

Choosing and Using Recipes

An important part of food preparation is recipe selection. A recipe tells which ingredients to use and how to put them together. Knowing how to interpret the symbols and terms and how to use the recipe will help create a successful product.

- A. Choose recipes that fit your food preparation skills. Use recipes low in sugar, salt, and fat to follow the U.S. Dietary Guidelines. Consider the cost and availability of the ingredients. Can you find the ingredients locally or substitute something similar? Use the most common kitchen equipment. If a special piece of equipment is used, tell what common piece of equipment can be substituted. For example, a fry pan could be used instead of a wok. Practice making the recipe so you have an acceptable product. Seasonings and baking times may need to be adjusted.
- B. Organize recipes to fit your needs for meal planning. Use a system (card file, notebook, blank book) so your recipes are easy to locate. Remember, the best system is what is usable for you. You may want to alphabetize your recipes or group them in categories such as beverages, salads, breads.
- C. A recipe includes (1) a title, (2) list of ingredients and amounts, (3) directions, and (4) safe storage instructions. Use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

- 1. Title:** A recipe has a name and source of recipe.
- 2. Ingredients:** List in order used. If abbreviations are used, be consistent. Use easy standard units of measurement. For example: $\frac{1}{4}$ cup instead of 4 Tablespoons. Use weight for uncooked meat, poultry, fish, and cheese. For canned products, list weight or fluid measurement. State the type of product needed. For example: all-purpose flour or cake flour instead of flour.
- 3. Directions:** Use short, concise, easy-to-follow sentences. Use clear, concise directions for every step of combining or cooking ingredients. Use words in the correct order to describe preparation, combining, and cooking processes. For example: $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped onion or $\frac{1}{4}$ onion, chopped. State size of cookware. Give temperature and cooking time. For example: degrees for oven, range setting for top-of-stove cooking, and power setting for microwave. Give number and size of servings or how much the recipe makes.
- 4. Safe storage instructions:** For example, cover and refrigerate immediately.

Elaine Husted, Extension faculty, Grant County, Oregon State University.



Four basic forms of recipes

1. Standard

This form gives ingredients first, then the method. The list shows what is needed to make the recipe. Exact measurements and terminology should be given. For example: 2 cups sifted flour, not 2 cups flour, sifted; 2 cups packed brown sugar, not 2 cups brown sugar, packed.

Sloppy Joe

Source: PNW 1

4-6 servings

1 small onion, chopped
1 pound ground beef
1 10³/₄-ounce can condensed tomato soup
2 Tablespoons packed brown sugar
1 teaspoon prepared mustard

1. Chop the onion.
2. Put onion and ground beef into a 10" skillet.
3. Cook and stir over moderate heat until meat is lightly browned. Drain drippings and discard.
4. Add tomato soup, brown sugar, and mustard. Stir, cover, and simmer over low heat for 10 to 15 minutes.
5. Serve hot on hamburger buns.

Refrigerate leftovers immediately in tightly covered container.

2. Action

This form combines narrative action with listed ingredients. The ingredients are described in the same way as in the standard form.

Sloppy Joe

Source: PNW 1

4-6 servings

Place 1 pound ground beef in 10" skillet
Add 1 small onion, chopped
Cook beef and onion mixture until lightly browned
Drain drippings
Discard drippings
Add 1 10³/₄-ounce can condensed tomato soup
2 Tablespoons packed brown sugar
1 teaspoon prepared mustard

Stir, cover and simmer mixture over low heat for 10-15 minutes. Serve hot on hamburger buns.

Refrigerate leftovers immediately in tightly covered container.

3. Descriptive

This form has each ingredient followed by the correct terminology. For example: carrots, diced, cooked; eggs, slightly beaten.

Sloppy Joe

Source: PNW 1

4-6 servings

Onion, chopped	1 small	Add onion and beef to a 10" skillet, cook over moderate heat until light brown.
Ground beef	1 pound	
Tomato soup, condensed, canned	10 ³ / ₄ ounce	Drain the drippings and discard. Add soup, sugar, and prepared mustard.
Brown sugar, packed	2 Tablespoons	Stir, cover, and simmer over low heat for 10 to 15 minutes. Serve hot on hamburger buns.
Mustard	1 teaspoon	

Refrigerate leftovers immediately in tightly covered container.

4. Narrative

This form includes the amounts of ingredients with the method.

Sloppy Joe

Source: PNW 1

4-6 servings

Chop 1 small onion. Add onion and 1 pound ground beef to a 10" skillet. Cook meat until lightly browned. Drain the drippings and discard. Add 1 10³/₄-ounce can of condensed tomato soup, 2 Tablespoons packed brown sugar, and 1 teaspoon mustard. Stir, cover, and simmer over low heat for 10-15 minutes. Serve hot on hamburger buns.

Refrigerate leftovers immediately in tightly covered container.

When recipes are used as part of your exhibit, refer to the guidelines below for judging. Organization of recipes is the decision of the 4-H member. The size of the recipes will be determined by the recipe file system. The recipe can be handwritten or typed.

4-H Recipe File

Guidelines for Judging

	Excellent	Good	Could Improve
Is the recipe file organized so recipes are easy to find?			
Does recipe contain name, number of servings, and source of recipe?			
Are correct terms used as outlined in glossary of terms?			
Are temperatures and cooking times included? (if applicable)			
Are common units of measure used and are they consistent?			
Is size of cookware stated? (if applicable)			
Are directions easy to follow? (short, clear, concise)			
Are care and storage directions included? (if applicable)			
Are recipes neat and easy to read (including correct grammar, spelling and punctuation)? Do they show creativity?			
Do the recipes meet the exhibit criteria as outlined in the exhibit description?			
Comments:			

Sources: AHEA Handbook of Food Preparation, 1980; Hullah, Evelyn, Cardinal's Handbook of Recipe Development, 1984; Hillers, Val, Criteria For Recipe Selection, 1988.

Produced and distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Extension work is a cooperative program of Oregon State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Oregon counties. Oregon State University Extension Service offers educational programs, activities, and materials—without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, marital status, disability, and disabled veteran or Vietnam-era veteran status. Oregon State University Extension Service is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Published July 1989. Reprinted May 2004.