



Cooking School Guidelines and Considerations

First of all, there isn't just one way to conduct a cooking school. This material is not intended for you to follow every detail exactly. It is intended to give you guidelines and ideas that you can follow to help you develop plans for conducting your own cooking school in a way that works best for you. With that in mind, here are a few things you will need to consider.

- 1. Timeframe**--Over what length of time will your cooking school be conducted? Just one day? Consecutive days? One day a week for several weeks? When will it be held? During the week? On the weekend? During the day? In the evenings? How long will each session be? One hour? Two hours? Three hours? The answers to these questions will help determine how your cooking school will best be conducted. You want to be able to transmit as much information to the participants as possible. So if it is going to be just a one day class, you might want to consider making it longer so that you can cover more material. There are many possibilities. You can hold a 4 hour Sunday class, a once a week month-long class, a one-time one hour class, a once month "supper club," or whatever else you think of. The choice is yours.
- 2. Location**--Do you have a good location for conducting the cooking school? Ideally, you want a facility with a kitchen. While you can conduct a cooking school in a facility without a kitchen, it does make it more challenging! The location will also need to be large enough to hold the amount of people that you would like to have attend. You will need to make sure you have enough seating for the number of people that might come. If you will be serving a meal, tables for the participants to eat at would be helpful. You will also need a table large enough to do the demonstrations on, as well as a table for serving the food from. Make sure you have a table that is tall enough, or you may have a sore back at the end of the session from bending over the whole time.
- 3. Recipe Demonstration**--The hardest part for me is deciding what recipes I want to demonstrate! This can also be the most fun part, because you get to experiment with lots of recipes before you make your decision! You want to make sure that you know how to make what you are demonstrating, and that it looks good and tastes good. Of course, taste is very subjective, but you want to make sure that at least a few different people have tasted the food and like it! The most important consideration in choosing recipes is to make sure that they are healthy! Please see the included documents on nutrition principles and nutrition information before making your decisions. Another consideration in choosing recipes is to make sure that all of the ingredients are available to the participants. It does no good to show them how to make a delicious recipe if they don't have access to all the needed ingredients! Also you need to consider the population you are serving. You want to choose the types of recipes that will be most useful to them. The goal is to exchange healthy eating habits for unhealthy ones. So you need to find out what the unhealthy foods are that need to be replaced. For example, if you know that you will be working with people who eat large amounts of flesh foods, then you will want to demonstrate some meat alternatives. Conversely, you wouldn't want to demonstrate cheese alternatives, if the population you are serving doesn't

consume a lot of cheese. They will not find a recipe for a cheese substitute helpful if they are not accustomed to consuming cheese anyway. The number of recipes you choose to demonstrate will depend on the length of the class and the complexity of the recipes chosen.

4. **Education**--It is nice to be able to include some nutrition education along with the recipe demonstrations. It is good to be able to demonstrate how to prepare new recipes, but it is even better if you can educate in the process. If you are demonstrating meat substitutes, then it is a good idea to educate the participants in the benefits of abstaining from meat products. They need to be taught the negative health implications associated with poor dietary choices as well as the positive benefits of good, healthy choices. Then they will be equipped to make better choices and start implementing the new food options that you are presenting to them. If they have no knowledge and no incentive to change, then they are not likely to go to the effort to make any changes. Based on the dietary habits of the population you are educating, you can choose educational topics that will most suit their needs. Some reading and study may be required on your part. Remember, you must first be educated yourself before you can educate others!
5. **Handouts**--This is an important part of the education process. Depending on the funds you have to work with, handouts can be as small and simple--or as detailed--as you like. Obviously, the participants need to be given copies of the recipes that you demonstrate. If you are serving a complete meal, but only demonstrating a few of the dishes, then it is a good idea to include the recipes for the entire meal in the handout, and not only the ones you demonstrate. Pictures of the dishes being demonstrated add a nice touch, but are not essential if you don't have the ability or the resources to do it. It is also nice to be able to include in your handout at least some of the main points of the nutrition education that was given, or at least some basic principles of good nutrition. You will find sample handouts in the Cooking School pdf files.
6. **Supplies**--Here is a very important component that must not be overlooked. You must be organized in knowing what supplies are needed and assuring that they are there and available at the cooking school. It will be hard to demonstrate how to make granola if you fail to bring along a large bowl to mix it in! And you can't show them how to make soy milk if you forget to bring a blender. It also won't do any good if you have the blender but failed to bring the extension cord so that you could plug it in! You must know ahead of time what you will need. Take a look at each recipe that you will be demonstrating and make a list of all the food, and all the kitchen utensils that will be required for making it. Then add in the other things, such as extension cords, tablecloths, towels, a sponge or dish cloth, serving utensils, etc. Don't forget to include things like plates, forks, etc if you are serving a meal. See the included Cooking School pdf files for an example of a checklist. Make sure that you have everything on the list before the day for the cooking school arrives. You don't want to have to think about rushing to the store to buy something you forgot when you are trying to get everything prepared for the class. On the day of the cooking school, go down your list item by item and make sure that you have each thing that you need. Don't forget to bring your handouts!
7. **Personnel**--It is helpful if you don't have to do the cooking school on your own! Delegate some of the responsibilities to others if you can. If you are serving a meal, or are planning on a large group, there is a lot of additional food preparation that needs to be done ahead of time. It is ideal if you can get assistance with this so that you don't have to do it all. Find someone to work with you in demonstrating the recipes, or get a volunteer from the class to come up and guide them through the process. Have an assistant that can bring needed items and do work behind the scenes while the cooking school is in progress. The nutrition education can be integrated throughout the demonstrations, or you can have a lecture given before or after the demonstrations are completed. It depends on the help you have and the type of cooking school you are conducting which way will work best for you. If it is just you and another person to lecture, then you may want to consider having the lecture at the end so that it gives you time to prepare the meal or samples. If you are not

-serving a meal, or if the meal or samples are already prepared and set up, then you can integrate the lecture with the class as you are demonstrating. We have done it both ways, and both ways have worked out well.

8. **Budget**--It is helpful before you start planning something too big and fancy to make sure you know what kind of finances you have to work with. Is it something that you will charge for to cover your expenses? Will you ask for donations to help cover costs? Or will it have a budget from the church or individuals and be done as a free service to the community or church family? Wherever the money comes from, you need to determine how much you have to work with in order to best plan your cooking school. If you don't have a big budget, then it may be wise to not serve a full sit-down meal, but rather give small samples of each of the foods prepared for the participants to try. If you have a large budget, generous donors, or are going to charge a fee for the school, then a full meal may be in order.
9. **Advertising**--Something else to consider is how you are going to advertise for your cooking school. It would be a shame to plan something so wonderful and then have no one show up! How do you plan to get the word out? Advertising will vary depending on who your target population is. If you are planning the cooking school for your church, then an announcement in the bulletin, a poster on the bulletin board, and announcements from up front will probably be sufficient. But if you are planning the event for your community, then you need to consider getting an advertisement in the local newspaper and/or radio station, or having a car announce it throughout the community. Most places will run community service announcements for free if the event is free to the community. You can also place posters advertising your cooking school in places that have community bulletin boards, such as the library, grocery store, etc. If you are really planning big and doing a lot of advertising, make sure that you are able to hold the number of people that may show up at the facility that you chose to hold the cooking school. It may be a wise idea to have people register to give you an idea of how many you should plan for. That information needs to be included in your advertising. Be sure to also include the following details: who, what, when, where, why, and how. Please see the included file with a sample poster if you would like an example.

Putting on a cooking school is a lot of work, but it is also a lot of fun. If you are unsure about doing it, start small. You can start as small as doing one in your own home and inviting a few friends. Or get together with others from your church and plan one together so that it is not so much for just one person to do. Each person could choose just one recipe to demonstrate, and then give out samples at the end. It doesn't have to be big and fancy to be effective. There are so many possibilities. Included with this information you will find healthy recipes, basic guidelines for nutrition, topics and information for educational purposes, as well as samples of handouts and checklists and sign-in forms that we have used. If you want to make the exact recipes and use the same handouts that we have used, feel free to just print them off and use them. That's an easy way to get started! We want this to be as simple and easy for you as possible. This work is a work that has been commissioned to all of us, not just a few choice persons. God calls for all of us to have a part, and He will qualify you and empower you to do the work that He is calling you to do. God bless you as you seek to work for Him.

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