

How to Plan a Local Film “Festival”

Melinda Hemmelgarn, M.S., R.D.
foodsleuth@mchsi.com

Why use film in nutrition education? Just about everyone enjoys a good movie. We get to sit back, relax and be entertained with a combination of music and images that inevitably touch our emotions. Better than a “talking head” presentation, and more time-efficient than a book discussion, a film screening turns education into an event. Add some fresh, local food and you’ve set the stage for a film “festival.”

Note: research support: Ellen Cottone, M.S., R.D. and Carol Byrd-Bredbenner, PhD, R.D. report that the film, “Super Size Me” raised consciousness and advanced stage of change for reducing fast food intake among young adults (July, 2007 JADA; Perspectives in Practice; pg. 1197-1203).

How to get started:

1. Identify your audience. Who do you want to reach? Students, the general public, political action groups, or colleagues in public health and nutrition?
2. Select a topic and choose a time frame. You might want to show two short documentaries, or one longer feature, allowing time for discussion. Preview your film to get a feel for sensitive issues, and prepare for discussion.
3. Secure a location: school auditorium or classroom; a movie theatre, church, community hall, library or campus meeting room. Adequate parking, restrooms, and access to a kitchen are a plus.
4. Contact the producer to see if there is a screening fee. If you are using the film as a fund raiser, the producer may want a percentage. If you are showing the film free of charge for educational purposes, the producer may simply ask for a plug to a website, or contact information. Producers can also provide valuable insight into the making of the film to share with your audience.
5. Arrange for equipment basics: a computer or DVD player, speakers and screen. Depending on the size of your group, you may need a microphone. Having a technology assistant makes for a less stressful screening.
6. Organize a discussion panel. You can lead a discussion after the film or invite a panel of experts. Include members of the community who would be willing to speak to the subject and serve as local resources. Consider a microphone for panelists and/or audience questions.
7. Find a sponsor. You can host a film event free of charge – but if you need help with travel expenses, honoraria, or funds to cover the venue, equipment or refreshments, then seek out a sponsor who shares a belief in your cause. Invite them to participate on the panel, and thank them in your publicity.
8. Publicize your event. Use the newspaper (event announcement or ad), library, church or school bulletin, newsletter, radio, TV, posters, flyers on kiosks, website, and social media to get the word out. Make note of newspaper deadlines for event calendars. Libraries and theatres may need months-in-advance notice to reserve rooms and print an announcement in their newsletter/calendar.

What to bring to the event:

- * A set of talking points to help start the post-screening conversation. Many films have associated websites that provide discussion notes.
- * A short handout with a set of definitions, action steps, resources or contacts for more information, plus a note of thanks to sponsors who made the event possible.
- * Food/beverages. Serve items that fit with the theme of the event. For example, if showing a film on fair trade coffee, brew some.
- * A pre and post evaluation to collect general feedback, or specific change in attitude or intent to change behavior.

Film ideas and participant resources:

- * "As We Sow;" (2004), Jan Weber: www.aswesow.com
 - * Chris Bedford Films: www.chrisbedfordfilms.com/recent.htm
 - * "Black Gold: A film about coffee and trade." (2005) www.blackgoldmovie.com/
 - * Bullfrog films: www.bullfrogfilms.com/index.html
 - * The Film Connection: www.filmconnection.org
 - * "FLOW: For the Love of Water." (2008). How did a handful of corporations steal our water? www.flowthefilm.com/
 - * "Food Inc." (2008) Robert Kenner. Traces the industrial source of supermarket food. http://robertkennerfilms.com/home_return.html
 - * "Fridays at the Farm." (2007) R. Hoffmann. How Community Supported Agriculture connects people to food. www.coyopa.com/fridays-at-the-farm.html
 - * "The Future of Food." (2004) D. Garcia. Genetic modification, seed patenting and sustainable alternatives. www.thefutureoffood.com
 - * "In Good Heart: Soil and the Mystery of Fertility." (2009) D. Garcia. www.ingoodheart.com/
 - * "King Corn." (2007) A. Woolf, I. Cheney, C. Ellis. Corn from seed to plate. www.pbs.org/independentlens/kingcorn/
 - * Media Rights/Media that Matters: <http://www.mediathatmattersfest.org/>
 - * Media Education Foundation: www.mediaed.org/
 - * "The Price of Sugar." (2007) Bill Haney. www.thepriceofsugar.com/
 - * "Ripe for Change." (2006) Jed Riffe: www.californiadreamseries.org/rfc.htm
 - * Rural Routes Film Festival: www.ruralroutefilms.com/
 - * "What's on Your Plate?" (2009) A documentary about kids and food politics. www.aubinpictures.com/woyp/index.htm
-
- * Check your local library, independent theatre, video rental outlet, University faculty, student films, or Google "your topic + film."
 - * Distribute local food fact sheets: <http://environmentalcommons.org/resources.html>

* Most important: Enjoy yourself! Film makes education FUN!

.....