

Kitchen Basics

Course Blueprint

By Jim Fuller | Recommended pacing 2 to 6 weeks

A practical first course for teens learning food safety, simple breakfast and lunch preparation, and proper cleanup. Adult support, clear pictures, repeated practice, and learner choices are built into the plan.

This is a curriculum map for development and review. The companion Build Your Own Sandwich lesson is developed; the rest of Basics and the later levels still need full lesson materials and family testing.

Four levels with room to grow

Level	Proposed focus	Readiness evidence to consider
Kitchen Basics	Food safety, familiar cold breakfast and lunch, cleanup every time; optional late knife introduction.	Repeats a familiar routine with chosen supports; communicates help or stop; joins handwashing and storage checks.
Apprentice	Measures ingredients, follows a short recipe, and learns one carefully selected appliance with direct adult supervision.	Uses the appliance specific stop routine and completes selected actions with reliable support.
Journeyman	Coordinates a main dish and side, plans a shopping list, compares prices, and repeats practiced cooking methods.	Plans and sequences a familiar meal, checks safety with an adult, and identifies when help is needed.
Sous Chef	Organizes a small menu, coordinates shared tasks, adapts familiar recipes, and manages a meal routine with agreed support.	Explains or shows the plan, coordinates tasks, and responds to a change with suitable help.

These are proposed educational course names. They do not confer professional chef qualifications, employment eligibility, or permission to cook unsupervised. Each learner may repeat a level, use selected parts, or keep long term supports.

What completion means

Agree on an individual set of useful actions and document them across repeated tries. Completion means progress on those agreed actions with the supports recorded; it does not require every learner to use knives, heat, or identical tools.

Kitchen Basics learning sequence

Every practice begins with a safety check and 20 second soap and water handwashing BEFORE anyone handles ready to eat food. Rewash after contamination. Every practice ends with food storage, cleanup, and a brief review. [1, 2]

Block	Practice	Observable learning target
1 Start safely	Identify the workspace, choose help and stop signals, wash hands, distinguish clean tools from dirty ones.	Join the handwashing routine and show a reliable help or stop signal.
2 Simple breakfast	Build a familiar cold breakfast such as a yogurt and applesauce bowl, with adult checked ingredients and textures.	Choose ingredients and complete one action such as spooning or stirring.
3 Simple lunch	Use the companion sandwich plate lesson with preportioned ingredients.	Complete one named lunch action and help return cold food promptly.
4 Repeat and measure	Repeat breakfast and lunch. Add a measuring cup or spoon only when useful.	Measure one familiar ingredient with the agreed support; record the actual help.
5 Late optional knife introduction	Review individual readiness. If suitable, introduce one controlled cut on a familiar soft food with direct adult supervision.	Demonstrate the agreed stop and tool placement routines before any cutting practice.
6 Put it together	Choose a familiar breakfast or lunch and follow the full routine with the supports still needed.	Prepare selected parts, join safety checks, store food, and complete an agreed cleanup action.

Three ways to pace the same course

2 weeks: three short practices per week; combine related blocks only if comfortable.

4 weeks: one or two practices per week, with repeat meals between new skills.

6 weeks: about one new block per week with familiar practice in between.

These are suggestions, not advancement deadlines. A practice can be 15 to 30 minutes or shorter. Knife work is optional and readiness gated; reaching week 5 or finishing another block does not establish readiness.

Build breakfast and lunch routines

A first breakfast to develop

Example: a familiar yogurt and applesauce bowl, plus the learner's usual bread and drink if wanted. Example practice amounts: 1/2 cup approved yogurt and 1/4 cup approved applesauce. Adjust to the learner's usual meal and plan; these are not prescribed portions.

Adult checks dairy and all relevant allergens, product labels, textures, clean tools, and cold storage. Both people wash before food handling. Adult preports ingredients for the entry route.

One action per direction: place the bowl • spoon yogurt into the bowl • add applesauce • stir • ask for the adult check • return cold food • serve • clear dishes • wipe • wash hands. Develop a matching action picture for each instruction before offering the full lesson.

A first lunch ready for review

Use the revised Build Your Own Sandwich booklet. It has a pictured supply guide, cheese or thin spread options, separate actions for each part of the meal, cleanup steps, and a repeat practice log. Measuring can be added later; it does not need to block a useful first lunch.

Teach the same way each time

Choose one action together. Show it if useful. Invite a try. Wait for the agreed response time. Offer one agreed cue, demonstration, or shared assistance as needed. Honor refusal or a pause. Do not impose physical guidance. Keep communication tools and safety supervision available.

Make cleanup part of the skill

Practice storage decisions with the adult, wrappers into the right bin, manageable dishes to the sink, wiping with an adult prepared cloth, and handwashing. Adult manages cleaning products, water temperature, safe dish handling, and food decisions. Do not mix cleaning chemicals.

Record useful evidence

Track the same action over several dates: completed or partly completed, the actual help used, safety cues, and learner feedback. Record paused or not offered separately. Do not score speed, how much food was eaten, or willingness to taste.

After repeated comfortable practice, try one different already approved familiar ingredient while keeping the tools and sequence familiar. Keep or restore support whenever useful. Broader kitchen independence is not assumed.

Introduce knives only when ready

Knife practice requires a separate adult decision for that learner, tool, food, and setting. No knife is universally safe. Staying with no knife tasks is a valid way to complete Kitchen Basics.

Readiness before a first cut

- ☐ Learner wants to try, has a way to request help or stop, and can follow the agreed adult safety stop routine with suitable support. Rehearse this without cutting first.
- ☐ Adult can stay present and actively supervise the entire task, taking over any unsafe step.
- ☐ Work surface and board are stable; the learner can reach comfortably; the selected tool and grip suit the task and individual needs.
- ☐ Adult has demonstrated safe placement, a protected support hand, and one controlled movement suited to the learner. Start with a familiar soft food prepared in a stable position.
- ☐ Pause if distracted, tired, distressed, or unable to use the agreed routine. Follow known care or access plans and adapt the activity rather than forcing a grip or pace.

Safety rules to build into the future lesson: keep the blade away from the body and fingers; place the knife flat away from counter edges; never try to catch a falling knife; never leave a knife hidden in dishwater. Adult manages unsafe carrying, cleaning, and storage. This blueprint does not replace a fully demonstrated cutting lesson. [3, 4]

Before offering the full course

Develop and review each recipe, its action pictures, adult checks, and practice record. Test the sequence with willing families and revise unclear or unsafe points. Verify each appliance or knife lesson separately. State exactly which materials are finished. Do not advertise the course as ESA approved or guaranteed reimbursable without the applicable program review.

Primary source notes

[1] CDC Handwashing in the Kitchen and Preventing Food Poisoning
<https://www.cdc.gov/clean-hands/prevention/about-handwashing-a-healthy-habit-in-the-kitchen.html>
<https://www.cdc.gov/food-safety/prevention/>

[2] FDA Are You Storing Food Safely
<https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/are-you-storing-food-safely>

[3] University of Maryland Extension Developing Confidence in the Kitchen
<https://www.extension.umd.edu/resource/developing-confidence-kitchen-how-adults-and-older-siblings-can-assist-youth-2-years-and-washing>

[4] Penn State Extension Use Knives Safely and Preventing Kitchen Accidents
<https://extension.psu.edu/use-knives-safely>
<https://extension.psu.edu/preventing-kitchen-accidents-when-preserving-food>

Planning draft version 0.3 | Sources checked October 4, 2026

What families need

Start with the equipment already in the kitchen. This list supports the first lunch lesson; later tools and optional elective equipment can wait until those activities are chosen.

Required for the first lunch lesson

☐ Food for one practice lunch: 2 soft bread slices; a familiar cheese slice OR peanut butter, jelly, Nutella, marshmallow creme, or an approved combination; 1/2 cup familiar applesauce or an approved prepared side; the usual drink in a suitable cup.

Adult checks and preports the chosen filling and side. Spread only a thin layer; if combining spreads, keep the total layer thin. Adjust all foods and amounts to existing allergy and mealtime plans. Check every actual package and substitute.

☐ Serving and preparation: 1 plate, 2 small bowls, an ordinary rounded spoon for spreading, the learner's eating utensil, a suitable cup, and a clean lidded storage container.

☐ Handwashing and cleanup: soap, running water, a clean hand towel, a wiping cloth, and adult managed dishwashing supplies.

☐ Kitchen access: a clean stable work surface, sink, trash bin, and refrigerator kept at 40°F or below.

☐ Learning and support: the picture directions, a way to use help or stop signals, and an adult present throughout preparation and eating.

Both people wash with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before handling ready to eat food, and again after contamination. Adult checks labels, food storage, and safe textures.

Helpful adaptations

☐ Nonslip mat, adapted utensils or easy grip dishes when useful.

☐ Printed picture cards or a device for viewing the steps.

☐ The learner's usual communication supports and a comfortable work position.

Choose supports together. Special equipment is not required unless the learner needs it to participate safely.

Later or elective equipment

Later Basics: measuring cups or spoons if adding measurement. A stable cutting board and a task appropriate knife only for an individually approved, actively supervised knife lesson.

Later appliance lessons: only the appliance and safety equipment specified in that developed lesson. Optional BBQ Smoking: see the separate equipment list on page 6. None of that smoker equipment is needed for the first lunch lesson.

Optional BBQ Smoking

A proposed later elective, separate from core Kitchen Basics and optional for completion. This outline needs full lesson development and testing; it is not a procedure or professional qualification.

Planned learning topics

- 1 Smoker setup: identify equipment, controls, placement, and the adult's operating role.
- 2 Fire and food safety: recognize hot areas, follow the stop routine, wash hands, and separate raw and cooked food tools.
- 3 Seasoning: choose approved familiar flavors and prepare a simple seasoning with support.
- 4 Temperature control: distinguish chamber and internal food temperatures; observe adult thermometer checks.
- 5 Resting and finishing: match safe cooking and any required rest to the food; plan serving, prompt storage, and cleanup.

Equipment if the elective is chosen

- ☐ Outdoor smoker and the fuel or power supply specified by its manufacturer, plus its operating manual.
- ☐ Food thermometer and a way to measure smoker chamber temperature, such as a suitable built in or separate chamber thermometer. [5]
- ☐ Heat resistant gloves and long handled utensils suitable for the equipment. [6]
- ☐ Clean preparation space, separate tools and trays for raw and cooked food, handwashing supplies, and suitable food storage containers.

Adult responsibilities and readiness

A competent adult actively supervises all outdoor smoker operation, controls ignition and fuel handling, and manages hot equipment. The learner may observe or take part in a cool preparation task. Agree on the stop routine and assess readiness for each activity; a course level alone does not establish readiness.

Use an outdoor smoker outside in a suitable open, well ventilated location away from combustible materials, following its manual and local fire restrictions. Never operate it in a closed space, home, garage, or tent. Outdoor cooking equipment presents fire and carbon monoxide risks. [5, 6, 7]

The future lesson must specify the selected food, safe internal temperature, any required resting time, and storage guidance. Use thermometer readings rather than appearance or time alone. [5]

Adult source notes

[5] USDA FSIS Smoking Meat and Poultry
<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/smoking-meat-and-poultry>

[6] US Fire Administration Outdoor Fire Safety and Pictographs
<https://www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/outdoor-fires/>
<https://www.usfa.fema.gov/gallery/pictographs/wildfire-and-outdoor.html>

[7] CPSC Charcoal and Carbon Monoxide
<https://www.cpsc.gov/Safety-Education/Safety-Education-Centers/Carbon-Monoxide-Information-Center/Charcoal>