

- Weekly sessions combined:
 - hands-on preparation of simple Mediterranean-style meals
 - practical strategies targeting forgetfulness, meal timing, and food visibility
 - shared meals to reinforce learning and social engagement
 - Focus on key nutrients such as fluids, protein, fibre, and the Mediterranean diet
- Qualitative feedback was obtained from participants on each day and at programme completion

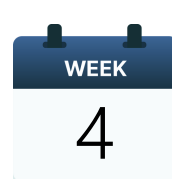
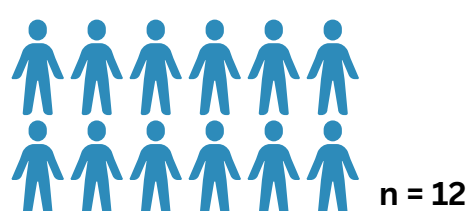
AIMS

- 1 To evaluate the impact of a structured 4-week social cooking programme on food-related confidence and practical skills in individuals with young-onset dementia.
- 2 To examine the influence of shared cooking activities on social participation and wellbeing in individuals with young-onset dementia.

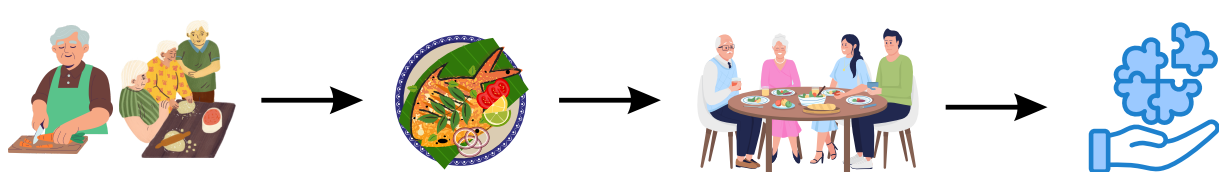
METHODOLOGY

1 Setting & Participants

- A 4-week social cookery programme was developed collaboratively by the Sláintecare Community Food and Nutrition Worker and the Senior Dietician with Wexford Memory Assessment and Support Service (WEXMASS).
- The programme was delivered at the Alzheimer's Society of Ireland Activity Lodge in Enniscorthy
- Participants were attendees of the lodge living with young-onset dementia



2 Implementation



RESULTS

- All participants completed the programme (0% attrition).
- Improvements were observed in cooking confidence, meal timing ability, and willingness to try new foods.
- Participants reported increased water intake and longer sleep duration.
- Improved independence in meal preparation and routine establishment was noted.
- Engagement remained high throughout, with consistent participation and sustained social interaction.
- High acceptability of the programme was reported by participants.
- Qualitative feedback collected at programme completion reflected increased confidence and enjoyment in cooking.

DISCUSSION

- Findings suggest structured, group-based cooking can enhance functional food skills, confidence, and health-related behaviours in young-onset dementia.
- Embedding cognitive and functional strategies within meaningful activities may support everyday independence.
- The group-based format likely enhanced motivation and sustained participation through social interaction.
- The intervention is low-cost, scalable, and directly targets function-related barriers
- Overall, results support activity-based, socially engaged approaches in dementia care.