

A Seat at our Table



Organisation:

Sister Project

Website: www.sisterproject.org.au

Focus: Women in the process of empowerment / New Community Members / Professionals / Career Seekers

Picture: Tamara Rodriguez, Project Coordinator and Chef of A Seat at our Table

Judith and her mum originally came from Central America approximately 7 years ago. They have teenage children and are passionate about cooking. They are interested in having a catering business, cooking traditional dishes for the local Latin community. Due to the different social, language and cultural barriers, they have struggled to get started and were unsure of registrations, health and safety protocols and lacked confidence in moving forward.

As a result of this project Judith, her mum, and over 20 women have felt confident to step into paid roles using Sister Project's actionable step and proformas for planning and facilitating cooking demonstrations for the wider community on behalf of City of Swan and also for Creating Communities.

Approach

Initially Judith did not feel confident to facilitate a cooking demonstration to members of the wider community so Sister Project encouraged them to share her culture through food, stories, pictures and videos of home. This was content that she was an expert in, removing any anxiety about knowing the content of what she was teaching to others. Involved Judith in decision-making to begin with they invited Judith to support the cooking class in a non-facilitating role created a supportive environment for women to feel safe to 'have a go'.

Before leading a community group, Habiba, a participant from Iraq, faced challenges in demonstrating dish preparation. After joining the project, she gained access to the Sister Project kitchen, learned to use the appliances, and received support to practice necessary English terminology.

Outcomes

- Engaged women from diverse cultural backgrounds who had not previously participated in community programs.
- Cooking demonstrations fostered social cohesion by encouraging connection and mutual respect.
- Participants gained confidence and practical skills, with some moving into facilitator and leadership roles.
- The program was co-designed with participants, ensuring cultural authenticity and responsiveness.
- Strengthened the volunteer model and enhanced organisational capacity to serve diverse communities.

Key Learnings

- Creating an inclusive supportive environment. Foster a nurturing atmosphere where participants can engage in activities within small groups, connecting with others who share similar experiences and backgrounds.
- Intentional design for inclusion. Inclusion is not a spontaneous occurrence; it requires careful planning. Establishing culturally safe, comfortable, and adaptable volunteering opportunities is crucial for involving underrepresented groups, particularly migrant women. This process should be collaborative, ensuring that women actively participate in both the design and execution of the project.