

Integrating Culinary Arts into the School Curriculum

A Recipe for Success

~ Sujata C



Home Science was introduced into schools as a subject in British India itself. Those were the days driven by stereotypes when girls were generally expected to get married and settle down in domestic life rather than pursue a career. As a result, Home Science became a subject studied mostly by girl students. But time changed eventually and modern outlook redefined gender roles. In the 21st century, home and kitchen are no more considered as gender specific domains, as men are expected to play a more proactive role in domestic work and women are seen contributing equally as men at the professional space. There has also been a paradigm shift in gender ratio among the students pursuing Home Science. According to a report published in *The Indian Express* on July 27, 2011, the Government College in Mohali had a larger number of boys in the Home Science

classroom than girls¹. In 2017, a draft proposal was prepared by the Government of India to make studying Home Science compulsory for boys in school².

Year after year we see 10th class board exam results where girls outshine boys and pursue higher studies and an active career. It is a good thing that the mind-set of people has evolved and women are no more expected to be relegated to the kitchen. Indian society has come a long way since and we are now at a stage when we celebrate the men who love cooking. Nowadays, Home Science opens up new opportunities for students who are interested to study hotel management after completing school education and make a career in hotel or related industries.



Once culinary skill is stripped off its gender associations and seen as an art by itself, it becomes much easier to be taught. Nowadays it should be learnt by men and women as a necessary life skill so that they are able to sustain themselves through healthy and safe food without undue dependence on any one person.

During the past few decades, cooking has transformed into a glamorous profession with master chefs hosting cookery shows on television and sharing recipes through social media channels. There are a few such television shows dedicated exclusively to children. People like Sanjeev Kapoor have become idols for aspiring chefs who want to work in top hotels across the world. One may have heard about Michelin stars, a rating system used by the blue Michelin Guide³ to grade restaurants on their quality. The chefs of restaurants with Michelin stars are highly paid and are much sought after in the industry.

Multidisciplinary learning

Irrespective of the students' interest to pursue a career in the food industry, learning the basics of cooking will endow them with transferable skills that they can apply in other aspects of life. They include skills of effective communication, time management and group leadership, with application of mathematics,

¹ <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/-girls--subject-home-science-has-more-takers-among-boys/822987/0>

² <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/news/story/home-science-1025926-2017-07-24>

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michelin_Guide

accounting, chemistry and nutritional science. An aspiring chef must know the chemistry of cooking and preservation of food, as well as the art of decorating and presenting food before it is served.

In Indian mythology, there are mentions of male cooks, for example, Bhima and King Nala in *The Mahabharata*. Bhima served as cook for one year in the kitchen of King Virata. Nala wrote *Pakadarpanam* which could possibly be the first ever cookbook. While these were exceptions, in reality, cooking



was considered to be a women's job till modern outlook changed the gender stereotypes in kitchen. In the 21st century, cooking is seen as an art that can be mastered by anyone irrespective of their gender.

Sujata C is a writer and editor with more than thirty years of experience. She writes on children, environment, society as well as technology. She has also been a copywriter with an advertising agency for almost fifteen years.

Lesson Plan: Integrating Culinary Arts into the School Curriculum

~ Sujata C

Hands-on experience:

A simple framework is provided for teachers to implement in the classroom. The frequency of the class maybe kept once or twice a week. Students will be fairly knowledgeable about cooking at the end of the plan. It will be good to ensure that ingredients that are easily and readily available are used.

Session 1: In the first session, make students aware of the objective of cooking, i.e., to make food more digestible. Also, categorise food items into those that need cooking and those that can be consumed raw. Introduce to the class the idea of *raw foodism*, a whole new philosophy of diet that advocates consumption of uncooked vegetables, fruits and animal products. Also, make a mention of the Stone Age diet or the Paleolithic (raw meat) diet that is popular with some sections of people.

Session 2: Next, introduce the cooking implements like cooking pots, pans, ladles, knives, peelers, scrapers, juicers, etc. to your class. Also demonstrate the kitchen implements of the olden days, for example, the pestle and mortar, the stone grinder



Knives

or *chakki*, the chutney maker or *silbatta*, the coffee bean grinder, the sickle like knives that came with a stand to hold down, etc. Don't forget to mention the type of vessels used in the olden days – the heavy bottomed brass pot for cooking rice, the mud pots for boiling the sambar and dal, etc. The *murku* maker, the *poori* press, the coffee filter were inventions of the pre-machine days to ease

cooking and ruled the roost till the electric gadgets swept them out of the kitchen

counters and into the bag of scrap dealers.

Also introduce the staple foods like rice, wheat, millets and different varieties of dal to the class. They can be familiarised with various vegetables, fruits and cooking oils.

Session 3: Demonstrate simple experiments like scrambling eggs and curdling milk in the classroom to show the irreversible side of cooking. Similarly, students can be encouraged to explore some of the reversible changes that take place in food

when they get heated or cooled, for example, melting of ice or butter. These will help them assimilate some basic principles of science. Popping corn is a simple activity that even young children can attempt. Boiling an egg is another basic skill just like cooking rice.

Session 4: Try out dishes that do not require cooking in this session. Prepare salads and sandwiches. Explain students the uses of spreads and sauces. Keep a variety of cheese spreads, butter, jam, jelly, mayonnaise, and explain the need for these.

Make sure the class learns how to make a simple sandwich. Since children also travel frequently nowadays, take some time to instruct how to pack it to retain its freshness. A simple sweet lime juice can be prepared and shared with students.



A preparation of salad

Session 5: This session can be about how balanced diet is essential for the healthy growth and development of physical and mental

faculties. The National Institute of Nutrition has prescribed the right proportion of food to be consumed by Indians to maintain good health. Discuss the concept of dieting that is prevalent among the youth along with their benefits and side-effects and the many varieties of diets that are trending from time to time.

Session 6: Use this session to explain the basics of roti making, atta kneading and pressure cooking.

Session 7: Introduce baking and the principle involved in it. After that, with the help of the students, bake a simple sponge cake in the class.



Preparation of Sushi, a traditional Japanese food

Session 8: This session can be about barbequed foods and kebabs. Explain the principles of marinating and grilling food. Then demonstrate it by preparing a kebab dish.

Session 9: Introduce cuisines of different parts of the world. It will be helpful for students while visiting other countries. Instead of yearning for home cooked food, they can try out

the local delicacies available in places they are visiting.

Apart from these sessions, the following activities can be arranged:

1. Arrange a trip to a local rice mill so that children can see how grain is de-husked and processed before they reach the market.
2. Visit a local bakery to show students how breads, cakes and biscuits are prepared. Ask children to estimate the degree of heat in a traditional *bhatti* or oven. Let them observe the working conditions in the bakery.
3. Ask students to make presentations on different types of breads consumed in different parts of the world.
4. Show children videos on traditional food items like making of puffed rice or pressed rice.
5. Arrange classroom debates on the health and taste-related aspects of modern and olden kitchen gadgets.
6. Organise expert talks about different aspects of food and nutrition (for example, popular kitchen remedies for common ailments).
7. Arrange a visit to the National Institute of Nutrition for those in the same city.
8. Give students an exercise. Make them prepare a therapeutic diet for an elderly person to suit a particular medical condition.
9. Ask students to prepare PowerPoint presentations on the different food habits found among Indians.
10. Visit a canteen with students to make them witness how cooking for a large gathering is done.
11. Explain students how cooking was earlier regarded as a job that must be done by women and gradually gender sensitization changed the perspective. Let them share their opinions with you.

A basic knowledge of culinary skills and how they are closely integrated to our daily lives will make students ready to rustle up a meal anytime and keep hunger at bay. It will also make them realise the importance of kitchen management and its link to our health and lifestyle. Eventually, they will grow up as ideal 21st century individuals with a gender-neutral outlook to cooking.

Sujata C is a writer and editor with more than thirty years of experience. She writes on children, environment, society as well as technology. She has also been a copywriter with an advertising agency for almost fifteen years.

Gourmand (noun)



Pronunciation: /'gʊmənd/ and /'gɔːmənd/

Meaning: A person who enjoys eating and often eats too much

Origin and additional information: The word came into late Middle English diction from old French in late fifteenth century. But its use frequented only in the late eighteenth century. The actual origin of the word remains unknown. The spelling of the word used to vary in earlier uses (*gurmand*, *gormande*, *gormaund*, *gourman*, *garmand*, *gurmond*, *gourmond*, *gormand*, etc.).

Use over time for: *gourmand*



Word section: Apart from its immediate denotation, *gourmand* is also used to mean *a connoisseur of good food; a gourmet*. The words *gourmand* and *gourmet*

overlap in meaning but are not identical. Both can be used to denote *a connoisseur of good food* but *gourmand* is more usually used to mean *a person who enjoys eating and often eats too much*. *Gourmand* is also used as an adjective and has given birth to words like *gourmandism* (noun), *gourmandise* (verb) and *gourmandiser* (noun).

Usage:

1. How shall I get this gourmand stanza through?
(Source: ***Don Juan*** by Lord Byron, 1824, used as an adjective)
2. Jos, that fat gourmand, drank up the whole contents of the bowl.
(Source: ***Vanity Fair*** by William Makepeace Thackeray, 1847)
3. After an appetizer like this, the grateful gourmand finds that he has regained his interest in dining.
(Source: <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/gourmand>)

Contents sourced majorly from Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary.