Virtual Food Skills Toolkit

Developed by, and in collaboration with:

Introduction

Self-isolating, social distancing, and delivery of services through virtual platforms are new phases for us all. One of the key priorities for the Aberdeen Community Food Network (ACFN) is to promote and support food knowledge and skills within the community.

The ACFN pre-COVID has always supported this agenda, partly through the promotion of the Confidence 2 Cook; an NHS Grampian resource in a Training-4-Trainers style framework, which looks to equip participants with the skills required for hosting and using the framework to deliver their own food skills classes.

As a result of COVID-19 these classes have not been possible. However, a demand for food skills training has still been visible, with some organisations continuing food skills delivery through adaptation.

Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership has been leading on how the Confidence 2 Cook framework may be adapted to provide additional support and coordination in this area and, through the Aberdeen Community Food Network (ACFN) Steering Group, is driving forward with this in a joined-up way.

To look at contributing to this work, and to wider demand for virtual food skills, ACFN embarked on a trial of virtual food skills in order to understand what works (and what doesn't!) when it comes to changing the way food skills are delivered. This toolkit reflects that work directly.

We wanted to share key lessons and top tips from the virtual food skills trial projects to;

> 1. Increase the accessibility of food skills for all, in an on-line format.
>
> 2. Provide practical food skills opportunities, based on the Confidence 2 Cook materials, which does not focus on a "for trainers" style of training.
>
> 3. Contribute towards the increased coordination and support to those interested or involved in food skills.

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit is presented as a checklist. Each area demonstrates what we feel, from experience, are key considerations when it comes to hosting a virtual food skills session. Everything from which platform you choose, to how you adjust the session to make it as close to a practical, in-person, session as possible - we've considered it all.

What's more, this is not prescriptive. Some "checkboxes" may be more relevant to you than others, but we hope this toolkit will help develop your appetite for hosting virtual food skills!

Importantly, this document is flexible, and we would love the network to help continue to inform how this evolves in the future! If you have any improvements, or if you feel you discover something which has been missed out, we want to hear about it. Get in touch!

Six Things to Think About in your Virtual Cookery Session

Our experience in testing virtual food skills demonstrated that there are six key areas of consideration in mapping out a food skills session in a virtual format:

Risk Assessment

- Appropriate virtual platform
- Cooking space
- Key considerations

Choice of Recipe

- Choice of ingredients
- Easily accessible and adaptable
- Suit your audience

Timing

- Preparation
- Time for interaction

Virtual Platform

- Teams
- Zoom
- Facebook Live

Technical

- Device use
- Use of overhead connection

Engagement with Participants

This toolkit examines each area in more detail, and shares tips on maximising the session when making these decisions.

Risk assessment

The following checklist may help to ensure sessions are delivered with minimum risk to food champions/volunteers and participants;

Appropriate virtual platform agreed by both volunteers and participants

☐ Zoom/ Facebook Live /Microsoft Teams etc.?
☐ Are there limitations to your chosen platform? (See Virtual Platform segment)

TIP: Let participants know which "view" to use.

For engaging with participants, use gallery view on one of your screens. Dependent on software used, you can also pin screens for participants- dependent on which cameras you would like them to view.

Figure 1- Different views, as demonstrated by the Keep Growing Aberdeen- Grow, Share, Eat!, July 2021

Cooking Space

☐ Will you be leading the session from your own kitchen?
☐ If you are using a community location, are you familiar with the space, and do you know where everything is? (including in the case of an emergency)?

TIP: If you are using a Community Kitchen, or community space, to lead the session, arrive early to ensure you can familiarise yourself with the surroundings.

Key considerations for participants

☐ Is there anything specific you must communicate to your participants for safety? Ie. Clear workspaces?
☐ Will you be providing ingredients to participants for the session? If so, does your project have a budget to meet this and have you ensured that these have been

received before the session starts?

☐ How is the session being made accessible to those with additional requirements? (Slow pace for participants keeping up, closed captions for an additional layer of information etc.)

Choice of recipe

Choice of recipe is important to help participants stay fully engaged during virtual sessions.

<u>Choice of Ingredients</u>

☐ Are you using a sensible number of ingredients in the recipe, to ensure accessibility?

☐ Are you able to trace the nutritional information about the recipe, and can you confidently share this information with participants?

> **TIP: NHS Grampian's Confidence 2 Cook programme provides a wide selection of nutritionally assured, and clearly displayed, recipes for use.**
>
> Find out more on the Confidence 2 Cook website or by clicking the image.

☐ If you need to prepare any ingredients, have you considered how you may be able to show this in the session, and how this might be communicated to participants?

> **TIP: If you are formatting the session as a "cook along", it may be a good idea to follow all the steps in real time with participants.**
>
> If you are **not** intending participants to cook along in real time, it may be an idea to prepare your ingredients in advance but save some of the preparation to illustrate (ie. If you have 4 carrots to chop, why not chop 3 before the session begins, and chop 1 live?)
>
> In any case, communication with participants before the beginning of the session will allow good preparation and a smooth cook along.

Easily accessible and adaptable

☐ Are there "simple swaps" suited to your recipe? Ie. If you are leading a chicken curry session- might a participant be able to use turkey, or a vegetarian alternative, with little/no impact on their cooking along?

☐ What ingredients are "essential" and which are "to taste"?

> **TIP: Not all participants will have a fully stocked spice rack!**
>
> Encouraging participants to tailor spices and seasonings to their own taste is a great way of overcoming a potential barrier.

Suit your audience

☐ Is there a specific type of meal which might suit your audience? For example, are you trying to show how to cook on a budget? Or are you trying to demonstrate vegetarian dishes? etc.

> **TIP: Have you thought of an average basket price or serving cost?**
>
> Encouraging participants to recreate your recipe after the session is important. To increase accessibility and promote budgeting, engaging with basket prices (ie. the cost of ingredients from the supermarket) or serving costs (what one dish of the meal would cost per person) is a great way to encourage this.
>
> Costs will vary, so why not draw attention to costs from different shops (Tesco, Asda, Aldi, Lidl etc.)?

☐ Are your participants "beginner"/"novice" cooks? Does the session require any adaptation to increase the accessibility of the skills being shared?

> **TIP: Dependent on how confident participants are, adjust your pace and ensure they can keep up with what you are doing.**

Timing

This is very important to maximise engagement. For a session of one hour, recommended preparation and cooking time should be around 30mins to allow for preparation and time for interaction- although this may be adaptable dependent on the recipe.

Preparation

☐ With 30 minutes to 1 hour as an ideal timeframe, what preparation do you need to have completed before the session? Have you communicated this to participants?

☐ Are you aiming to get through 1 recipe or 2? If 2, how much preparation is involved in each? Is there a theme, or common ingredient use which could save time?

☐ Are you hosting the session yourself, or will there be a co-host alongside you? Have you agreed how this will work - who will go first, whether you both cook different dishes or cover different parts of the same recipe etc.?

Time for interaction

☐ How much "free time" is there in the recipe you have chosen (time where you are observing the dish cooking, or waiting for a key stage of the recipe)?

☐ How many key messages need to be communicated? Is there something participants need to know about techniques, what to watch for, health benefits etc.?

☐ Are you prepared for additional questions which may come from participants, or do you have questions you would like to ask them whilst they cook?

Virtual platform

The choice of easily accessible platform for participants should be considered for sessions. In preparing our trials, for example, we considered three options and our thoughts are below:

Microsoft Teams

Pros	Cons
Easy to set up a meeting if you have this functionality	The types of view available to participants is more limited
Can be used by participants without a Microsoft Teams enabled account Unlimited time in meetings, regardless of participant numbers	Camera feeds are slower to update, and occasionally can result in the presenter not appearing on screen automatically
Intuitive and easy to navigate	

Zoom

Pros	Cons
Easy to organise meetings	There can be a cost- if your session runs over 40 minutes with 3 or more participants, there is a requirement to have a "premium" paid-for account
Can be used by participants without a Zoom account	
"Gallery View" and the ability of individual participants to view specific feeds means easier use for participants	Due to not taking the form of a calendar invitation, it can be more difficult to track who has access to the link.

Facebook "Live"

Pros	Cons
Ability to reach beyond a pre-arranged audience (people may join in live time)	Interaction is limited to comment-only, meaning only the leader will have picture and sound
	Comments and reactions can move fast and be distracting, more so on Facebook than other platforms because there is no vocal interaction. Using this may need assistance of another person to keep track

Technical

Device Use

> **TIP: Use two devices**
>
> If you have access to more than one device, use more than one device to show the visuals of what is happening. A laptop, for example, is great for viewing the participants reactions, but is difficult to use to show the dish being prepared. Why not use your phone or mobile device to show the dish being prepared?

☐ Have you set up two devices- one for viewing the cooking in progress, and one for viewing the participants in live time?
☐ Have you ensured that one device is muted (microphone and sound) to avoid interference?

The use of overhead connection

☐ Do you have access to handsfree equipment (such as a tripod or stand) which could allow you to use two screens hassle-free?

> **TIP: More than one "camera operator"**
>
> If you, for any reason, can't setup an overhead camera, a friend or assistant may be able to assist, by holding a camera manually to show participants key stages of the process as you cook.

☐ If not, don't worry! Is there a way you could use a second device/ your device to show key points of the process- such as preparation, key visual cues during cooking etc.?

Engagement with participants

Engagement with participants is really important, its one of the greatest benefits of an in-person session. To avoid losing this in a virtual session, we have the following tip:

> **TIP: Making the session more interactive can help reinforce the following;**
>
> a. Knowledge about the nutritional value of the different ingredients on the menu
> b. Alternative ingredients that can be used
> c. The benefits of different food types
> d. Cooking with what is at hand (cooking on a budget/budget tips)
> e. Trying new flavours
> f. Use of cupboard ingredients
> g. Pros and cons of cupboard ingredients vs fresh ingredients
> h. New skills (Another way of preparing foods e.g chopping)

Important Contacts

You can contact a local group of community food champions (volunteers) who can assist you with planning and delivering a virtual cookery session.

Cook at the Nook (CFINE)

      Website: https://www.cfine.org
      Phone number: 01224 596156

Mixing Bowl

      Website: https://www.mixingbowlaberdeen.co.uk/
      Contact: https://www.mixingbowlaberdeen.co.uk/contact-us

Useful Resources

Confidence 2 Cook- [Confidence 2 Cook NHS Grampian resource equipping community to start to cook in Aberdeenshire](#)

The Eatwell guide, NHS- [The Eatwell Guide - NHS (www.nhs.uk)](#)

Change4Life, NHS- [Home | Change4Life (www.nhs.uk)](#)

CFINE- [Community Food Initiatives North East (cfine.org)](#)

Healthy Choices Healthy Child, the Aberdeen City Parent Learning Hub- [Parent Learning Hub - Healthy Choices Healthy Child (google.com)](#)

Do you have any feedback on this document? Anything you'd like to see added?

Get in Touch
Martin Carle
Sustainable Food Coordinator, CFINE
Email: MCarle@cfine.org
Address: 2-4 Poynernook Road,
Aberdeen
AB11 5RW

Telephone: 01224 596156