

# TKC Recipe Guiding Principles



*We believe that the healthiest foods can be the most delicious. And the most sustainable. And affordable. And easy to cook. Did we mention they can also be the most fun to eat and prepare? Our recipes are not promoting one diet; rather, they are part of an approach supporting long-term behavior change and improved health.*

- ❖ **Make it delicious:** Most often it is taste – not calories – that motivates people to eat certain foods. Our recipes aim to teach people how to build flavor into everyday foods to show how healthy foods can also be the most delicious foods.
  - Use techniques that boost flavor such as caramelizing and searing
  - Add in plenty of spices and herbs, both fresh and dried
  - Create contrast with acids like lemon or vinegar to enhance the flavor of recipes
  - We eat with our eyes, so make use of beautiful herbs and colorful produce, along with a plate or bowl that frames the dish attractively
  
- ❖ **Promote health by cooking mostly with whole and minimally processed, plant-based ingredients:** Our focus at the TKC is on driving better health outcomes. Cooking at home is inherently more healthful than eating out so by offering a robust collection of recipes we aim to support people *wherever* they are in their journey to cooking and eating more healthfully. **Chefs and dietitians can work together to reach these goals.**
  - Include a variety of nutrient dense foods: lots of deeply colored vegetables and fruits, whole grains, beans, peas, nuts, lentils and seeds
  - Incorporate heart healthy oils like olive oil and fats like avocados; limit butter and other saturated fats
  - If animal proteins are used, feature fish, and lean proteins. Use red meats in small quantities as a flavor enhancer
  - For desserts, focus on fruit, whole grain, and lean protein (like no sugar added yogurt) based treats that are lightly sweetened
  - Support healthy beverages by offering options without added sugar such as fruit-infused water



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- ❖ **Build skills with technique-driven recipes:** Our recipes are a means by which we can teach more than just a single dish. We aim to empower participants with basic cooking techniques and food literacy skills that can be applied to a wide variety of ingredients and recipes to feel more confident in the kitchen. By mastering each technique, any recipe can be modified or customized to a range of taste preferences.
  - Techniques could include anything from meal planning to knife skills to roasting vegetables
  - Know your audience and consider that different cultures use different preferred cooking techniques (for example, some cultures don't eat cold foods like salads)
- ❖ **Keep ingredients accessible and flexible:** People are limited in their capacity to cook by cost, equipment, food access, and/or dietary restrictions.
  - We aim to use affordable ingredients and minimal equipment to include all budgets.
  - It's important to emphasize that canned and frozen vegetables and fruits such as canned beans, frozen spinach and frozen blueberries can be a part of a healthy – and delicious – diet.
  - Our recipes aim to be flexible by offering substitutions for each recipe, so they work for differing food availability, seasonality, religious and cultural preferences and/or dietary restrictions.
- ❖ **Keep it simple:** Include recipes that involve minimal active cooking time, ingredients, cooking techniques, and equipment.
  - Recipes use only what most people have at home or could easily access.
  - Provide options for alternative ways of preparation when possible.
  - Provide options and suggestions for students who wish to advance to more challenging recipes.



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- ❖ **Embrace culture and diversity:** A plate of food for one culture might look very different from a plate from another culture. It's important to include, embrace and share foods that are part of one's culture and accessible to the larger community.
  - Our recipes aim to celebrate these cultural differences, expand palates by introducing new ingredients, and honor cultural foods and heritage by sharing the history and significance of the ingredients and recipes being used.
  - Consider contacting representatives from those different cultures to develop and refine your recipes.
  - Avoid categorizing foods for different cultures as blatantly "healthy" or "unhealthy."
  - Because not all communities will have access to the same vegetables at the local market as the typical "American" market, be sure to propose alternatives. For example, someone living in a predominantly Chinese, Korean or Japanese community will likely want to cook with and eat Asian vegetables.
  
- ❖ **Encourage sustainability:** By incorporating lots of vegetables and fruits in your cooking, you're doing good for your health and the health of the planet. Choose recipes that highlight ingredients that are grown locally and seasonally in your region. Sustainability also involves minimizing or avoiding food waste.
  - Offer tips on how to use the whole plant (such as beet and beet greens) and how to repurpose leftovers.
  - Keep in mind storage options to help avoid waste. For example, teach freezer-friendly recipes and/or those that can be cooked in large batches.
  - Limit ingredient variations so that similar ingredients can be used for multiple recipes.
  - Offer locally-sourced and sustainably-raised animal protein options



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## Tools & Resources:

*This is an ever-evolving list of nutrition and culinary resources to complement TKC recipes.*

- ❖ [Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025](#)
- ❖ [The American Heart Association Diet and Lifestyle Recommendations](#)
- ❖ [American Diabetes Association](#)
- ❖ [Menus of Change: Principles of Healthy Sustainable Menus](#)
- ❖ [Harvard's Nutrition Source: Healthy Eating Plate & Healthy Living Guide](#)
- ❖ [Canada's Food Plate](#)
- ❖ [Oldways: Traditional diets and food pyramids](#)
- ❖ [Edible Schoolyard Project: Resource Library](#)
- ❖ [Nutrition Data: Nutrition analysis](#)
- ❖ [Alternative and Adaptable Cooking Tools](#)
- ❖ [The Basic Shelf Cookbook](#)
- ❖ [Healthy Kitchens, Healthy Lives Educational Conference](#)

