



PUBLICATION FST-100NP



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Produced by Virginia Cooperative Extension,

Virginia Tech, 2024

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VT/0724/FST-101 (FST-483NP)

Master Food Volunteer Foods Demonstration Guide

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Introduction

When you are volunteering as a Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Food Volunteer or as a volunteer for other Family and Consumer Sciences programs, you may have the opportunity to share what you learn with others by giving a foods demonstration. Talking in front of a group of friends and other volunteers can be a little scary at first, but with planning and practice, you will be able to give a foods demonstration with ease.

Just what is a foods demonstration? Basically, a foods demonstration is showing a group of others how to prepare a recipe use a cooking technique, or cook an unusual food product. Actually, a demonstration may be easier than a “talk” because you have something to do with your hands — you actually show, or demonstrate, what you are talking about.

Foods demonstrations may be presented in various settings, such as classrooms, church kitchens, or farmers markets. For more information on foods demonstrations at farmers markets, refer to “Leave ‘em Star Struck: A Demonstration Activity for Farmers Markets,” Virginia Cooperative Extension publication.

Planning the Demonstration

Choose a Recipe or Preparation Technique

First, decide what you are going to demonstrate and research possible recipes. If you are proposing an activity idea that is not already offered by Virginia Cooperative Extension, you will need to consult with your supervising Extension agent for preauthorization procedures. The Extension agent will also have many recipes that have been tested and approved. Additional recipe ideas can be found on other cooperative extension websites and “.gov” websites, such as www.choosemyplate.gov.

Your supervising agent will also have access to all the approved recipes from the Family Nutrition Program, so be sure to ask for ideas. If you are volunteering with FNP, consult your SNAP-Ed family and consumer sciences Extension agent and/or FNP program assistant (depending on the specific program) to obtain the materials you will use.

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Do Your Homework

Once your food demonstration idea is approved, learn the recipe and what the food should look and taste like when it is finished, which means **practice, practice, practice!**

Think about how long it takes to make the food. If you are doing a quick eight- to 10-minute demonstration, choose a simple recipe that can be prepared in that time frame. If the recipe is too complicated to complete in the time period, prepare some of the ingredients ahead of time (such as measuring, chopping, etc.).

Sometimes you might give a longer demonstration. For example, you could demonstrate preparation of a complete meal for a 4-H group. Again, select your recipes to fit your time goals and practice!

Learn all you can about the project, including nutrition facts, menu complements, food safety tips, and origins of the food you are preparing. Your goal is to know more about the topic than you can possibly say during the demonstration. This will give you more confidence.

When preparing for the demonstration, use the following checklist to make sure you have everything you need:

- List the demonstration steps in order.
- Outline the information you have found that helps explain your demonstration.
- List all equipment you need.
- Practice, practice, practice!

Getting Ready

- Prioritize food safety!
- Measure all ingredients and do any advance food preparation, as necessary (chop, dice, precook).
- Virginia Cooperative Extension does not promote consumer products. Cover or remove labels on food product containers so the company's name is not visible. Or, you can premeasure ingredients and place them in storage containers.

- When possible, use clear containers to store ingredients. Remove the lids or covers just before the demonstration. Make sure the commercial labels are also removed from any food containers you use. If that is not possible, add a disclaimer to your presentation that the ingredients you have used were the ones available to purchase and is not meant to imply any endorsement of their product.
- The demonstration area is your "stage." The center of the table will be the actual work area for mixing, slicing, kneading, rolling, etc. Set up the work area so that items you will use are easy to reach and work with. Keep the work area free of distracting items. Make it attractive with a clean tablecloth.
- Have a few clean, damp cloths so you are ready to wipe up spills and clean the work area and your hands.
- Set up any ingredients that are premeasured.
- Trays can be a helpful way to carry and organize your food items. Set up the trays so you can work from left to right (or right to left if that is more comfortable for you), taking the ingredients from the left tray, using them in your workspace in the center, then placing the empty containers on the right tray.
- Have a clean container, such as a plastic mixing bowl, for waste materials.
- If you need to use electrical equipment of any kind, bring along an extension cord and make sure you know how to operate the equipment.
- Clean, plain, simple clothing is best for doing a foods demonstration. An apron is a good choice, especially if you have a Master Food Volunteer apron. Avoid jewelry, rings, bangle bracelets, long necklaces, long fingernails, and fingernail polish. These can be distracting and may pose a safety problem if they get lost in the food.
- Hair should be neat and pulled away from your face. Make sure that no hair can fall into the food.

- Post a sign that indicates that your demonstration is “Brought to you by Virginia Cooperative Extension.” Your FCS agent can help obtain one for you.

Giving the Demonstration

Show and Tell

Begin your demonstration by drawing your audience in. Make a statement that they can identify with or that will make them want to prepare the dish. You may want to start out by showing what the finished product will look like. Audience appeal is what you are after.

- Introduce yourself, including your name and your role with Virginia Cooperative Extension.
- Talk about the recipe. Why did you choose it? Does your family like it? What are its selling points, e.g., new recipe ideas, delicious ways to serve vegetables? Ask the question, “How many of you are looking for easy ways to eat healthier?”
- While you are mixing the ingredients, rolling out dough, shaping bread —whatever you are doing — talk to the audience and maintain eye contact.
- Tell a bit about the history of the food. Tell them the nutritional value of the food you are preparing. Use the MyPlate Guidelines (USDA 2012) to explain its nutritional value.
- Explain the proper steps in safe food handling as you prepare each step. Refer to any handouts (see the Resources for Further Reading section of this publication) you are using to emphasize specific points, such as proper handwashing, avoiding cross-contamination, required cooking temperatures, etc.
- Why is this food recipe good to include in their meals? If you are using unusual equipment, special foods, or unfamiliar terms, give them information to help them understand what you are talking about. This is called “filler,” and it will help keep your audience interested in what you are doing.
- Do not try to talk above a mixer, food processor, or other noisy piece of equipment.

Tip: While you are talking, make sure that you do not refer to ingredients as “my” or “your” — call them “the” ingredients. For example, instead of “my flour,” say “the flour.”

Finish Up

As you finish the steps in the demonstration, clean up your workspace and move the trays and soiled articles to another table. Wipe off the work area; remove any crumbs into your hand and place them on the trays with the soiled dishes.

Display the finished product as attractively as possible. Make sure it is appealing. You may want to remove one portion of the food and display it on a serving plate with a napkin, utensils, and beverage.

Summarize the Demonstration

You have shown the audience what you have made, how easy it is to do, and how attractive it can be. Bring your demonstration to a close with a statement by answering the question asked in the introduction, e.g., “Why is this recipe good to include in your meals?”

Food Safety Guidelines

Before the Demonstration

- First and foremost, any one involved in the demonstration who is sick (symptoms include fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or other gastrointestinal upset) should be excluded from preparing food or demonstrating.
- Persons with cuts, burns, skin infections, or sores should have them bandaged and protected with gloves or other barriers sufficient to prevent contamination of food or surfaces that contact food.
- Wear an apron when working directly with food. Take off your apron before leaving the demonstration table to use the restroom, take a break, etc.
- Use one cutting board for raw meats and a separate one for fresh fruits and vegetables. Clean all surfaces and utensils with hot water and soap, including cutting boards, peelers, and

knives that will touch fresh fruits, vegetables, and meats before and after food preparation. Once the surfaces have been cleaned, sanitize them with a solution of 1 teaspoon of chlorine bleach per quart of water.

- Anyone handling food must wash their hands before handling food products; after eating, smoking, or using the restroom; and after touching the nose, face, hair, or any other possible contaminant.
- Wash hands with warm water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling raw fruits and vegetables. If drinkable water is not available, bring bottled water and liquid soap as a substitute. Be sure to include a plastic basin or container to catch the “gray water” as you wash and rinse your hands, etc. Dispose of the gray water afterward in an area away from the classroom or facility.
- Hand sanitizer should be used in addition to handwashing but not as a substitute. Virginia Retail Food Regulations prohibit bare hand contact with “ready to eat” foods; therefore, put on gloves after handwashing.
- Check to make sure the fruits and vegetables you prepare are not bruised or damaged.
- Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water. Never use detergent or bleach to wash fruits and vegetables, as they are not intended for consumption.
- Any precut fruits/vegetables should be kept in a refrigerator or a cooler with ice, ready for use during the demonstration. Only take out what is needed and keep the refrigerator or cooler door closed.
- Keep raw meats separate from all other foods. Store ready-to-eat foods above raw meats in the refrigerator. If you are using coolers, keep a separate cooler for raw meats.
- Print the basic “FighBac!” brochure to hand out to people watching the demonstration before you begin (PFSE 2024; see References section for the URL).

During the Demonstration

Incorporate the four basic steps for food safety found in “FightBac!” (PFSE 2024) throughout the demonstration and explain them as you go:

1. Clean.
 - Demonstrate the use of a food thermometer to check the required internal cooking temperature.
 - If you are using a bimetallic food thermometer, demonstrate how to properly calibrate it (using the manufacturer’s instructions).
2. Separate.
3. Cook.
4. Chill.

After the Demonstration

Apply the instructions for “chill,” the fourth step in the “FightBac!” brochure (PFSE 2024).

Tips for Successful Demonstrations

Nutrition Tips

- Use the MyPlate recommendations as part of the presentation, introduction, etc.
- Explain the macronutrients, vitamins and minerals contained in the foods — what they are and how the body uses them.
- Make sure your information is accurate — confirm with your supervising Family and Consumer Sciences Extension agent as you plan the demonstration.

Presentation Tips

- If you have forgotten an ingredient, don’t make a big deal of it. Just go on and do the demonstration as though you had it.
- If you have an accident, explain what happened and continue with the demonstration. Anyone can have a problem with food preparation!

- Use a damp cloth under a mixing bowl or cutting board to keep it from slipping and from making too much noise.
- Be entertaining and informative.
- Use a pleasant voice and proper grammar.
- Make sure everything is clean before you start.
- Be organized.
- Speak in a voice that the audience can hear.

Resources for Further Reading

Boyer, R. 2019. *Is It Safe to Eat? Use a Food Thermometer to Be Sure*. Virginia Cooperative Extension publication FST-28NP-B. <https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/FST/FST-28/FST-28NP-A/FST-28NP-A.html>.

References

Camp, S., and J. Finck. 2003. *4-H Foods Demonstration Guide*. University of Illinois Extension. Reprinted and adapted with permission. https://extension.illinois.edu/sites/default/files/20_food_demo_guide.pdf.

PFSE (Partnership for Food Safety Education). 2024. *FightBac! The Core Four Practices*. <https://www.fightbac.org/food-safety-basics/the-core-four-practices/>.

USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture). Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. 2024. *MyPlate*. <https://myplate.gov>.

Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge Melissa Chase, Dawn Barnes, Van Do, Meredith Ledlie, Susan Prillaman, and Katie Strong for their contributions to this publication.