Using Recipes

Recipes can teach a new cook about ingredients, equipment, and important kitchen techniques. As the cook gains confidence, he or she can begin to alter favourite recipes, change quantities, experiment with substitutions, and make changes if something goes wrong.

Recipe Formats

A recipe is a set of instructions for a particular dish that ensures consistent results every time the dish is made. Recipes are presented in three common formats. A standard recipe presents a list of ingredients first, then a set of instructions or preparation steps. A narrative recipe is written in paragraphs and introduces ingredients gradually as the preparation steps are explained and discussed. An active recipe combines the instructions and ingredients as they are used.

Sample Standard Recipe

**Zucchini and Onion Frittata**

Yield: 4 servings

**Ingredients**

- 625 mL (2 ½ c) chopped zucchini and onions
- 6 eggs
- 2 mL (½ tsp) pepper
- 15 mL (1 tsp) olive oil

- 30 mL (2 tbsp) chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 125 mL (½ c) grated parmesan cheese

**Method**

1. Preheat broiler.
2. Heat oil in a cast-iron skillet. Add onions, zucchini and cook for 5 min.
3. Whisk eggs and pepper and pour into skillet. Cook until almost set.
4. Sprinkle with cheese, then broil for 5 min or until cheese has melted.
5. Garnish with parsley and serve.

Sample Narrative Recipe

**Zucchini and Onion Frittata**

Preheat broiler. Chop 625 mL (2 ½ c) of zucchini and onions. Heat 15 mL (1 tbsp) olive oil in a cast-iron skillet on medium-high heat, add onions and zucchini, and cook for 5 min. Whisk 6 eggs with 2 mL (½ tsp) pepper. Pour into skillet and cook until almost set. Sprinkle with 125 mL (½ c) grated parmesan cheese and broil for 5 min or until cheese has melted. Garnish with 30 mL (2 tbsp) chopped flat-leaf parsley and serve. Makes 4 servings.
Zucchini and Onion Frittata

Chop and set aside:
625 mL (2 1/4 c) chopped zucchini and onions
Heat 15 mL (1 tbsp) olive oil in a skillet on medium-high heat.
Add vegetables and cook for 5 min.
Whisk together:
6 eggs
2 mL (1/4 tsp) pepper
Pour egg mixture over vegetables in skillet and cook until almost set.
Add 125 mL (1/2 c) grated parmesan cheese and broil for 5 min.
Garnish with:
30 mL (2 tbsp) chopped flat-leaf parsley
Makes 4 servings.

Preparing to Cook

Once you have read through a recipe and visualized the steps involved, it is necessary to assemble all the ingredients and equipment together in a systematic way that allows you to cook efficiently. This step is known as mise en place. Mise en place may begin several minutes to hours before you begin cooking. For example, if you were preparing a stir-fry, you would clean and chop the vegetables, chop or prepare any meat or tofu, gather all the flavouring components, and possibly even prepare your cookware before you turn on the stove. The preparation of mise en place saves time and allows you to follow a recipe without stopping to gather and prepare once you have begun.

When Recipes Fail

Despite every effort, sometimes recipes fail. A recipe can fail for various reasons such as incorrect, incorrectly measured, or spoiled ingredients; an inappropriate pan; the wrong cooking time or temperature; cooking at a different altitude; or cooking techniques that are incorrectly applied. For example, if certain ingredients are not incorporated well enough or are over-stirred, the final product can be ruined. Using a different ingredient than the one suggested by the recipe can alter the results. Adding olive oil instead of vegetable oil may change the flavour of a dish. When recipes fail, retrace your steps, make notes, and try again later. If the results are the same on your second attempt, it may be that the quantity of one or more ingredients is listed incorrectly or that the recipe is faulty in some other way.

THINK CRITICALLY

1. Why is it important to gather ingredients and equipment before you begin cooking?
2. What kind of human errors can cause a recipe to fail?
3. Describe three things other than human error that can go wrong in the process of following a recipe.
4. Choose a recipe from this book or another source. What mise en place would you do before beginning to follow the recipe?
It is important to follow the recipe instructions carefully. If you omit any step, the final product may not turn out as expected. For example, if a recipe requires cooking at a specific temperature for a certain amount of time, it is crucial to adhere to these instructions. Failure to do so can result in a subpar dish.

Adapting Recipes

At times, you may need to adapt a recipe to fit your taste preferences or dietary restrictions. Here are some tips for adapting recipes:

1. **Change the ingredients:** If you have a food allergy or preference, you can substitute other ingredients. For example, if a recipe calls for gluten, you can use gluten-free alternatives.
2. **Adjust the measurements:** Sometimes, you might notice the recipe calls for a specific amount of an ingredient. If you don't have the exact amount, you can adjust the measurements. For instance, if a recipe calls for 1 cup of flour, and you only have 3/4 cup, you can adjust the amount accordingly.
3. **Try new combinations:** You can experiment with new flavor combinations. For example, if a recipe calls for a specific spice, you can try using a different spice or a combination of spices.

In summary, it is important to follow the recipe instructions carefully. However, if you need to adapt a recipe, you can do so with some adjustments and experimentation.
Recipe Usage

The first time you prepare a dish, it is imperative that you follow the recipe. Not only does it help you to develop an organized routine in the kitchen, which is essential for success, but it also allows you to see what changes you need to make for the next time you make it.

Sometimes you may want to alter a recipe for:

Health Reasons:
- Increase the amount of whole grain to increase the fibre content;
- Decrease the amount of fat;
- Reduce the amount of sugar. (Note: the amount of sugar in baked goods can often be reduced by 20-25%, and you will still obtain a desirable product);
- Reduce the amount of salt (sodium).

Flavour Improvement:
- You may want, for example, to make a dish more or less spicy.

Accommodate Dietary Restrictions:
- Perhaps someone is allergic to an ingredient. Sometimes simple substitutions can be made that may even improve the flavour or texture of the recipe!

Substitution of Ingredients that You Don’t Have on Hand.
- For example, if you don’t have cream on hand, you could use evaporated milk instead.

Reducing or Increasing the Amount of Food Produced:
- Please note that not all recipes are designed to be doubled, tripled or halved.
- Products like jam, bread, cookies, muffins, custards, and other baked goods have a specific formula that must be followed in order to achieve maximum success.
- Other products like soups, stews, stir-fries, etc., can be altered to suit your taste.

YOUR TASK:

Create a user guide for a recipe that you have cut out from one of the magazines in class. Your user guide must include the following:

- Colour code the key parts of your recipe using a legend.
- An estimate of the time required to complete this recipe – explain how long you think each step will take.
- Information or tips that might help someone to follow this recipe better.
- A list of three modifications that could be made to this recipe, and how you would accomplish the modifications. Consider health reasons, flavour improvement and various dietary restrictions.
- Show how you would either double or halve the recipe.
- Identify the format of the recipe (narrative, standard, active) and explain the user-friendliness of the recipe you chose.
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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge:</strong></td>
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<td>- All parts of the recipe are labeled correctly</td>
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<td>- The recipe is doubled or halved correctly</td>
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<td><strong>Thinking:</strong></td>
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<td>- Estimated time makes sense and is well explained</td>
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<td>- Tips provided are useful and connects with course content</td>
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<td>- Modifications make sense and are well thought out and explained</td>
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<td>- Ideas for user-friendliness of the recipe make sense and are thorough</td>
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<td><strong>Communication:</strong></td>
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<td>- Ideas are clear and well organized. Correct spelling and grammar are utilized</td>
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<td>- Student is able to effectively apply course content to a real recipe</td>
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<td>- The legend is clear and helpful</td>
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