

It's All in the Recipe

A recipe is a list of ingredients and set of instructions for making a food dish or beverage. The purpose of the recipe is to duplicate a desired product. A recipe allows you to apply basic food science techniques to specific ingredients. If you can learn the basic principles and techniques of preparing food, you will be able to understand the recipes you use. No matter how detailed the recipe, it can't supply you with everything you need to know. Some judgment by the cook may be required.

Keep in mind there are several reasons why recipes may turn out slightly different each time. First, food ingredients are not always the same. One tomato may be riper; one apple may be smaller; or some types of nuts may be saltier than others. Secondly, not all kitchens have the same equipment. Heat distribution of equipment is dependent upon whether an electric, gas, or flat top stove is being used. Liquid will evaporate from a wide pan much faster than from a tall, narrow pan. And lastly, it is impossible to give exact instructions for every process. For instance, what does *cook over medium heat* or *cook until thick* mean to you? How hot would you set your burner? How thick is thick? As you gain experience, these types of statements in a recipe will become easier to interpret.

Basic Parts of a Recipe

Now that we know there are some variations in cooking, ingredients, processes, and equipment, let's look at what information we need for a higher rate of success in preparing a recipe. A well planned recipe will include the following items:



★ Recipe Name

The recipe name simply gives you a short description of what you are making.

★ Servings

The number of servings is important because you will want to have enough of the recipe to serve everyone at the table. It would be a shame not to have enough cookies for the whole class.

★ Serving Size

If you know the average portion size, you won't *super size* your food portions. With this information you can also figure out the nutritional value for each person.

★ Nutritional Analysis

The nutritional analysis of a recipe gives an estimate of how many calories, protein, carbohydrates, fat, fiber, and vitamins and minerals are present in a serving size. This information is especially important for individuals with special dietary needs.

★ Ingredients

An ingredients list allows you to gather everything you need before you get started. It is also helpful when checking to see what you do or don't have in the pantry before making your grocery list.

★ Directions

The steps needed to make the recipe should always be read from start to finish before you begin. For instance, preheating the oven may be the first step.

★Time

Some recipes include how long it will take to prepare the recipe from start to finish. Both the time to prepare and cook the ingredients may be added together.

★Serving Suggestions

Some recipes may suggest an accompanying dish or garnish that will enhance the flavor or appearance of the food. Other recipes may include guidelines for altering the recipe for special dietary needs.

Substitute Ingredients

Here are a few ways you can make your recipes more healthful with only slight changes in the end product.



- Reduce sugar by one-third of the amount in a recipe. Sugar substitutes may be able to replace some or all of the sugar. Follow the recommendations on the package.

- Reduce fat by one-third of the amount in a recipe. Since lower fat margarines are higher in water, they should not be used as a fat substitute unless indicated in the recipe.



- Because salt is an acquired taste, you may be able to leave out or reduce the salt by one-half the amount in a recipe. Make sure the salt is not a part of the preservation process.

- Substitute whole-grain flour for one-quarter to one-half of the flour that is called for in the recipe.



- Some foods can be substituted for others, especially if you want to lower the amount of fat in a food. Experiment with lower fat dairy foods and meats.

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Learning how to read and use a recipe will start you on your way to becoming a Super Star Chef!

Clip Art: Microsoft Word

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