Games of Food: Educational escape games that make the learning process fun and engaging

Escape games are an ongoing trend, and the EIT Food funded project Games of Food is using them to design educational experiences for people of all ages to enjoy. EUFIC is coordinating the communication aspects of the project, giving the developed escape games visibility all over Europe.

Is your diet as healthy as you think it is?

Do you know how many calories are in one gram of protein? And do you know how much protein you should be eating per day? Have you ever heard about complementary proteins and their role in the diet? What about essential amino acids? If you are not sure about the answers to these questions, keep on reading.

What we eat affects our bodies, our minds and therefore, our life. Not only can a healthy diet promote
weight loss, but it can also reduce the risk of developing cancer and heart failure as well as preventing various other illnesses. Eating healthily boosts the quality of our teeth and bones and improves our sleep, mood and memory. On top of that, we will be passing on a powerful example of better health-related behaviours and eating habits to the future generations – our children.

Nowadays, we are surrounded by countless fast food restaurants, delicious snacks, and sugary or fatty products disguised as healthy and light. Every day, we make numerous food-related decisions, and in the end the result of our choices depends on two main factors:

- Our individual nutritional requirements,
- The nutritional value of food we eat.

That is why it is essential that we start learning about our body’s needs and what goes into the food we buy and eat. Even though this process might be time-consuming, tedious and demanding in terms of willpower and attention, it will certainly get easier with time and practice. As the first step is always the most difficult, we provide you with a solution to make the learning process a bit easier.

Using escape games in education

In 2018, a group of scientists from Belgium, Finland, Great Britain, Israel, and Poland started the ‘Games of Food’ project with an objective to increase knowledge and awareness of balanced nutrition and healthy lifestyle in an unconventional manner – through an escape game experience.

An escape room is an adventure game taking place in near-real-life conditions played by teams of two to ten people. The players are locked in a room and have one hour to find the key to escape by solving a series of puzzles and challenges of varying difficulty. To be successful, the players will have to demonstrate knowledge, observation skills, logical thinking, hand-eye co-ordination, and teamwork.

Currently, the ‘Games of Food’ team is designing two escape room games – ‘Zombie Attack’ and ‘Mission Nutrition’, both containing nutrition-related riddles and puzzles in order to provide a fun and educational experience at the same time.

The ‘Zombie Attack’ narrative starts with a group of the zombie apocalypse survivors hiding in a small, abandoned cabin in the woods. They have been surrounded by bloodthirsty undead who bite only people who eat unhealthily. In order to escape and become immune to the zombie bites, the team must solve a dozen puzzles and learn about nutrition and healthy eating.

In the ‘Zombie Attack’ escape room you will learn:

- How to achieve a balanced diet based on the food pyramid
- How to calculate the energy of food products
- How many grams of protein you should consume per day
- What proteins are, where to find them, and why they are important
What ecological issues are related to your eating habits

The outcome

As you can already imagine, besides learning, you will have lots of fun in the ‘Zombie Attack’ escape game. If you are still not convinced that this would be an effective learning tool, let us reassure you. The escape room has already been tested on over 200 players of various ages, genders, nationalities, with different eating habits, and views on nutrition. Before and after the game, each player filled in a questionnaire which evaluated their initial and post-game knowledge regarding nutrition and healthy eating. The results showed that, on average, after participating in the game, 14.5% more participants answered the questions correctly in comparison to before. More importantly, participants who were not aware of issues concerning nutrition and healthy diet took the first step towards a sustainable lifestyle, now having the basic tools to deepen their knowledge.

In fact, that is one of the key goals of the ‘Zombie Attack’ escape room: to raise awareness and encourage the players to continue learning about food and diet on their own and sharing their newly gained knowledge with their family and friends. The game invites both adults and children to expand their knowledge and change their lives for the better through a family-friendly experience.

As you can see by now, learning does not necessarily mean boredom! If you want to get familiar with the basics of healthy nutrition, in an entertaining and pleasant atmosphere, ‘Zombie Attack’ is the solution. In the escape room you will learn the answers to the questions asked earlier in this article and begin your journey towards a healthier and happier life.

For more information visit: www.GamesofFood.com