

Guidance for Practical Cooking in the Primary School Classroom



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1. Introduction

Cooking from basic ingredients is a fundamental skill that every person should master, it is at the heart of tackling obesity and will enable future generations to understand food, diet and nutrition, and put together healthy meals for their entire lives.

Cooking is an essential skill to enable young people to take healthy actions to improve their health. The New National Curriculum is designed to develop the understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet, give pupils the skills and knowledge to make healthier food choices and establish life-long healthy eating habits.



Cooking is at the core of good food education and children should learn to use a range of cooking methods, skills techniques and equipment to prepare and cook a variety of dishes which contribute to a healthy balanced diet. To understand how foods behave during the cooking process, apply food safety and food hygiene principles during food handling,

cooking and storage. They should be able to use food knowledge in decision making when sourcing, selecting, purchasing food or when considering issues surrounded by food, also respect food and be aware of its social and cultural importance;

AND

HAVE FUN!

2. Hygiene in the Classroom

Good food hygiene is fundamental in the safe preparation of food whether it be at home or in the classroom. However it is NOT essential that teachers hold a certificate in food hygiene to be able to teach cooking in the classroom. Guidance issued by the Food Standards Agency states 'there is no legal requirement for teachers, staff, parents or volunteers who prepare and cook food in the classroom to attend a formal training course, or to obtain a qualification in food safety' (FSA, Food Handling, preparation and serving in the classroom, 2008).

It is essential that teachers are aware of the potential risks associated with the preparation and cooking of food in the classroom. By using the following guidance the risk of food poisoning will be greatly reduced.

The basic principles of safe food preparation

- Clean as you go.
- Wipe down all surfaces before starting to cook.
- Keep raw foods separate from cooked foods, use separate chopping boards for raw foods.
- Thoroughly clean your chopping boards after use, using hot water and anti-bacterial washing up liquid, rinse well and leave to air dry.
- Wipe up spills immediately so that no one slips or falls.
- Eggs should be kept in the fridge.
- No open tins should be stored in the fridge.
- Fridges must not be overloaded.
- Hot food should never be put directly into the fridge, it should be covered and left to cool.
- Don't leave food to stand for several hours in a warm place before it's eaten.

Change all tea towels, dishcloths and other cleaning materials regularly as these can harbour bacteria, especially if they are left damp.

Fridge Rules

- Make sure you have a fridge thermometer and that the fridge is running at the correct temperature (0°C- 5°C).
- Refrigerate perishable foods as soon as possible after buying.
- Never put hot or warm foods into the fridge as this will raise the internal temperature of the fridge, which could cause bacterial growth.
- Don't leave the door of the fridge open for longer than necessary, this lets warm air in which will raise the internal temperature of the fridge.
- Don't overload the shelves. Cool air needs to circulate freely around the food.
- Keep all foods covered to prevent cross contamination.
- Don't store opened cans in the fridge, all contents should be transferred to a lidded container before being put in the fridge. Check the food labels before you decide what to use. Shop bought foods may come with two dates: a use by date and a best before date. Don't use any foods that have passed their use-by date, even if you think they look fine, as they may not be safe to eat. However, you can use food after its best before date as this only refers to the quality of the food, rather than the safety of eating it. The only exception is eggs, which contain a type of bacteria called Salmonella that may multiply after the best before date. So always throw eggs away once this date has passed.

Personal Hygiene

It sounds simple enough, but many of us are guilty of forgetting. One of the most important things you can do is to make sure that your hands are clean at all times. This doesn't mean just passing your hands under the tap. Give them a proper scrub with soap.

- before starting to cook.
- before handling ready to eat foods.
- before and after handling food.
- after going to the toilet.
- after handling raw foods, especially raw meat or poultry.
- after putting out the rubbish.
- after blowing your nose.
- after eating and drinking.
- after cleaning.

Don't forget to dry your hands thoroughly, because if they are wet they will spread bacteria more easily.

Hand washing procedure

Soap

Wet your hands thoroughly under warm running water and apply soap to them.

Rub

Rub your hands together to make a lather and spread it over all areas of your hands and wrists, making sure it covers palms, backs, wrists, fingernails and fingers, and rubbing between each finger and round your thumbs. It's this action which helps the soap dislodge and remove dirt and germs.

Rinse

Rinse the soap off completely under a stream of clean running water.

Dry

Dry your hands thoroughly, using a clean hand towel or hand dryer, not a tea towel or your clothes.

Also

- Keep the wearing of jewellery to a minimum.
- Nails should be kept clean and short with no nail varnish.
- Ensure any cuts etc. are totally covered with a waterproof dressing.
- Don't cough or sneeze over food.
- Don't touch your face or hair whilst preparing food.



3. Preparing to teach Cooking

Things to consider

- Teach food preparation skills appropriate for the pupils taking into consideration age and experience. Simple tasks such as peeling, grating, mixing, sprinkling are great ways in improving dexterity.
- Build on and extend existing cooking skills and food knowledge using more complex recipes, introduce more skills e.g. using sharp knives safely.
- Make it real, use familiar foods initially and then introduce new ones to extend experience and understanding.
- Look at the origins of food, talk about food miles.
- Encourage sampling and tasting of familiar and unfamiliar ingredients, reinforce positive attitudes towards food and healthy eating.
- Encourage the use of seasonal food, cook with a variety of fresh ingredients, include some canned/frozen or dried goods if appropriate.
- Try recipes in advance to identify skills and decide how to teach them whilst avoiding any pitfalls.
- Encourage and develop social skills whilst cooking and eating together.
- It may be necessary to pre-prepare/pre-cook some ingredients before the lesson so that pupils can handle them safely and still use other skills to complete the process e.g. cutting cucumber into batons so that pupils can dice them easily.



Suggested equipment for food preparation in the classroom

If possible store all food equipment in a labelled box or designated area and ensure that it is only used for food preparation. All items should be cleaned and dried and put back at the end of the session ready for the next activity.

Preparation and cleaning

Washing up liquid
Tea towels
First Aid kit
Anti-Bacterial liquid
Cloths for cleaning
Liquid soap
Cover for tables

Basic Cooking equipment

Mobile Cook Station (www.mexathermal.co.uk)
Sauce pans
Frying pan
Wok
Aprons disposable or material
Mixing Bowls (plastic)
Measuring jugs
Chopping boards
Box graters
Vegetable peelers
Scissors
Measuring spoons
Scales
Wooden spoons
Sieves
Rolling pins
Spatulas
Lemon squeezer
Can opener
Cooling trays
Baking trays
Oven gloves

Sharp knives should be kept in a separate box and counted out and in at every session. Do not use plastic knives as they are liable to bend and shatter during use.

4. Planning a Practical Food Activity

Preparing children for cooking can take some time, for example they need to understand about food safety, personal hygiene, how to read a recipe and how to use equipment.

Choose appropriate recipes for the age and skills of the pupils.

Allow time to shop for the ingredients, consider setting up small dry goods store that all teachers can use, therefore avoiding lots of open packets of flour, sugar etc.

Supermarkets are always keen to work with schools and you may find they are happy to support cooking in schools by providing dry goods.

Work with small groups (5-6 pupils).

Allow enough time for preparation and clearing up at the end of the session.

Check for any food allergies and intolerances, if necessary adapt/change, recipes to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to take part in the activity .



Pupils should be encouraged to participate and tasks performed should be related to the skills of that pupil, at the end of each session it is important that the pupils have achieved something. Pupils will learn more by participating rather than just watching the teacher perform the tasks. Decide if food is to be eaten at the end of the session or to be taken home at the end of the day.

N.B. this could cause problems in relation to correct food storage; however pupils should be encouraged to taste/eat what they have made.

Recipes could be sent home instead of the food.

Ensure there is a supply of cleaning materials, such as washing up liquid, anti-bacterial surface cleaner, disposable cloths, bin bags etc.

Supply of hair bobbles to tie up long hair.

Plan how you are going to eat, taste the food at the end of the session.

Wipe all surfaces to be used in the preparation of food with antibacterial spray.

Make sure all the equipment to be used is clean.

Lay out the equipment and ingredients needed ready for the pupils to use.

To save some time, some ingredients can be semi-prepared, i.e. tinned fruit could be opened and put into a bowl and covered till ready to use.

Cucumber could be cut into batons ready for pupils to cut into small pieces.

Any spreads, yoghurt, cheese etc should be stored in the fridge.

Wash all fruit and vegetables.

5. Tasting and testing food

Well before you eat, you usually look at food first, perhaps smell it, and then finally taste it to decide if you like it before you eat it.

Everyone has a different opinion when it comes to likes and dislikes when tasting food. No one can tell how much you like or dislike something.

Negative peer pressure can often influence the tasting of new foods, so it is important that negative comments are discouraged, by both adults and pupils.

When preparing food for other people you need to find out their views on how it tastes.

Food tasting is a skill and as you improve your skills you will learn to use a range of taste tests to meet your needs.

Guidelines for tasting and testing food

- Avoid letting pupils dip their fingers into food samples.
- Pupils and teachers should wash their hands before handling and working with any food, so wash hands before tasting food.
- Explain to pupils with runny noses, coughs and sneezes that they must wait until they are well enough to carry out this activity as they could contaminate the food (or maybe they could taste last).
- Pupils should be encouraged to taste food.
- Be aware of the components of food products since some of their ingredients may be unsuitable for some pupils to eat, e.g. vegetarians.
- When tasting food pupils should use a clean spoon and only dip it once into the food. Avoid letting pupils share spoons, straws or drinking cups.
- Use plastic bags for tasters to spit out unwanted food.



Make a tasting box

You may want to unexpectedly taste test food during a food activity. If you make a tasting box, this can be available for use whenever it is needed. Ensure that the box is clearly labelled.

Equipment for a tasting box

- Lots of plastic teaspoons, useful for a whole class tasting.
- Plastic pots or cups for tasting drinks and small food samples.
- Paper plates and cups.
- Paper towels to clean up food spillages.
- Plastic bags to carry food.
- Bin bags for food and other waste.
- Chopping board and a small sharp knife for preparing food samples.
- Sticky labels and a pen for labelling food samples.

A large plastic box is ideal for storing these items. Make sure that the box is labelled and that the box and washable components are thoroughly washed after EVERY use.

6. Basic Techniques

If taught properly these cutting techniques are safe for pupils to use under supervision. Both techniques are designed to keep fingers away from the knife blade while cutting.

Bridge cutting technique



Form a 'bridge' with the thumb and index finger of the left hand. Hold the item to be halved/quartered on a chopping board flat side down. Holding the knife with the right hand (if right handed) position the knife under the bridge and cut down firmly.

Claw cutting Technique



Place the flat side of the item to be cut on the chopping board. Shape the fingers of the left hand into a claw-shape tucking the thumb inside the fingers. Rest the 'claw' on the item to be sliced, holding the knife in the right hand (if right handed), slice the item, moving the 'clawed' fingers away as the cutting progresses.