



# THE EDIBLE SCHOOLYARD PROJECT

## COOKING WITH CURIOSITY: Challenging Perfection with Reflection

**A curriculum that supports cooking skill development through reflection, experimentation, and choice-based recipes**

### **Edible Education at Home:**

At The Edible Schoolyard Project, we believe that students' experiences outside of school are just as meaningful as their experiences at school. We seek to bring students' lived experiences into our classrooms to connect their lives to their learning. Now, widespread distance learning has created a moment in which learning primarily occurs outside of formal learning environments. The Edible Schoolyard aims to support students, teachers, and families through a suite of lessons and activities designed for the home classroom.

### **ABOUT THIS CURRICULUM**

#### **Overview:**

This 16-week distance learning curriculum equips students with the tools to grow their confidence, abilities, and investment in the kitchen while helping them to investigate their personal connections to foods and cooking. We provide skills videos and choice-based recipes to build students' kitchen skills and integrate reflective practices throughout the learning process. Reflective practices encourage students to observe what went well and to find learning opportunities in what they might otherwise deem as "failures" in the kitchen. By re-orienting students towards reflective practices, we challenge notions of perfection. A culture of perfection teaches us that there is a "correct" way to make food, and that failure is shameful. The result is that we may be less likely to take risks, for fear of failure. Perfection culture tells us that our mess-ups say something about our character, rather than creating learning moments. As educators, we must challenge these notions and teach our students that a kitchen is a wonderful place to experiment, to learn from our mistakes, and to take every moment as an opportunity for reflection. These lessons seek to empower students to be present in the kitchen, to be curious about their own learning process, and to enjoy food in all its forms.



This curriculum is written with sixth- to ninth-grade students in mind. However, all of the lessons are easily adaptable for younger students. To adapt for earlier grades, we suggest integrating more synchronous learning and guiding students through the lessons.

The curriculum is intended to be taught sequentially, starting with unit one and ending with the final project in unit four. However, each lesson and unit can be taught on its own. All lessons are written to a student audience and can be completed asynchronously with teacher supports.

## Curriculum Goals

The goals of this curriculum are to introduce students to cooking skills and reflection practices so that they can cook confidently on their own terms. Skill development lessons and choice-based recipes encourage personalized learning. Lessons include space for students to apply those skills to personal food histories and stories. Ideally, students will walk away from these lessons with practical kitchen skills, a curiosity-driven approach to food, and a deepened connection to the dishes and recipes that are meaningful to them and their family members.

## Essential Questions

- How might learning new skills in the kitchen encourage students to question expectations of perfection, allowing students to let themselves make mistakes and experiment?
- How might skills-based kitchen lessons teach students to experiment and cook on our own terms?
- How might cooking create a deeper relationship with the past—connecting food histories and family traditions and stories—and what foods are meaningful to each student?

## Guiding Principles

The curriculum is centered on three guiding principles that support learning in the kitchen.

- **Experimentation is encouraged and supported within instructional frameworks that ensure students are set up for success.** While we believe that no experiment in the kitchen is a failure (even if the end product doesn't turn out the way students want), we also believe it's important to guide students towards successful experimentation by scaffolding choices in the kitchen. For us, this means designing recipes that are flexible and allow students to make some decisions around ingredients. When choice-based recipes are utilized, students are given the freedom to experiment within a framework that sets up success.



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- **We cannot learn how to cook without trial and error and reflection.** We must teach students to be comfortable with making mistakes when learning a new skill and developing their cooking practice. One aspect of this is supporting them to be okay when food does not turn out the way they want it to. In order to do this, we focus on reorienting our relationships to what we deem as “failures” in the kitchen and support students to be reflective of why things don’t work out.
- **Cooking is a way to deepen our relationship with food, families, and places.** All cooking creates opportunities for shared learning and community building. When students get to share what they cook with their peers and families, they feel proud and it builds their confidence. These are important experiences to support the development of their self-efficacy.

Cooking evokes memories and stories that connect us to our past, our families, and our histories. Cooking is at the center of many cultural traditions. Connecting the practice of cooking to students’ lives can affirm our cultural funds of knowledge, backgrounds, and identities. We’ve taken care to design experiences that welcome and affirm all students’ lived experiences with food.

## Core Learning Strategies

**Our three core learning strategies frame the educational approaches and instructional practices that undergird this curriculum.**

- **Watch and Practice:** Our instructional videos introduce students to key cooking techniques designed to get them to practice skills. These skills serve as the building blocks of learning how to cook. Students will be asked to watch the videos and then practice the skill covered in the video. Alternatively, you can choose to hold synchronous classes where you teach the skill rather than presenting students with a video.

Instructional Practices and Activities:

- [Utilizing videos as an instructional tool](#)
- Synchronous learning through demonstration (optional)
- Independent practice: Asynchronous learning time

- **Create and Reflect:** Once students have gained proficiency with a skill, they will use our “Create Your Own,” flexible, choice-based recipes that give them decision points with various ingredients in the recipe. Unit learning focuses heavily on reflecting on the process of cooking, identifying what worked, and what didn’t. Additionally, each unit ends with a set of reflection questions that urge students to reflect on what worked and what they can learn from.

Instructional Practices and Activities:

- Self-guided cooking projects (utilizing “Create Your Owns”)
  - Rituals and practices for reflection; [kitchen habits of mind](#), [reflection wheel](#), and [reflection activities](#).
- **Collaborate and Share:** Throughout the curriculum, students are encouraged to share what they have created with a family member, friend, their classmates, or their teacher. We believe that sharing and connection is a vital part of kitchen learning. As students explore in their own kitchens, virtual platforms allow students to share and connect. Supporting open sharing and creating an environment in which students feel they can share without judgment builds their confidence.

Instructional Practices and Activities:

- [TEACHER RESOURCE]: [Sharing Toolkit for Teachers](#)
- [STUDENT RESOURCE]: [Sharing What You Made](#)

## **Standards**

This curriculum is aligned with the [Common Core Standards State Standards](#).

- Comprehension and Collaboration:
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas, and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- Vocabulary Acquisition and Use:
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.



- Conventions of Standard English:
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- Writing:
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

## **Assessments:**

**Formative assessments** allow you to get a sense of what students are learning and experiencing. Each lesson asks students to complete reflections. These reflections can serve as your formative assessments and evidence of student work. Reflections activities are designed with [Universal Design for Learning Frameworks](#) in mind, which integrates choice and multimodal ways of learning.

It's important to note, the formative assessment tools used in this curriculum are written mostly to gauge what the students are experiencing, with an emphasis on common-core ELA skills. As a curriculum that is intentionally written for students to freely explore cooking, the curriculum is less concerned with evaluating students' proficiency with certain cooking skills.

**Summative assessment:** Unit four of this curriculum is focused on a culminating final project. The entire unit serves as the summative assessment for this curriculum.

## **HOW TO USE THIS CURRICULUM**

This document provides all of the lesson plans, resources, worksheets, and links to complete this 16-week (60 minutes, once a week sessions) curriculum. The curriculum is broken up into four units:

**Unit One:** Getting Familiar in the Kitchen

**Unit Two:** Skills Part One: Prep Skills

**Unit Three:** Skills Part Two: Cooking Skills

**Unit Four:** Final Project: Recipes of Meaning

Each unit has a number of lessons for students to complete. Each lesson is written for the student audience and directs students on how to complete the lesson. The following curriculum map outlines the sequence of the curriculum and references all of the lessons and key resources for each unit. All lesson plans are available as a download through the hyperlinks in the curriculum map and unit introduction pages.

\*Note that this version of this document only contains live links for Unit 1. New versions of this document will be released along with each subsequent unit. Check the [Edible Ed at Home webpage](#) for new releases.



## Curriculum Map

### Unit One: Getting Familiar in the Kitchen

This unit introduces students to basic kitchen skills, such as knife safety and recipe reading. The primary focus of the unit is to introduce students to the curriculum's reflection practices and habits of mind.

#### Essential Questions:

- How does our way of thinking impact our time in the kitchen?
- Why should we take time to reflect when we cook?
- How do we define "success" in the kitchen?
- What makes a recipe special to you?
- What does it mean to be a "good" cook?
- What are the important knife safety skills?
- What are recipes and why are they important?
- What is flavor?
- What is organic? And what does it represent?
- Why clean?
- Why is cleaning as you cook a good habit?
- What tasks must be completed to "clean" a kitchen?

#### Objectives: Students will...

- Understand the difference between precise recipes and flexible recipes.
- Understand how to hold a knife safely
- Practice critical thinking skills by analyzing recipes.
- Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations
- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led)
- Practice reflective thinking and responding.
- Know the basic components of flavor
- Explore and discuss their understandings of what organic is and what it represents to them
- Understand what needs to be cleaned in a kitchen and how to clean those things
- Learn fun strategies to make cleaning feel less of a hassle
- Practice cleaning habits of mind

Lesson 1: [Kitchen Habits of Mind](#)

Lesson 2: [Kitchen Reflection Wheel](#)

Lesson 3: [4 Levels of...](#)

Lesson 4: [Knife Safety](#)

Lesson 5: [Planning Sharing and Extension Activities](#)

Lesson 6: [How to Read a Recipe](#)

Lesson 7: [A Clean Kitchen](#)

Lesson 8: [What is Flavor?](#)

Lesson 9: [What is Organic?](#)

Assessments: All completed worksheets can be evaluated to determine student progress

## Unit Two: Skill Part One: Prep Skills

In this unit students will watch short instructional skills videos, introducing them to basic kitchen skills, such as knife cuts, slicing, mincing. Students will be asked to watch the videos and then practice the skill. Once students have gained proficiency in that skill, students will use complete “Create Your Own,” lessons that use flexible recipes and that give students free-choice with various ingredients in the recipe. Learning focuses heavily on students reflecting on the process of cooking; identifying what worked and what didn’t.

### Essential Questions:

- How do we develop and refine our kitchen skills?
- How might cooking missteps or failures teach us to become better cooks?
- What are the important skills to learn in the kitchen?
- How do your cooking choices help you to make recipes your own?

### Objectives: Students will...

- Further their understanding of the difference between precise recipes and flexible recipes.
- Be introduced to approximation in recipes
- Reflect on their experiences in the kitchen
- Understand and practice the process of quick pickling
- Understand and practice basic cuts, such as dicing, chiffonading, julienning, and splicing.
- Practice mincing.
- Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations
- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led)
- Make choices in the ingredients of their recipes and reflect on those selections
- Practice reflective thinking and responding.

Lesson 1: [How to: Cut Vegetables](#)

Lesson 2: [Your Perfect Slice](#)

Lesson 3: [Create Your Own: Quick Organic Pickles](#)

Lesson 4: [Extension Activity: Kitchen Tool Exploration \(Suggested\)](#)

Lesson 5: [How to: Mince](#)

Lesson 6: [Create Your Own: Yogurt Sauce](#)

Lesson 7: [Extension Activity: Peer Check In \(Suggested\)](#)

Lesson 8: [Create Your Own: Salad Dressing](#)

Lesson 9: [How to: Approximate Recipes](#)

Lesson 10: [Sharing What You Made](#)

### Assessments:

- All completed worksheets and lesson plans can be evaluated to determine student progress.
- A strong focus on this curriculum is allowing students to explore cooking freely, therefore we don’t suggest evaluating students on recipe outcome. Instead, we suggest using student responses to reflection prompts to gauge what students are learning.



## Unit Three: Skills Part Two: Cooking Skills

This unit builds on the learning objectives of Unit 2. Similarly, students will watch short instructional skills videos, then practice that skill. Again, once students have gained proficiency in that skill, students will use complete “Create Your Own,” lessons that use flexible recipes and that give students free-choice with various ingredients in the recipe. The lessons in the unit focus on students practicing cooking skills; using the stove and oven. Learning focuses heavily on students reflecting on the process of cooking; identifying what worked and what didn’t.

### Essential Questions:

- How do we develop and refine our kitchen skills?
- How might cooking missteps or failures teach us to become better cooks?
- What are the important skills to learn in the kitchen?
- How do your cooking choices help you to make recipes your own?

### Objectives: Students will...

- Further their understanding of the difference between precise recipes and flexible recipes.
- Understand and practice the basics of whisking, emulsifying, sauteing, blanching, roasting, and baking.
- Reflect on their experiences in the kitchen
- Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations
- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led)
- Make choices in the ingredients of their recipes and reflect on those selections
- Practice reflective thinking and responding.

Lesson 1: [How To: Flip Food](#)

Lesson 2: [Create Your Own: Sautéed Vegetables](#)

Lesson 3: [How To: Whisk and Emulsify](#)

Lesson 4: [Create Your Own: Any Organic Greens Pesto](#)

Lesson 5: [Sharing What Your Made](#)

Lesson 6: [How To: Cut Vegetables \(Review\)](#)

Lesson 7: [Create Your Own: Grain Bowl Recipe](#)

Lesson 8: [Extension Activity: Interview an Elder \(Suggested\)](#)

Lesson 9: [How To: Basic Baking Methods](#)

Lesson 10: [Create Your Own: Seasonal, Organic Fruit Muffin](#)

Lesson 11: [Extension Activity: Decorate a Recipe \(Suggested\)](#)

Lesson 12: [Sharing What You Made](#)

### Assessments:

- All completed worksheets and lesson plans can be evaluated to determine student progress.
- A strong focus on this curriculum is allowing students to explore cooking freely, therefore we don’t suggest evaluating students on recipe outcome. Instead, we suggest using student responses to reflection prompts to gauge what students are learning.





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## Unit Four: Final Project: Recipes of Meaning

This unit serves as the culminating project and summative assessment of the curriculum. In the final project, students will demonstrate their newfound kitchen abilities by making a recipe of your choice and documenting your cooking process. This is an opportunity for students to practice what they have learned by making a dish that is meaningful for you. The end product will be a multi-part post to the sharing platform agreed upon by the teacher that includes a description, a recipe, a skill demonstration, a written or recorded reflection, and a photo essay.

### Essential Questions:

- What foods are meaningful to us?
- How does reflecting on what we learn, practice and cook make us better chefs? How might cooking missteps or failures teach us to become better cooks?
- What does it mean to be independent in the kitchen?

### Objectives: Students will...

- Research recipes and consider flavor combinations
- Make choices in the ingredients of their recipes and reflect on those selections
- Practice reflective thinking and responding.
- Identify ingredients that are meaningful to them and use persuasive language to make a claim as to why they chose them
- Choose two ingredients that are important to them and create or select a recipe
- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
- Students will document their cooking processes and demonstrate that they have practiced skills presented throughout the curriculum
- Track their progress towards a goal
- This unit serves as the culminating project and summative assessment of the curriculum. See the final project outline and teacher rubric for how to evaluate students.

Lesson 1: [Five-Ingredient Recipe](#)

Lesson 2: [Your Ingredients](#)

Final Project: [Recipes of Meaning](#)

## **Curriculum Contributors:**

### **Raquel Vigil**, Curriculum Designer

Raquel is Edible Schoolyard's Curriculum Specialist and a co-designer of Edible Education at Home. Prior to joining Edible Schoolyard she founded an Urban Agriculture Career Technical Education Program at Mission High School in San Francisco, where she taught for seven years. Raquel holds a Masters in Curriculum and Teaching from Teachers College, Columbia University and a Certificate in Horticulture from the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems.

### **Rachel Mewes**, Consultant

Rachel recently graduated from Teachers College, Columbia with a Masters in Curriculum and Teaching and a Sexuality, Women, and Gender Certificate. She is committed to innovative pedagogy that centers student knowledge and actively challenges injustice and oppression. Rachel has facilitated a diverse range of programming for youth and adult audiences and designed curriculum in school, museum, and extracurricular settings. She is thrilled to form a part of the incredible work of the Edible Schoolyard Project.

### **Nick Lee**, Editor and Contributor

Nick is the Senior Program Manager at The Edible Schoolyard Project and a co-designer of Edible Education at Home. Nick is an educator, cook, curriculum writer, and trainer. For the past seven years he taught cooking to middle and high school youth at the Edible Schoolyard Project in Berkeley, California. Nick sees cooking as a pathway to support youth to deepen their relationship with food and learn how food impacts their own health, the health of the planet, and the health and wellbeing of the people working in the food system. Nick is also the lead trainer for the Edible Schoolyard Project helping educators and school food professionals develop their own edible education programs.

## **Additional Contributors:**

Russell Sterten, ESYF Community Manager, provided editorial and tech support  
Tais Reis, Chef Teacher, provided illustrations

## **About The Edible Schoolyard Project:**

The Edible Schoolyard Project (ESYP) is an organization dedicated to the transformation of public education by using organic school gardens, kitchens, and cafeterias to teach both academic subjects and the values of nourishment, stewardship, and community. Edible education provides hands-on experiences that connect students to food, nature, and each other; and it systematically addresses the crises of climate change, public health, and social inequality. At its heart is a dynamic and joyful learning experience for every child. The Edible Schoolyard Project was founded in 1995 by Alice Waters, former Montessori educator, advocate of school-lunch reform, champion of regenerative agriculture, and founder and executive chef of Chez Panisse Restaurant in Berkeley, California.