

Insight Curriculum Bitesize

Food Technology

Welcome to the first Curriculum Bitesize which focuses on skills in food technology. We're lucky enough to have input from Jo Miller, a trained chef who is herself registered blind. Jo has suggested a couple of recipes that a group of children could make, with specific ideas for those children who are blind or partially sighted. But first, let's look at the practical skills involved in preparing and cooking food.

Getting started

The following ideas were suggested for teachers and support assistants supporting blind and partially sighted pupils, either in a mainstream or special school setting. Some of the tips may also be useful for daily living skills classes, as well as for pupils covering food technology as part of the National Curriculum.

Try to ensure that the room where the activity takes place is set out in a consistent manner so that equipment can be found in the same place each session.

Keep a separate set of equipment, including any specialised items in one place for the pupil. Make sure he or she always works in the same part of the room, thus aiding mobility skills.

Where possible use standard "high street" equipment, adapted as necessary with bump-ons or "hi-mark". Specialised equipment is not a cure all! Standard equipment won't single a pupil out as having a visual impairment and parents are more likely to have similar equipment at home.

For partially sighted pupils, ensure as much colour contrast as possible. If your work surface is dark, use light chopping boards. If the chopping board is light, use a dark handled knife and so on.

Choose bowls with dark interiors to mix light coloured foods and vice versa.

If similar shaped plastic bowls are used to microwave food, mark to denote sweet and savoury to avoid flavour transfer – drill a hole in the rim of the bowl used for savoury and leave the sweet rim unmarked.

If a pupil is struggling with an activity, break it down into manageable parts, as it may only be one task which is the barrier - go through this task in more detail to ensure they can complete the whole exercise.

Safety is paramount. Pupils may miss out on valuable information if imparted on a verbal basis only. Show pupils what is meant instead of just telling them - work hand-on-hand with them where appropriate.

Remember that the role of a support worker is to promote as much independence as possible, but to step in to prevent danger or increase chances of success.

Cutting, chopping, peeling and slicing

Pupils can practise cutting using a homemade version of play-dough (see page 6 for a simple recipe). Practising over and over again helps pupils to develop a rhythm to their chopping - this tip came from a blind chef! Once a pupil has practised with the play-dough, they can move on to rolled-up ham, a cucumber halved along its length, a block of cheese, building up the resistance each time.

Any introduction to the use of a knife should be accompanied with safety input e.g. using a “bridge”.

Use the right knife for the job – blunt knives are not safer than sharp knives, because more pressure needs to be exerted and the knife might slip and cut, trapping vulnerable fingers.

Ensure that pupils know about colour coded chopping boards - read for meat, green for salad etc. If they have no colour vision, mark the boards up accordingly and ensure that they are familiar with the implications of mixing board use. RNIB sells colour coded chopping boards - see page 8.

A chopping board with one normal end but with a built-up funnel-like end at the other can prove very useful for pupils when directing their food into a frying pan/bowl.

Pupils may wish to use scissors in place of a knife to cut sausages, bacon, celery, sliced meat, spring onions etc. Pupils can use an auto chop machine or manual food processor – think about egg slicing gadgets, onion slicers etc. Pupils may find it easier to use a grater with a slicer attachment or even to substitute a hard cheese such as cheddar for softer

more crumbly cheese such as Cheshire that can be broken down into smaller pieces by hand.

For less dextrous pupils, use a spike mounted on a block of wood secured to the table with Dycem matting to hold the food to be cut in position.

Use a D design peeler with a free moving blade or avoid peeling by scrubbing vegetables thoroughly. Pupils don't really need to peel mushrooms or carrots or even potatoes - roast potatoes with their skin still on are lovely and more nutritious!

Pupils should leave the potato under water for a couple of minutes to soften mud and scrub **under** the water level to prevent getting themselves and surfaces splashed with muddy water!

Using a hob

When boiling vegetables, pupils could place a milk saver at the bottom of the pan to help detect when the water is bubbling.

To prevent fingers slipping down a spoon being used for stirring hot food, position a rubber band or washer 20cm from the top of the handle.

Frying should only be attempted if a pupil is very confident and safety conscious.

Teachers should promote the use of a splatter screen or saucepan lid to catch "spits".

When stir-frying, use a bigger pan than a fully sighted person might use - it gives the pupil space to stir things round without the danger of ingredients spilling over the top or some parts of the food not being thoroughly cooked because they have not got to the heat source thoroughly.

It may be worth taking a little extra time to take the pan off the heat before adding an ingredient.

Where possible, select oven designs with knobs on the front edge of the hob rather than on the back panel – this avoids the need for a pupil to lean over the hob to alter heat settings.

Ovens with "clicking" knobs are also easier to use, but non-click knobs can be labelled with Hi-mark.

Pouring hot liquid

The need to pour hot liquid can be avoided if a pupil measures the liquid cold and heats it in the microwave.

Some people favour the use of a liquid level indicator. Be aware that the wire contacts will get coated, if fatty substances such as milk are used, and this interferes with their sensitivity. Pupils will need to wash them in detergent before next usage.

Draining boiling liquids

The pupil should place a colander in the sink over the plug hole, then lift the pan or bowl to be drained into the colander to position it, and then tip. This way, the food will not end up in the sink!

Pupils can avoid the need to drain hot liquids by cooking vegetables in a chip basket or vegetable steamer, then simply lift out onto a plate when cooked.

Using kettles

The best way for a pupil to use the kettle is to empty it completely, measure the exact amount of water needed (a mug full or a teapot) and then put this cold water into the kettle. This saves on electricity and the pupil will know that they can pour back into the mug or teapot without worrying about it overflowing.

However, it may often be safer and easier if a pupil uses the microwave to heat from cold as this avoids the need to pour boiling liquid.

Using the oven

Use oven gauntlets rather than gloves as these protect up to the elbow and may give a pupil greater confidence.

With a side opening door, pupils might like to try pulling a shelf out slightly to wedge the door open and prevent it swinging whilst putting something in the oven.

A pupil could, whilst the oven is cold, practise putting items in and getting them out. This will enable him or her to learn safely about oven layout,

position of shelves and how to lift heavy and awkward items in a safe manner.

Pupils should always clear a space on the work surface and position trivets before opening the oven door and getting the food out.

They could also use the oven from cold if the recipe allows.

The George Foreman grilling machine have also been recommended for grilling meats - it's easier to move meat around/turn it over on this than it is to pull a grill pan out, turn the meat over and then re-insert the grill pan.

Measuring and weighing

Talking scales can sometimes be unreliable.

Balance scales with weights on one side are far more reliable once a pupil is used to the feel of the scale pans balancing. Weights can be brailled or "blobbed" to indicate amounts.

Pupils with useful vision can use a large readout digital scale. Avoid weighing by using recipes that have cups or spoons as units of measurement. RNIB sells a set of flat based tactile measuring spoons. Use cupfuls/mugfuls to measure liquids where possible. Adapt a standard measuring jug with seed bead glued on to the inside with a heat resistant non-toxic glue such as Araldite at 100ml, 200ml etc.

RNIB sells a measuring jug with a graduated ruler "dipstick" showing different quantities in braille.

Using recipes

Use brailon paper for braille recipes as these wipe clean after use. For print recipes, slip one inside a rexel cover or laminate them to make them wipeable. Recipe books on tape can be obtained from Henshaws College on 01446 886451 (although they are based on using a 600 watt microwave so may need to have cooking times adapted) or from RNIB on 0845 7023153 – for example, "Jamie's Dinners" by Jamie Oliver will shortly be available from RNIB in braille.

Time and stress saving techniques!

Using carefully chosen convenience foods can save a great deal of time and frustration. Naturally the cost of these has to be carefully considered and discussed as pupils should recognise that the use of fully prepared meals would soon get too expensive. If pupils have problems with ring pull tins, just get them to turn the tin over and use a conventional tin opener!

Pupils may wish to consider use of the following to help make economical but nourishing recipes:

- pre-sliced meat (no need to open tins or carve meat off a joint)
- pre-chopped herbs, including frozen ones
- Frozen chopped onions – to save on tears!
- garlic puree in a tube – to save peeling and cleaning those awkward crushers
- squirtable containers for ketchup, salad cream, mayonnaise and syrup
- frozen pastry, including ready-rolled
- sliced bread (many supermarkets will now slice your choice of more interesting bread for you)
- frozen vegetables or fruit
- Instant mashed potato (much better if well-seasoned!) - Great for thickening sauces too
- tinned foods – tomatoes, beans, mushrooms (RNIB sells speaking magnetic lids for tins so you can “label” them when you get them home from the supermarket).

And finally! A last word from 13 year old Lucy, who is featured in this issue's Spotlight on page 30 of Insight - “I appreciate the help and guidance I receive from my teachers, but at the end of the day, I need to try it myself. Guide me, support me, but let me do it!”

I hope these tips have proved useful. The next Curriculum Bitesize will look at graphs and diagrams for braille users and will be out with the May/June edition of Insight.

If you have any curriculum-related enquiries, please get in touch with RNIB's Curriculum Access Service on Tel: 0870 042 9554.

Recipes

Play-Dough

10 oz plain flour

1 oz salt

1 tablespoon of veg oil

7 fl oz water

Place all the ingredients in a bowl and mix until they form smooth dough. Place in the fridge and use with a child to practise cutting and chopping skills.

Fun recipes

Here are two recipes recommended by chef, Jo Miller. They'd be great to make with any children, as well as being easy ones to follow for a child who is blind or partially sighted

Pigs in the Poke

1 large baking potato, pre-scrubbed

2 to 4oz mature cheddar cheese

1oz butter

1 large good quality pork or veggie sausage

Rock salt

Carefully prick the potato all over using a fork then, using a little of the butter, rub the spud all over. Place on a baking tray that has been sprinkled with rock salt and bake on gas mark 6 for approximately 1 hour or until soft.

Meanwhile, oven cook the sausage for about 30 minutes and keep warm.

Cut potato almost in half (about 3/4 of the way down) and scoop soft filling out into a bowl, add a knob of butter and cheese to taste and season with salt and pepper. Put mixture back into spud, place the sausage on top of the filled potato and bake on gas mark 5 for about 10 mins or until cheese is golden brown. Yummy!

Eton Mess

1 packet of meringue nests
1 pint of double cream pre-whipped into soft peaks
8oz raspberries
4oz strawberries cut into quarters
Sprigs of mint to garnish

Break meringue nests into bite-size pieces and place into a large bowl.

Add the strawberries and raspberries. Gently fold in cream, taking care not to over-mix. Place mixture into chilled glasses and place in the fridge for 1 hour or until required. Garnish with a sprig of mint and serve - delicious!

Great cooking gadgets from RNIB

We've put together details of some cooking related products that are available from RNIB. To order any of these products contact RNIB

Customer Services on Tel: 0845 7023153, email cservices@rnib.org.uk or shop online at <http://onlineshop.rnib.org.uk>. All prices include VAT where applicable.

Talking Food Thermometer (DK115) £12.99

This talking food thermometer announces the temperature of food at the touch of a button. Insert the probe into the food, press the talking button on the right side of the rocker switch, and the temperature is announced.

Coloured Chopping Boards (DK70A, DK71G, DK71R) £3.95 each

RNIB has a selection of chopping boards in a range of colours - black, green and red. Ideal for offering contrast on your worktop, these boards are strong and durable.

Easy to See Tactile Timer (DK22, DK23) £14.81

This mechanical timer is available with either a white face with big, bold, raised black numbers or a black face with white numbers. The markings are easy to see and feel. It's also easy to use - simply turn the big handle to set the time. A loud ring is heard when the time is up.

Liquid Level Indicator (DK98) £7.04

This new slim line model is designed to give people with sight problems an alternative method of telling when sufficient liquid has been poured into a cup, glass or other container. An intermittent tone signals a cup is nearly full, and a continuous tone indicates it is full.

Talking Kitchen Scales (DK96) £46.94

This mains operated talking kitchen scale weighs up to 5kg/11lb in 5gm/half ounce steps and is accurate to within 2 per cent. Comes complete with large secure plastic bowl and non-slip feet. It also has an adjustable volume control and a smooth surface for easy cleaning.