



18 APR, 2025

## Cook + Connect building healthy communities in Roma

Maranoa Today, Maranoa



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**By Isabella MacDonald**

Cook + Connect is an innovative community-based cooking program supported by Healthy Communities, SouthWest Hospital and Health Service.

It is designed to empower participants who live in South West Queensland to make healthier food choices.

The initiative aims to leave participants with essential cooking skills, nutritional knowledge and confidence to prepare healthy and affordable meals.

Participants engage in interactive cooking sessions where they learn to prepare a variety of healthy dishes while connecting with other community members.

Many connections and friendships have blossomed from these classes.

They foster a sense of community by encouraging participants to share their experiences and meals.

This round of Cook + Connect classes was hosted at the Roma Bungil Cultural Centre by community nutritionist Alex McKenna and University of the Sunshine Coast student dieticians

Michelle Phillips and Hannah Larsen.

"I've made some nice connections during the classes and taken these recipes home and made them for my family," participant Nat Argus said.

By promoting achievable healthier eating habits, the program helps to reduce risk factors for diet-related chronic disease.

All participants have reported an increase in confidence in using available ingredients effectively, planning balanced meals and preparing nutritious dishes; as well as sharing their recipes with friends and family.

Join us; Cook + Connect is more than just a cooking class. It's a movement towards healthier, more connected communities.

Whether you're looking to improve your cooking skills, learn more about nutrition or simply meet new people, Cook + Connect welcomes you.

The classes are free and community members can access the class by completing the Wellness My Way Health Check and engaging with a health coach for a referral.

Scan the QR code for more information or search Join Wellness my Way online.



Take the health check



Student dieticians Hannah Larsen and Michelle Phillips, and participants Isabella Macdonald, Nat Argus and Marie Mawn enjoying their meal together.



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Making homemade naan bread during the Cook + Connect session.



Participants engaged in a Lentil Dahl cooking lesson.



Student dieticians Hannah Larsen and Michelle Phillips teaching participants how to make the noodle stir fry recipe.



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Participants learnt to make healthy and affordable meals while also connecting with other community members.