

Module 3: Whatza Cookin' Centers – Chef Constance's Special on Blue

Chef Constance's Special on Blue is one of six learning centers. It is designed to help children, youth and adults discover whatza cookin' with the season of Advent. Participants will make prayer card holders and receive several "Prayers for Stirrin' Hearts" to nurture a sense of intrigue and longing or desire for intimacy with God throughout the seasons of the church year.

Kitchen utensils will be used to create a sense of continuity between the theme and the content of each learning center. Color-coded strips may be attached to wooden or paper Stirrin' Spoons to highlight the key learning at each center. "Reasons for the Seasons" Party Planners include a "Stir-factor" sheet for each season along with several ideas for celebrating each one at home. The "Stirrin' Up a Celebration" menu cards will engage participants in learning some of the essential ingredients associated with each season. "Happy New Year" Party Packs are suggested to transport are suggested to transport crafts and other learning materials. The "Please Wait to Be Seated" Gathering Activities are designed to introduce and distribute these resources for participant use as they move through the Whatza Cookin' Learning Centers.

The Leader's Notes for this activity, along with any needed preparations and supplies, are outlined below. A Program Planning Grid (PDF file) is available to assist you in coordinating the details and tasks involved. You may wish to display signs to distinguish between the gathering activities and the learning centers. A "Whatza Cookin'" pattern/sign design (PDF file) is provided for this purpose. You may wish to print the name of the learning center on the bottom half of the hat.

Approximate time: 10 minutes

Equipment and Supplies:

- Plastic placemats or tablecloths
- One bowl or aluminum pie tin per family or participant
- [Church Year Wheel](#) (PDF file)
- ["Prayers for Stirrin' Hearts" sheet](#) (PDF file)
- [Reference sheet for Advent](#) (PDF file)
- [Whatza Cookin' sign design](#) (PDF file)
- Envelopes
- One ½ " x 14-18" strip of blue cloth or crepe paper per individual or family
- Plaster of Paris
- Plastic Gloves

Option: You might use salt dough and a hand-shaped cookie cutter in place of the glove and the Plaster Paris.

Leader's Notes:

Scan through the activity outline and adapt your plans to honor the time you have scheduled for your overall event. You may wish to recruit a few people to complete some of the initial steps involved. Plaster Paris is recommended to make the hand-shaped prayer cardholders and they will take several hours to dry.

The facilitator for this center may consider actually portraying Chef Constance. A costume might simply consist of a chef hat (see pattern), a nametag and an apron, along with a few props, e.g. a large bowl and a spoon.

Cut one blue cloth or crepe paper strip for each family or participant to attach to a Stirrin' Spoon. You may wish to write the name of the season on each strip or give participants the option to do so. Lay out a few extra Stirrin' Spoons for participants who did not participate in the Special Guest Check-in gathering

activity. Make a copy of the “Prayers for Stirrin’ Hearts” sheet for each family or participant. Cut into 4 cards and place in envelopes for distribution.

You might wish to display an enlarged copy of the Church Year Wheel and highlight or outline the season of Advent with a blue crayon or marker. (There is a copy of the wheel on the back page of the Reasons for the Season Party Planner so this would not be absolutely necessary.) You might also decorate this center with blue balloons to make it even more festive.

Use the following instructions to make a prayer holder.

****Participants will need a partner to accomplish this craft.**

- 1) Hang up a clothesline to dry the hand-shaped molds.
- 2) Place 2 cups of Plaster of Paris in a large freezer bag, add 1 cup of water according to the instructions on your package.
- 3) Encourage one person to hold the plastic glove upside down while their partner slowly and carefully begins to pour the plaster into the glove. Massage the plaster down into the tips of each finger.
- 4) Pour enough plaster into the glove to cover the base of the thumb
- 5) Tie a knot in the glove opening or provide small pieces of wire to secure it.
- 6) As the mold is hardening, the glove may be placed in a plastic bowl to pose the hand for “holding” the cards. Gently bend some of the fingers upward. Be careful that the bend doesn’t sever the finger as it dries.
- 7) Use masking tape to label the bowls or pans and set aside the mold to dry or solidify in the plastic glove, preferably overnight.
- 8) Cut out the “Prayers for Stirring Hearts” and place them in the hand-shaped cardholder along with a few blank slips of paper.

Alternative Plan: You might also use salt dough and a hand-shaped cookie cutter. Bend the hand into a position for “holding” the cards. This option would engage participants in actually making the cardholders.

Refer them to the stir-factor sheet in their “Reasons for the Seasons” Party Planners as you share some of the characteristics of the season of Advent. Point out that this seasons marks a time to prepare our hearts to celebrate the birth of Jesus and his promise to come again. It also marks the beginning of a new Church Year.

Activity:

Introduce yourself and the season associated with your Whatza Cookin’ Learning Center. Point out the significance of the color “blue.” Explain that colors are often used to identify or represent things, e.g. an athletic team or a national flag. And, just as the color green is related the season of summer because it is a time when many seeds grow and flourish and the color “white” is related to winter because many people encounter and experience snow during this time, the church uses colors to identify and interpret the life and ministry of Jesus throughout the calendar year.

Display an enlarged Church Year Wheel or refer to the one in the “Reasons for the Seasons” Party Planner. Note that the church has a special way of looking at the calendar year. Christians associate the life and ministry of Jesus with specific days and months of the year. Point out that some of the days or events of the church year are the same as a calendar year, e.g. Christmas and Easter, but some of them are just recognized in the church, e.g. the days before Christmas, which are marked as a time to get our hearts ready for Jesus. Those days are called Advent.

Note that each of the Whatza Cookin’ Learning Centers will highlight one or more of the days or seasons of the church year, according to their designated color. **This center is designed to stir up some thoughts about the color blue and the season of Advent.**

Engage participants in a brief discussion about why the color blue might be associated with the season of Advent. Suggest that it is one of the colors that represent “royalty” which is befitting the birth of Jesus who is proclaimed to be the “King of Kings.” Refer to 1 Timothy 6:14-16. If time permits, you might refer to the angel preparing Mary for her role in the impending birth of Jesus in Luke 1:26-38 or Isaiah’s prophecy in Isaiah 9:6-7. Note that the season of Advent marks the beginning of a new year in the church as we replay the events in the life of Christ from birth through his death, resurrection, ascension and coming of the Holy Spirit as inspiration for living our lives with Christ in heart and mind. It includes the four Sundays before Christmas and it is intended to help us prepare our hearts for Christ’s coming.

Invite participants to engage in the craft activity as you have planned and prepared for it. Encourage them to display their cardholders in places where they will regularly refer to the prayers and be prompted to compose a few of their own as they nurture their own desire for intimacy with God during the season of Advent and every other day throughout the year.

Briefly review the essential ingredients of this season as you invite participants to describe Chef Constance’s Special on Blue on their “Stirrin’ Up a Celebration” menu cards. Briefly review the essential ingredients of this season as participants complete a description of Chef Constance’s Special on Blue on their “Stirrin’ Up a Celebration” menu cards. Distribute the blue strips of cloth or crepe paper and encourage participants to tie or glue it onto their end of their Stirrin’ Spoons.

Refer to the stir-factor sheet on Advent in the “Reasons for the Seasons” Party Planners as you invite participants to consider some ways they might celebrate this season at home.