

Nourish Your Brain with Tastes from Home

**A Mind-Healthy Toolkit for
Cooking for Dementia Care**

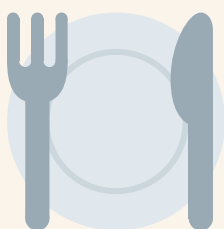


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A Mind-Healthy Toolkit for Cooking for Dementia Care

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We are a team of aspiring Registered Dietitians, studying at Toronto Metropolitan University and completing the Master of Health Science in Nutrition Communication. Part of our studies, we are instructed to design a public health initiative for the dementia communities in Canada.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Additionally, we thank our project partners:

Alzheimer's Society of Canada
Toronto Metropolitan University

Introducing...

Nourish Your Brain with Tastes from Home

A Mind-Healthy Toolkit for Cooking in Dementia Care!

This dementia-friendly cooking toolkit was created to help **caregivers, families, and care partners** bring joy back to the kitchen while supporting the **nutritional and emotional needs** of individuals living with dementia.

Packed with practical tips, culturally inspired meal ideas, and easy kitchen modifications, this toolkit helps turn everyday cooking into a **meaningful, brain-supportive experience**. Rooted in **inclusivity, accessibility, and evidence-based nutrition**, it's your go-to guide for creating safe, satisfying meals that feel like home.

One delicious memory at a time.

“Food is more than just fuel...it's connection, comfort, and culture”.



Why Cultural Inclusion Matters in Dementia Care



Food is deeply personal and provides us with a sense of identity and connection to family memories. For individuals living with dementia, mealtimes can raise challenges due to cognitive changes. However, research evidence shows that integrating familiar cultural foods and flavours can induce memories, and foster emotional well-being. Hanssen & Kuven (2016) found that serving traditional foods increased enjoyment, appetite, and communication in people with dementia, bringing "moments of joy and delight" to mealtime.

Did you know.... Currently, over 750,000 Canadians are living with dementia and is projected to double by 2050. Worldwide, there are over 10 million new cases annually, implying 1 new case every 3.2 seconds, with cultural diverse populations (e.g. Indigenous, Black, and South Asian) facing higher rates of dementia. This disease was identified as the 9th leading cause of all deaths in Canada in 2022 and nearly two-thirds of deaths were among individuals 65+ years of age (Alzheimer's Disease International, n.d. & Statistics Canada, 2024).



Cultural foods support memory recall

In dementia care, sensory cues like smell and taste can powerfully stimulate autobiographical memory. A familiar dish can induce recollections of family gatherings, early life, or cultural celebrations. This connection has been shown to improve emotional wellbeing and reduce agitation in the dementia community (Gaviola et al., 2024).

Inclusion and mealtime support boosts nutritional intake



Malnutrition is a growing concern in older adults living with dementia, with rates as high as 57% in long-term care settings (Perry et al., 2023). Engaging individuals living with dementia throughout the cooking process can enhance communication, promote sensory stimulation, and build confidence in the kitchen. Shifting the focus to engagement, caregivers can foster familiarity, connection, and a greater sense of familiarity with cultural dishes with people living with dementia (Passos et al., 2024).



Addressing the Dementia Literacy Gap

Limited dementia literacy is a common barrier among caregivers and individuals from diverse backgrounds. Stigma, language challenges, and a lack of accessible resources can isolate families and reduce quality of care. Enhancing caregiver education, simplifying nutrition tools, and promote inclusive participation are vital for improving outcomes in dementia-friendly communities (Shatnawi et al., 2023).

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Results from our Needs Assessment



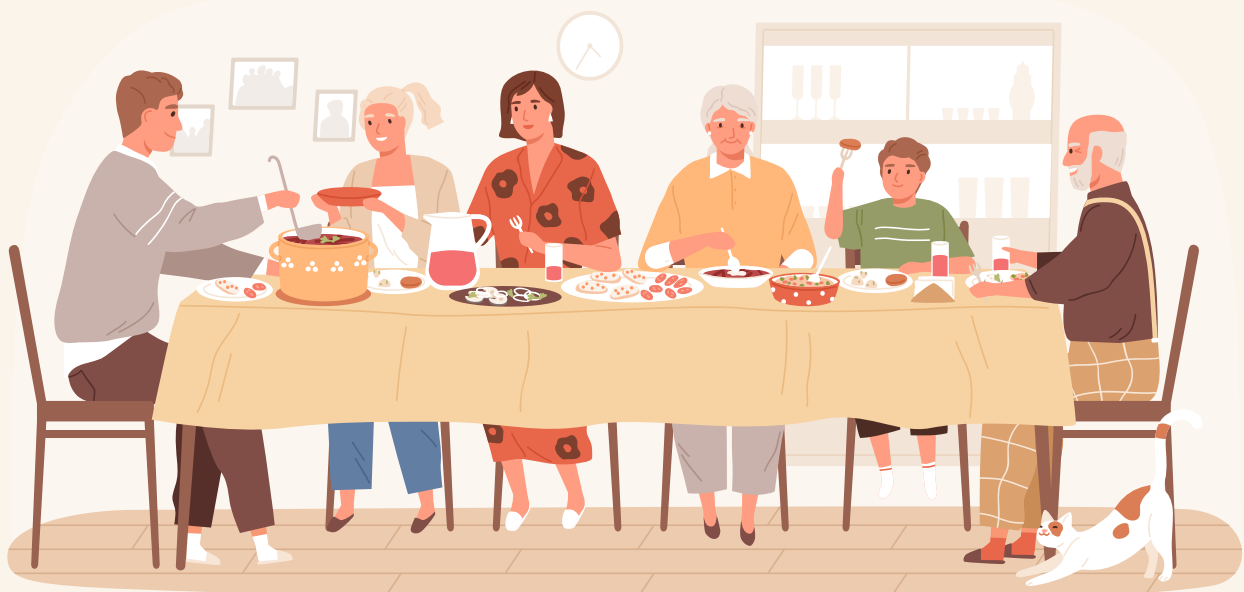
In partnership with the Alzheimer's Society of Canada, we distributed an online survey and conducted a focus group with people living with dementia patients, caregivers and health professionals, which revealed:

- Many expressed difficulties finding culturally appropriate meal options in care settings.
- A desire for recipes and cooking that reflect diverse traditions.
- Honed in on the importance of modifying meals for texture or accessibility without losing cultural roots.



A Toolkit rooted in Culture

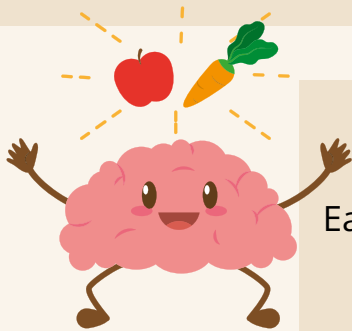
Our toolkit responds to these findings. By promoting meals that celebrate cultural heritage while meeting the dietary needs of people living with dementia, we can make food a joyful, nourishing, and inclusive part of care. It is made apparent that many individuals from racialized groups feel excluded by mainstream dementia resources. We are here to design a resource that encompasses simpler recipes, visual tools, and adapted versions of their cultural meals that accommodate dementia-friendly textures and cognitive needs.



The MIND Diet and Brain Health

What is the MIND Diet?

The **MIND diet (Mediterranean-DASH Diet Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay)** emphasizes eating nutritious, brain-healthy foods. Rich in antioxidants and beneficial fats, the MIND diet has been shown to help improve cognitive function.



Why does it matter?

Eating a certain diet might increase specific nutrients that can protect the brain through anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. Research studies have determined an association with a lower risk of dementia, slower rate of cognitive decline and lower glucose metabolism in participants who consumed a MIND-focused diet (National Institutes of Health, 2023). However, more research is needed to determine if what we eat can prevent or delay Alzheimer's or age-related cognitive decline.

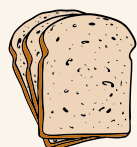
MIND Diet Foods



VEGETABLES: 2+ servings daily & 1 serving of leafy green vegetables



BERRIES: 2-5 servings weekly



WHOLE GRAINS: 3+ servings daily (emphasize on minimally processed)



NUTS & SEEDS: 5+ servings weekly



LEGUMES & BEANS: 3-4 servings weekly



SEAFOOD: 1+ servings weekly (focus on fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, herring, sardines)



POULTRY: 2+ servings weekly (without skin)



EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL: 2 tbsp daily



LIMIT: Red/processed meats, saturated fats, full-fat cheese, refined grains and added sugars

Making a Dementia- friendly Kitchen



1. Label the cabinets and drawers using pictures or words

2. Proper lighting, preferably task and ambient lighting

3. Replace sharp items like knives with safer options (e.g. Adaptive Knives)

4. Keep the plates and cutlery you need and store the rest.



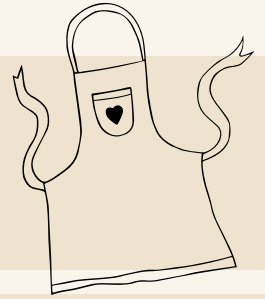
5. Mark food with purchase date, regularly check inventory and throw away expired items.


6. Remove cabinet doors & use open / glass doors to see content more clearly

7. Place heavy equipment at a lower level and everyday materials on the countertop

8. Remove any slipping hazards, like rugs

Kitchen Set-up for Safety & Success



1. Use labelling for cabinet doors and drawers to identify what can be found inside. For example, **pictures** like  for the garbage and **simple words** like “Cutlery drawer, Pots and Pans Cabinet”, using bright paper, large font, and laminating them.
2. Installing the proper lighting is extremely important and could lead to several safety incidents. The **task and ambient lighting** systems are typically recommended.
3. Remove any hazards or unsafe equipment/material from accessible use. For example, knives and sharp objects should be hidden and replaced with **Adaptive knives**. Some other things to keep in mind:
 - a. Cleaning Liquids can be mistaken for refreshments; either remove them from the kitchen area or store them somewhere higher up.
 - b. Be mindful when using a kettle; can be too hot to touch, too heavy, or mistaken for a cooker top kettle.
 - c. Use appliances that have an auto shut-off feature.
 - d. The hot water tap temperature may be too high, resulting in scalds -reduce the hot water temperature.
 - e. Prevent unsafe stove usage by applying stove knob covers, removing knobs or turning.
 - f. Discard toxic plants and decorative fruits that may be mistaken for real food.
4. Reduce the number of options of plates, pots, cups, glasses, and cutlery stored in the cabinets and only keep the items used daily. Store the rest in a different location.
 - a. Consider changing glass or ceramic items to non-breakable options to avoid accidents.
5. Mark and label food with purchase date, regularly check inventory on hand before shopping and throw away expired items.
 - a. Store food in clear containers to eliminate the question of what is in each container.
 - b. Work with already established routine, such as having weekly groceries delivered to help move new food in and old food out.
6. Remove cabinet doors & use open / glass doors to see content more clearly; sometimes closed doors can act as obstacles.
7. Placing heavy items at an appropriate height level and everyday materials on the countertop. For example, having a tray on the counter with the most used things, like tea, coffee, sugar, and a jar of cooking utensils, all on display.
8. Remove any rugs and mats near the kitchen sink or stove area, as it is a tripping hazard.

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Adaptive Tools and Equipment Checklist

Those living with Alzheimer's disease constantly face a higher risk for injury or harm in their homes. Here are some Suggestions for tools and equipment that may reduce risk in the kitchen and allow for a safer and more engaging cooking environment.

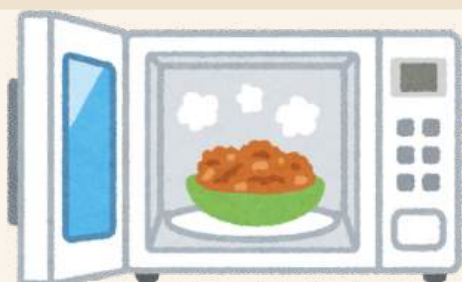
Gas Locking Valve: Can shut the gas off a cooker when timer runs out

Smoke Alarms & Carbon Monoxide alarms can help alert you if smoke or gas is detected



Water overflow device can help prevent leaks and flooding

Combination Microwave Oven: Easy to use and they can grill, roast and bake as well. Automatically shut off when the timer runs out.



Airfryer - can be placed on countertop, cook meals using less oil, equipped with dial or digital controls



Fridge alarms can advise if a door is left open and avoid food spoilage due to lower temperatures.

A small stepladder or stool with non-slip feet can help reach for products up high

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Common Hazards and How to Avoid Them

Hazard	Suggestion
Falls	Install safety latches on storage cabinets and drawers for dangerous/breakable ideas
Sharp corners	Pad any sharp corners on your furniture with sharp corners like tables and countertops
Hot appliances	Put signs near the oven, toaster, iron or other appliances that heat up, to caution against heat.
Spoiled food	Check foods in the refrigerator often. Mark expiry dates on foods to practice food safety.



Nourish Your Brain with Tastes from Home

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How to Use This Toolkit



Support for Cultural Recipes and Brain Health

Each page is curated with recipe ideas and MIND diet-friendly adaptations to support cognitive health.



Create a Dementia- Friendly Kitchen

Explore safety tips and accessibility hacks for a safer, more comfortable cooking space.



Print or Download

Print full pages or single sections, stick your favourite sheets on your fridge or cupboard for daily reference.

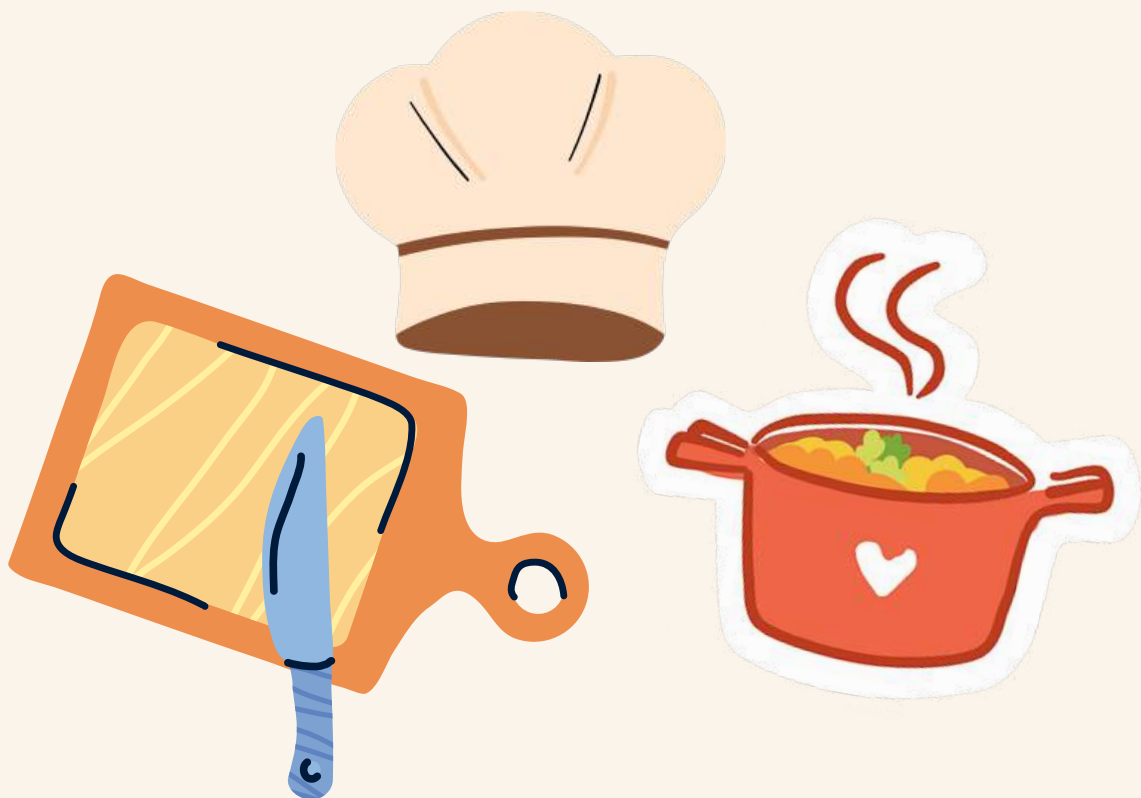


Personalize Your Plate

Customize recipes to meet your needs by swapping ingredients, skipping what you don't like, and adding or removing spices as desired!

Start Exploring!

Basic Cooking Skills & Safe Cooking Temperatures



Basic Cooking Skills

Steaming Vegetables

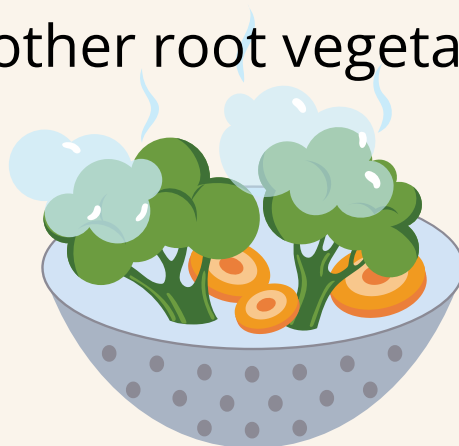
Add water to a pot, place a steamer basket with veggies in the pot and cover with a lid. Bring to a boil.

Additionally, if you don't have a steamer basket, simply place veggies in a bowl with a small amount of water, cover with plastic wrap and microwave!

Quick Steam (3-5 mins): Spinach, peas, and asparagus

Medium Cook time (7-10 mins): Broccoli, cauliflower, green beans

Long Cook time (10-15 mins): Potatoes, beets, carrots, and other root vegetables



FRIENDLY TIP:

Cut the vegetables into uniform pieces to ensure even cook

Basic Cooking Skills

Boiling Vegetables

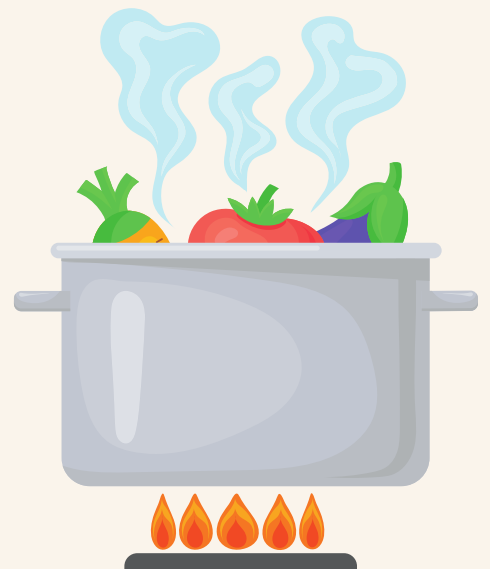
Place vegetables in a pot, cover with water and bring to a boil.

Cooks Quickly (3-5 mins): Spinach, kale, and other leafy greens

Firmer Vegetables (8-10 mins): Broccoli, cauliflower, brussel sprouts

Root Vegetables (10-15 mins): Potatoes, carrots, parsnips

Beetroot: 45 mins to 1 hour



FRIENDLY TIP:

Cut the vegetables into uniform pieces to ensure even cook

Basic Cooking Skills

Roasting Vegetables

Set oven to 425°F. Lay out veggies in a single layer on a baking sheet. Drizzle with 1 tbsp oil (preferably canola). Place in oven and cook for recommended time as stated below.

Soft/Thin Vegetables (10-20 mins): green beans, asparagus, zucchini, bell pepper

Cruciferous Vegetables (15-25 mins):
Broccoli, cauliflower, brussel sprouts

Root Vegetables (30-45 mins): Potatoes, carrots, parsnips, beets



FRIENDLY TIP:

Cut the vegetables into uniform pieces to ensure even cook

Basic Cooking Skills



Baking Proteins

- The **best practice** for proteins is to utilize **internal temperature** checks for doneness (see our next section!) but as a general rule, roast proteins for **30 minutes to start at 350°F**, then check the temperature.
- If it is only a few degrees off, bake for another 5-10 mins, if it is more than 5 degrees off, cook for another 15-20 and repeat.
- In general, baking is the best practice when it comes to cooking with Alzheimer's or Dementia, as many ovens have built-in features to remind people if the oven is on, and you can set timers directly on the oven rather than using another tool.
- If you would like to sear a protein, you can always sear it over high heat with a heat safe oil (like canola) briefly on each side (1-3 mins) to achieve the desired sear and texture, and then put in the oven to finish cooking.
- If using this method, start cooking the protein for 15 minutes to start and then continue with the previously mentioned tip.

Basic Cooking Skills

Grains- Rice

For every cup of rice you are cooking, use 2 cups of water (1:2 ratio!)

1. Bring pot of rice and water to a boil
2. Reduce the stove heat to low and cover with a lid
3. Simmer for 20 minutes for the perfect rice!



FRIENDLY TIP:

Rice cookers can take all the ratios out of making rice!

Basic Cooking Skills

Grains- Quinoa

For every cup of quinoa you are cooking, use 2 cups of water (1:2 ratio!)

1. Bring pot of quinoa and water to a boil
2. Reduce the stove heat to low and cover with a lid
3. Simmer for 20 minutes for the perfect quinoa!



FRIENDLY TIP:

You can substitute the water when cooking quinoa for broths!

Basic Cooking Skills

Grains- Pasta

1. Bring pot of water to a boil (don't forget to salt it!)
2. Add in desired amount of pasta but do not exceed the water line, all the pasta should be covered by water.
3. Boil for 10-12 minutes
4. My personal favourite method of checking if pasta is done is to place one piece of pasta in a heat safe bowl, running it under cold water and then tasting it! Whether you like al dente (slightly firm) or well done (very soft) pasta this method won't fail you!



Basic Cooking Skills

Grains- Quick Oats

For every ½ cup of oats you are cooking, use 1 cup of water (1:2 ratio!)

1. Make sure you are using 'quick oats' to use this cooking method for oatmeal!
2. Place water and oats in a microwave-safe bowl
3. Microwave for 1 minute
4. Let sit for 30 seconds to cool slightly
5. Add your favourite oatmeal toppings!
(my favourite is Nutella and bananas)



Safe Cooking Temperatures for Proteins

Beef, Veal, and Lamb	Temperature
Ground meat (burgers, meatballs, sausages)	71°C (160°F)
Pieces and whole cuts	Medium-rare 63°C (145°F) Medium 71°C (160°F) Well done 77°C (170°F)

Poultry and Game Birds	Temperature
Ground poultry (burgers, meatballs, sausages)	74°C (165°F)
Frozen raw breaded chicken products (nuggets, fingers, strips, burgers)	74°C (165°F)
Pieces (wings, breasts, legs, thighs)	74°C (165°F)
Stuffing (cooked alone or in bird)	74°C (165°F)
Whole bird	74°C (165°F)

Eggs	Temperature
Egg dishes	74°C (165°F)

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Safe Cooking Temperatures for Proteins

Seafood	Temperature
Fish	70°C (158°F)
Shellfish (Shrimp, lobster, crab, scallops)	74°C (165°F)

Leftovers	Temperature
All leftovers	74°C (165°F)

Hot Dogs	Temperature
Hot Dogs	74°C (165°F)

Game Meats	Temperature
Ground meat, meat mixtures, ground venison, and sausage	74°C (165°F)
Deer, elk, moose, caribou/reindeer, antelope and pronghorn, large game (bear, bison, musk-ox, walrus)	74°C (165°F)
Small game (rabbit, muskrat, beaver)	74°C (165°F)

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Safe Cooking Temperatures for Proteins

Taste changes are very common for people living with dementia and Alzheimer's.

- While it may be instinctual to just stop adding seasonings, that is likely to impact the enjoyment of food.
- Herbs and spices are still useful to have on hand not only to keep food flavourful, but also include tastes of a person's culture.
- Simply adding **less seasonings** can still have the food be flavoured but not overpowering for the individual.
- Herbs may be **more palatable** due to their lack of spice and light flavour, such as parsley, cilantro, dill, and thyme.
- Spices may create **throat or stomach discomfort**, so use sparingly.
 - Spices include cinnamon, nutmeg, clove, paprika, cumin, etc.
- As a general guide, herbs are usually the leaves of a plant, while spices are the seeds of a plant ground up.
- If spices and herbs are intolerable, adding **different textures** to a meal can provide interest and variety to a meal.
- In general, it is good practice to start by **adding very little seasoning** to a meal (¼ teaspoon at a time) and **gradually add more** as needed.



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Cultural Recipes by Region



North America

The culinary traditions of North America, which encompass Canada, the United States, Mexico, and the Caribbean, reflect a rich tapestry of cultures, histories, and regional influences, with Indigenous foodways forming a foundational thread. Food plays a central role in family life, celebration, and identity throughout this continent. From the use of corn, beans, and squash, known as the “Three Sisters”, to traditional methods like pit cooking and smoking, Indigenous communities have long shaped the continent’s food landscape. In Mexico, dishes like tamales and pozole trace back to Indigenous roots of often enjoying in communal settings, while in the Caribbean, native ingredients blend with African and European influences and island-specific flavours in meals like jerk chicken, rice and peas, and callaloo. Canada and the U.S. offer diverse regional cuisines, from Southern soul food and New England seafood boils to Quebec’s poutine demonstrating how immigration and geography shape food culture.



Common Food & Spices



Fries



Apple Pie



Collard Greens



Maple Syrup



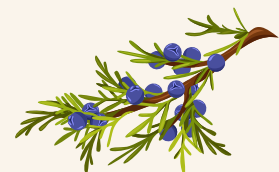
Tacos



Chili Powder



Garlic



Juniper Berries

Mac & Cheese with Cornbread

Recipe adapted from: Eating Bird Food



6 servings



40 minutes



EQUIPMENT NEEDS

Baking Dish

Pot

Saucepan

Measuring cup

Measuring spoons

Grater (or shredded cheese)

Wooden Spoon or spatula

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb elbow macaroni
- ¼ cup butter
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 2 cups unsweetened almond milk
- 2 cups vegetable broth
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 3 cups shredded cheddar cheese, divided
- ½ cup shredded parmesan cheese
- ½ cup cornbread or corn muffin crumbs

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 375°F and spray a 9×13 baking dish with cooking spray.
2. Cook **elbow macaroni** according to package instructions until al dente (you want the pasta a little undercooked).
3. While pasta is cooking, add **butter** to a large saucepan and heat over low heat. Once butter is melted, whisk in **all-purpose flour** until combined.
4. Add **almond milk**, **vegetable broth**, **salt** and **pepper** and bring mixture to a boil, whisking constantly, raising heat to medium-high, until mixture is smooth and thick.
5. Remove from heat and slowly add 2 cups of **shredded cheddar cheese**, mixing until fully melted and smooth.
6. Add cooked pasta to cheese mixture and stir to combine until pasta is fully coated.
7. Add pasta to prepared baking dish and top with remaining 1 cup **cheddar cheese** and **parmesan cheese**. Sprinkle **cornbread** or **cornbread muffin crumbs** over the mac and cheese and bake for 20-25 minutes until bubbly and top begins to brown.
8. Broil for the last 2 minutes to brown the top even more, watching closely to not burn the cheese.
9. Remove from oven and let cool slightly before serving.



FRIENDLY TIP:

Consider using ramekins or muffin trays to make individual portions, to enhance safety, manage time and is less overwhelming.

Three Sisters Chili

Recipe adapted from: A Spicy Perspective



8 servings



45 minutes



EQUIPMENT NEEDS

Cutting Board

Knife

Measuring cups

Measuring spoons

Large 7-8 quart Saucepot

Wooden spoon or spatula

Fork

INGREDIENTS

- ¼ cup butter
- 1 large sweet onion, peeled and chopped
- 2 poblano peppers, seeded and chopped
- 5-6 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 whole butternut squash, peeled, seeded, and chopped into **1/2 inch cubes**
- 15 ounce x 3 cans red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 28 ounce x 1 can crushed fire roasted tomatoes
- 3 cups vegetable broth
- 13.5 ounce x 1 can chopped green chiles, mild
- 10 ounces frozen corn
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 bay leaf
- ½ cup chopped cilantro
- Salt and pepper

DIRECTIONS

1. Prep and chop up the following produce items (**onion, poblano pepper, garlic**).
2. Cut the **butternut squash** in half, then peel with a vegetable peeler. Scoop out the seeds with a spoon and discard. Chop into even 1/2 inch cubes.
3. Set a large 7-8 quart saucepot over medium heat. Add the **onions**, chopped **poblano peppers**, and minced **garlic**. Sauté for 5 minute to soften.
4. Add in the cubed **butternut squash**, rinsed **kidney beans**, **fire roasted tomatoes**, **vegetable broth**, **green chiles** in juices, **frozen corn**, and all **spices (cumin, oregano, bay leaf)**. Add 1 teaspoon of **salt** and **pepper**.
5. Cover and simmer for 15-20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Then uncover and simmer another 5 minutes to thicken.
6. Once the squash is fork-tender, remove the **bay leaf**.
7. Taste to ensure spice level is appropriate.
8. Stir in the **cilantro** and serve.



FRIENDLY TIP:

Pre-measure and organize all ingredients into separate, clearly labeled containers before cooking.

Middle East & North Africa

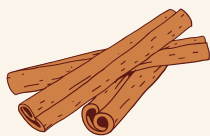
The culinary traditions of the Middle East and North Africa, including Iran, Lebanon, Egypt, and Morocco, are deeply tied to history, culture, and community. Food is central to social life, with meals often shared in large gatherings that emphasize hospitality. In Lebanon, “mezze” features small shared dishes fostering connection; in Iran, stews and rice dishes anchor family meals. Egypt’s communal dishes like “koshari” reflect diverse influences, while Moroccan tagines and couscous are staples of family and festive occasions.



Common Food & Spices



Olive oil



Cinnamon



Lentils



Tumeric



Corinader



Za'atar



Sumac



Cumin

Couscous (Couscous Bidaoui)

Recipe adapted from: Salima's Kitchen



4-6 servings



45 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDS

Large pot with lid

Medium pot or kettle

Cutting board

Knife

Measuring spoons

Measuring cups

Wooden spoon or spatula

Ladle

Fork



INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 carrots, peeled and chopped
- 1 zucchini, chopped
- 1 sweet potato, peeled and chopped
- 1 cup canned chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 3 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- 1½ cups whole wheat couscous

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large pot, heat **olive oil** over medium heat. Add chopped **onion** and sauté for ~5 minutes until soft.
2. Add **garlic, turmeric, cumin, salt, and pepper**. Stir for 1 minute until fragrant.
3. Add **carrots, zucchini, sweet potato, and chickpeas**. Pour in **vegetable broth** to mostly cover the ingredients.
4. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer covered for 25–30 minutes, or until vegetables are tender.
5. Meanwhile, prepare **couscous**: bring 1½ cups water to a boil, remove from heat, stir in couscous, cover, and let sit for 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork.
6. Serve couscous on a plate, topped with the vegetable stew and broth.



FRIENDLY TIP:

Prep the vegetables in advance! You could also substitute with vegetables you want to use up!

Sfouf (Turmeric Semolina Cake)

Recipe adapted from: Taste of Beirut



9-12 small squares



45 minutes



EQUIPMENT NEEDS

Mixing bowls (1 large, 1 medium)

Whisk or spoon for mixing

Measuring cups

Measuring spoons

9x9-inch baking dish

Oven

Toothpick

Knife

INGREDIENTS

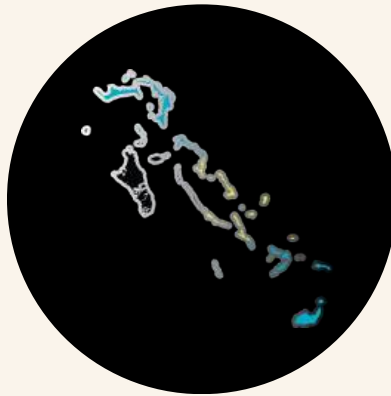
- 1½ cups semolina
- ½ cup whole wheat flour
- 1 cup low-fat milk
- ½ cup olive oil
- ½ cup honey
- 1 tablespoon turmeric powder
- 1 teaspoon aniseed (optional)
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- ¼ cup chopped walnuts (for topping)

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C).
2. In a large bowl, mix **semolina**, **whole wheat flour**, **turmeric**, **aniseed**, and **baking powder**.
3. In a separate bowl, whisk together **milk**, **olive oil**, and **honey** until well combined.
4. Gradually add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients, mixing until a smooth batter forms.
5. Pour the batter into a greased 9x9-inch baking dish.
6. Sprinkle chopped **walnuts** evenly over the top.
7. Bake for 30-35 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.
8. Allow to cool before cutting into squares and serving.

Caribbean

Including Jamaica, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago, and Bermuda these different islands all share similarities within their vibrant food. With influences from African, European, Asian, and Indigenous cuisines, Caribbean food is nothing short of flavourful. Key ingredients in Caribbean cuisine are influenced by these cultural influences as well as the tropical climate of the region. Food is central to Caribbean culture, present in social gatherings, celebrations, religious ceremonies, and festive traditions. Traditional recipes are often passed down throughout generations to create a sense of familial bond through food.



Common Food & Spices



All Spice



Cassava



Garlic



Scotch Bonnet



Corinader



Thyme



Plantains



Collards

Jamaican Rice and Peas

Recipe adapted from: Meals By Mavis



6 servings



50 minutes



EQUIPMENT NEEDS

Fine mesh strainer

Wooden Spoon

Measuring cups

Measuring spoons

Knife

Cutting Board

Medium Non-Stick Pot with
Lid

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tbsp canola oil
- 1 medium onion (diced)
- 2 cloves garlic (minced)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup liquid from the canned beans
- $2\frac{1}{4}$ cups water
- 1 tsp ginger (minced)
- 1 tsp ground allspice
- 2 stalks scallions (chopped)
- 4 stalks thyme (de-stemmed)
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp ground black pepper
- 2 cups brown rice
- 540 ml can red kidney beans
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup + 2 tbsp coconut milk

DIRECTIONS

1. Rinse the rice in the fine-mesh strainer until the water runs clear
2. In your pot over medium heat, add in **canola oil**, **onions**, and **garlic**. Stir and cook for 1 minute.
3. Pour into the pot: **Liquid from canned beans**, **water**, **ginger**, **allspice**, **scallions**, and **thyme**.
4. Cover the pot with a lid and let come to a boil.
5. Add the **rice**, **beans**, and **coconut milk** to the pot. Stir to combine. Cover the pot with a lid and let come to a boil
6. Reduce the heat to low and let the ingredients simmer for 35-40 mins, stirring halfway through.

Dosti Roti

Recipe adapted from: [Cooking with Ria](#)



8 rotis



1 hour

EQUIPMENT NEEDS

Tawa (or 10 inch cast-iron skillet)

Rolling Pin

Wooden Spoon

Pastry Brush

Mixing Bowl

Measuring cups

Measuring spoons



INGREDIENTS

- 4 cups flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tbs brown sugar
- 1 ½ cups water
- 4 tbs butter
- 4 tbs canola oil

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large bowl, combine the **flour**, **baking powder**, **salt** and **sugar**.
2. Gradually add **water** until a shaggy, sticky dough has formed.
3. Rub 1 tbsp **oil** over the dough. Cover with a towel and allow to rest for 15-30 minutes.
4. Divide the dough into 4 equal pieces. Then divide each piece in 2. You should have 8 equal pieces. Roll dough into a ball.
5. Using one piece of dough at a time, use a rolling pin to make the dough into a 4 inch circle.
6. Using your fingers, rub a small amount of **butter** into the surface of the dough. Repeat for another piece of dough.
7. Sprinkle flour on the first piece of flattened dough and place the second piece on top and press together. Repeat steps 6 and 7 until no more dough remains.
8. Roll all dough again into 10 inch circles.
9. Heat your tawa or skillet over medium heat and brush with oil.
10. When hot, place the roti in the pan and brush with butter. Let cook for 1-2 minutes and flip. Brush cooked side of the roti with butter. Rotate the roti as it cooks to cook evenly.
11. Repeat flipping as needed to cook through.
12. When cooked, remove roti from pan onto a parchment-lined plate. Wrap in a clean, dry cloth for storage (but they are best enjoyed hot!)

South Asia

South Asian cuisine is a vibrant and diverse culinary tradition that spans countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. Known for its bold flavors and rich aromas, it often features a dynamic mix of spices such as cumin, turmeric, coriander, cardamom, and chili.

Common cooking styles include slow-cooked stews, grilling in clay ovens (tandoors), deep frying, and tempering spices in hot oil. Eating holds deep cultural and social significance in South Asia. Meals are often communal and celebratory, a time for families to gather, share stories, and uphold traditions. Food is seen not just as sustenance but as a way to express love, hospitality, and identity.



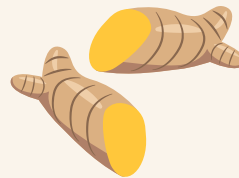
Common Food & Spices



Legumes



Ginger



Tumeric



Cumin



Corinader



Lentils



Garlic



Cardimon

Indian Lentil Soup

Recipe adapted from: Food.com



4 servings



36 minutes



Image from: Canva

EQUIPMENT NEEDS

Large pot

Immersion or regular
blender

Small pan

Wooden spoon

COOKING TIP:



If you prefer a thicker texture, use less vegetable stock for a more dal-like consistency!

INGREDIENTS

- 1½ cups lentils
- 1 teaspoon turmeric
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- ¼ teaspoon ground cardamom
- 2–3 bay leaves
- 6 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 teaspoons mustard seeds
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- Black pepper, to taste
- ½–1 lemon, juiced
- Optional: spinach or kale
- Optional: Serve with whole-grain pita bread or brown rice

DIRECTIONS

1. Rinse the **lentils** thoroughly.
2. In a large pot, combine the **lentils, vegetable stock, turmeric, cumin, cardamom, and bay leaves**.
3. Simmer for about **30 minutes** or until the lentils are very soft.
4. Remove the **bay leaves**
5. Use an **immersion or regular blender** until it's smooth but has some texture. (Or mash with a ladle.)
6. In a small pan, heat **olive oil** over medium. Add **mustard seeds and garlic**, sauté for **1–2 minutes**.
7. Add the oil mixture to the lentil soup.
8. **OPTIONAL:** Stir in a handful of spinach or kale and simmer for 5 more minutes.
9. Season with pepper (and salt if needed), and add lemon juice (optional).
10. Serve hot with **whole-grain pita or brown rice**.

Aloo Baingan (Eggplant + Potato Curry)

Recipe adapted from: [TeaforTumeric](#)



4



50 minutes



EQUIPMENT NEEDS

Oven

Large, non-stick pan

Image from: [TeaforTumeric](#)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium eggplant, diced, peeled
- 2 medium potatoes, diced and peeled
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ inch ginger, grated
- 2 ripe tomatoes, chopped (or ½ cup canned, no-salt added)
- ½ tsp of preferred spices (turmeric, cumin powder, coriander, black pepper to taste)
- ½ cup water
- Fresh cilantro and lemon juice to finish

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to **425°F (220°C)**. Toss diced **eggplant** with **1 tbsp olive oil**. Spread on a baking tray and roast for **25–30 minutes**, until soft and golden.
2. In a lpan, heat 1 tbsp olive oil over medium heat.
3. Add **chopped onion** and sauté for **5 minutes**.
4. Add **garlic and ginger**. Cook for **1 more minute**.
5. Add **Spices & Tomatoes**. Cook for **5 minutes**, until soft. Add a splash of water if needed.
6. Add **Potatoes** with **½ cup water**. Cover and simmer on low for **10–12 minutes**.
7. Add the **roasted eggplant**. Cook uncovered for **5–10 minutes** until texture is soft. Add water if too thick.
8. **Optional**: Turn off the heat. Add chopped cilantro and a little lemon juice.
9. Serve with whole wheat roti, brown rice, or soft bread.

East Asia

East Asia entails flavors and traditions from countries such as China, Korea and Japan. This region is well-known for stir-fries, steaming and fermentation or pickling. Commonalities between the ingredients, cooking methods and traditions originate from their history of trade, cultural exchanges, religious beliefs and similar geographical conditions. Certain dishes and food often hold a symbolic meaning, which has led to consumption of those foods on certain occasions and celebrations.



Common Food & Spices



Tofu



Ginger



Soy Sauce



Green Onion



**Rice Wine
(Mirin,
Shaoxing Wine)**



Garlic



**Sesame
Oil/Seeds**



Rice Vinegar

Asparagus Stir Fry

Recipe adapted from: [The Woks of Life](#)



4 servings



15 minutes



EQUIPMENT NEEDS

Wok (or frying pan)

Wooden Spoon (for stir
frying)

Measuring cups

Measuring spoons

INGREDIENTS

- ⅓ cup water
- 1 tablespoon Shaoxing wine (can substitute dry white wine or another Chinese cooking)
- 2 teaspoons Oyster Sauce
- ¼ teaspoon Salt
- ¼ teaspoon White Sugar
- ¼ teaspoon Sesame Oil
- 1 Pinch White Pepper (can substitute black pepper)
- 2 tablespoons Canola Oil
- 450 grams Asparagus
- 3 cloves garlic (minced)
- 1 teaspoon Cornstarch (mixed into 1 tablespoon of water)

DIRECTIONS

1. Prep the **asparagus**. Trim the ends of the **asparagus** where the green colour fades.
2. Cut the **asparagus** into small 2 inch/5 cm pieces (roughly the size of your thumb)
3. In a liquid measuring cup, mix together **water**, **Shaoxing wine**, **oyster sauce**, **salt**, **sugar**, **sesame oil**, and **white pepper**.
4. In a wok over medium-high heat, add in the **canola oil** and **prepped asparagus**.
5. Stir-fry the **asparagus** for one minute and add the **garlic** and **sauce mixture**. Cook for one minute
6. Add in the **cornstarch** and **water** mixture and stir fry until the sauce has thickened and coats the asparagus.

FRIENDLY TIP:



1. Prep the asparagus in advance! You could also steam it ahead of time for two minutes to skip the need to stir fry it before adding the sauce.
2. Prep the sauce in advance!

Fish Tofu Soup

Recipe adapted from: [The Woks of Life](#)



4 servings



35 minutes

EQUIPMENT NEEDS

Large Wok (or pot)

Wooden Spoon (for stir
frying)

Ladle

Measuring cups

Measuring spoons

Knife

Cutting Board



INGREDIENTS

Fish and Marinade:

- 8 oz (225 g) tilapia, sliced
- 1 tablespoon Shaoxing wine (substitute dry white wine or another Chinese cooking wine if need be)
- 1 teaspoon Light soy sauce
- ¼ teaspoon Salt
- ¼ teaspoon White or Black Pepper
- ¼ teaspoon Sesame Oil

Soup

- 2 tablespoons Canola Oil
- 1-2 thin slices of Ginger
- 6 fresh shiitake mushrooms, sliced
- 6 dried chili (optional)
- 1 cup soy bean sprouts
- 4 cups chicken stock/broth
- 1 ½ cup water
- 1 cup napa cabbage, sliced
- ½ lb firm tofu, diced
- 1/2 teaspoon sesame oil
- salt (to taste)

DIRECTIONS

1. Start by marinating the **tilapia**. Mix the fish and marinade ingredients (**shaoxing wine, light soy sauce, salt, pepper, sesame oil**) together in a bowl and set aside while you prep the other ingredients (about 15-20 minutes). You should have all the ingredients ready to go before you turn on the stove!
2. When you're ready to cook, heat 2 tablespoons **oil** in a large wok over medium heat. Add the **ginger** and **mushrooms**, and sauté for 2 minutes until fragrant and slightly browned. Stir in the **dried chilies**, if using, and cook for another 30 seconds. Add the **bean sprouts** and stir for another minute.
3. Add the **chicken stock, water, napa cabbage, sliced tofu, and sesame oil**. Bring to a boil and add **salt** to taste.
4. Once boiling, lay each piece of fish on the surface of the soup (do this one by one. You don't want the fish to stick together in one clump). The heat should still be medium high to high.
5. Carefully move the fish around the soup so each piece gets submerged in the hot liquid. Bring the soup to boil, and it's done.



FRIENDLY TIP:

1. Marinate the fish in advance for convenience and more flavor.
2. Prep the vegetables in advance!

Europe

The culinary traditions of Europe vary greatly by region, but many share a strong emphasis on fresh, seasonal ingredients, bread, cheese, and communal dining. In Southern Europe (e.g., Italy, Greece, and Spain), the Mediterranean diet, rich in olive oil, vegetables, legumes, and fish, is a cornerstone of eating. Northern and Central Europe often feature whole grains, root vegetables, and fermented food. Eastern European diets emphasize hearty soups, pickled vegetables, and grains like buckwheat. Across the continent, meals bring people together, with food preparation rooted in heritage and tradition.



Common Foods & Spices



Olive oil



Garlic



Oregano



Basil



Rosemary



Parsley



Paprika



Dill

Simple Cabbage Rolls

Recipe adapted from: [Spend With Pennies](#)



6 servings



2 hours



EQUIPMENT NEEDS

Large skillet (or frying pan)

Large pot

Medium pot

9x13 Baking Dish

Measuring cups

Measuring spoons

Wooden spoon

Aluminum foil

INGREDIENTS

- 1 head green cabbage
- 1 cup white rice uncooked
- 1 pound ground turkey
- ½ pound lean ground beef
- 2 small yellow onions, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ teaspoon dried dill
- 1 tablespoon dried parsley
- salt and black pepper to taste
- 1 (400 mL) can diced tomatoes with juices
- 1 egg
- 1 ¾ cups canned tomato sauce, divided
- 1 (298 mL) can condensed tomato soup

DIRECTIONS

1. Prep the oven: Preheat to 350°F.
2. Boil **cabbage** leaves for 2 minutes, then set aside.
3. Cook **rice**: Simmer 1 cup **rice** in 2 cups water for about 15 minutes (slightly undercooked). Set aside.
4. Cook **meat** mixture: In a skillet, cook **turkey, beef, onion, garlic, parsley, salt, and pepper** until no pink remains.
5. Mix filling: Stir in **cooked rice, diced tomatoes, ⅓ cup tomato sauce, and egg**. Mix well.
6. Make sauce: Combine remaining **1 cup tomato sauce with tomato soup**.
7. Assemble rolls: Spread some sauce in the bottom of a 9x13 baking dish. Place ¼ cup filling in each cabbage leaf, roll up like a burrito, and place seam-side down in the dish.
8. Bake: Cover with foil and bake for 1 hour 25 minutes.

German Apple Pancake

Recipe adapted from: [The Kitchen](#)



3-4 servings



35 minutes



EQUIPMENT NEEDS

Cast-iron (or any oven-safe)
skillet

Large mixing bowl

Whisk

Measuring cups

Measuring spoons

INGREDIENTS

- 3 large Eggs
- ½ cup 2% Milk
- 1 large Granny Smith, Honeycrisp, or Pink Lady apple
- ¼ cup Unsalted Butter
- 3 tablespoons White Sugar
- ½ teaspoon Ground Cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon Ground Nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon Vanilla Extract
- ¼ teaspoon Salt
- ½ cup All-Purpose Flour
- Powdered Sugar or Maple Syrup, for serving.

DIRECTIONS

1. Prep batter: In a large bowl, whisk together **eggs** and **milk**. Let sit at room temperature for 30 minutes.
2. Preheat oven: Set to 425°F.
3. Cook the **apples**: In an oven-safe skillet, melt **butter** over medium heat. Add **apple slices**, 2 tbsp **sugar**, 1/2 **tsp cinnamon**, and 1/4 **tsp nutmeg**. Cook for about 5 minutes, until soft and slightly caramelized. Remove from heat.
4. Finish the batter: To the egg mixture, add remaining **1 tbsp sugar**, **1 tsp vanilla**, and **¼ tsp salt**. Stir in **½ cup flour** and whisk until smooth.
5. Combine and bake: Spread **apples** evenly in the skillet. Pour batter on top. Bake for 12–15 minutes, until puffed and set in the center.
6. Serve: Dust with powdered sugar or drizzle with maple syrup. Enjoy!



FRIENDLY TIP:

You can prepare the batter in a blender!

Thank you!

We appreciate everyone who reviewed this resource and hope you find it useful in the future. We wanted to contribute something useful to this community, whether you are a person living with dementia, a caregiver, or a family member. We would like to extend a huge thank you to Jhnelle McLaren-Beato and Natasha Jacob, who helped us every step of the way in the creation of this toolkit. Another huge thank you to everyone who participated in our focus groups and provided us with the information we needed to create something useful for people living with dementia and Alzheimer's.

“Food is more than just fuel...it's connection, comfort, and culture”.



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