

Retaining Participants

Here are a few proven strategies for keeping your students motivated and connected throughout the classes, and coming back week-to-week:

Join the A Taste of African Heritage Facebook Group Page. Facebook's popularity is in part due the fact that, as human beings, we love sharing what we enjoy, what inspires us, and what we are working on, and celebrating each other's accomplishments. Inviting your students to join Oldways' [A Taste of African Heritage Facebook Group](#) page is a wonderful way to connect students outside of class and to encourage peer-to-peer motivation. Invite students to share photos of their homework assignments, foods they've discovered, African heritage restaurants they've visited, or heritage dishes that they've created at home. Post highlights from your class to share with others. Oldways staff will keep the page filled with motivational statements, recipes, information, and articles to give continual fuel to your students.

Keep the Student Handbooks Until Graduation Day. It's easy to attend a first class, receive the materials for all subsequent classes, and decide to not come back –you have all the information! Past teachers recognized this and decided to keep the Student Handbooks until graduation day. Have students return their Handbooks at the end of each class, after writing down the week's homework assignment. Let students know during the first class that if they come to at least 4 out of the 6 classes, they will receive the student handbook as a graduation gift to keep. Having this cookbook/nutrition guide at the end is a nice motivator to see out the program.

Add a Brief Fitness Component. When people know they'll be getting their day's exercise in as well as a cooking tutorial and meal, they are more likely to kill two birds with one stone. If you have the time, offer a 20-minute group walk or simple exercise class at the beginning of each class. We have some of our teacher's favorite regimes on our [Oldways Youtube Page](#), including African drumming music.

Assign Class Duties to Students. A Taste of African Heritage was designed as a cooking and *tasting* class. If your class happens around a mealtime – lunch or dinner – you may want to offer more robust plates for the students to enjoy. Assign dishes to students who volunteer to make food for the following class. In Lesson 1, students learn how to prepare Jollof Rice and Spicy Chickpeas. Assign these dishes to volunteers to bring in for Lesson 2, to pair the rice and chickpeas with the lesson's greens dishes for a full African heritage plate. And so on and so on. You can also ask for volunteers to bring in paper plates, cups and silverware, or drinks (e.g. water or hibiscus tea) each week. This responsibility and direct involvement with each week's class adds more incentive to be there each week.

Create an Inviting Atmosphere. If you love to cook with music, bring in your favorite tunes to cook to! If you have any kitchen decorations, cloths, or tapestries (especially from African diasporan regions) that you don't mind bringing in, showcase those. Make eating together special, in any ways that you wish!