

## **Hosting a virtual cooking class**

This is not only a fun way to engage your community online during these challenging times, but it also provides an opportunity for you to show off your skills—and share how you're doing during COVID-19. Virtual cooking classes are a great way to engage your community and stay connected during these challenging times. They take a bit of pre-planning, but once you are ready to go, they can be a fantastic opportunity to expand your reach and increase your connections through a memorable digital experience.

Orchestrating this production may seem daunting, but it's as simple as using the camera on your mobile device. Follow these 10 simple steps, and you will be running your own cooking school in no time.

### **1. Determine the menu**

You will want to select recipes that can be easily followed by people of all skill levels. Share the shopping list in advance, and avoid ingredients that are difficult to find in standard grocery stores or have substitution ideas for anything out of the ordinary. Alternative ingredients are appreciated by attendees who have allergies or can't get to the store. You could also consider supplying the ingredients needed for the class—in a kit or box that's available for pickup or delivery (see step 4).

When selecting your dishes, factor in prep and cooking time to ensure the class doesn't take too long. Once you have figured out the ideal length, you can set the expectation with your families as to how much time they will need to set aside for the class.

### **2. Pick the channel, day, and time**

If you have a strong social media following, take advantage of that and go live on one of those platforms, like Facebook Live or Instagram Live. If you prefer something more along the lines of video conferencing, try Zoom or Google Meet.

To figure out when you should host the class, check traffic and interaction trends for your program on your chosen platform, and see what times of day you have the most engagement. You may even want to poll your families to ask them what day and time works best for them.

### **3. Create a run of show**

To reduce anxiety and increase preparedness for a smooth video, it helps to create a detailed outline of the class to be shared with both your families and your co-host (for more on the importance of a co-host, see step 9). This will set expectations and help everyone to be prepared. Include the ingredients and necessary kitchen tools you will be using. This will help your families follow along easily when it's time for them to join you online and go to work in their own kitchen.

Don't forget about the end of your class. Plan ahead for how the class will end and what you want families to do next (see step 10).

### **4. Promote the class—and your recipe(s)**

Once you know what you are making, when you are making it, and where your families can follow along, spread the word everywhere. Promote the event on your website, social media sites, and to your email lists. Share enticing pictures of the dishes you will be making to help drum up excitement about the class.



If you are on a video conferencing platform, walk families through the control panel or any features they may need to use during the class. Prior to beginning the actual cooking portion, walk through the ingredient list one last time, and point out that you have premeasured the ingredients—this will encourage others to do the same, if they haven't done so yet.

Lastly, encourage everyone to take pictures as they go: chef selfies, kitchen set-ups, progress on the dishes, etc. Tease that there will be a contest announced at the end of the class (see step 10).

## 8. Move slowly, remember your audience, and repeat yourself

The attendees cooking along with you will have a wide range of skill sets. It is important to pace yourself and instruct them in an easy-to-follow manner. Certain terminology that may be commonplace to you could be something a viewer is hearing for the first time, so use basic cooking language. If you use more complex terms, make it an educational experience and explain what they mean to your followers. You will want to speak slowly, and don't be afraid to repeat yourself—sometimes people miss an instruction, so repeating your message will help everyone stay on track. Repeat the measurements for each ingredient multiple times: Despite your recommendation to premeasure, not everyone will.

## 9. Have your co-host be your personal assistant

Having someone co-host with you is invaluable. They can do the filming, share questions for you to answer in real time, type answers to questions as necessary in your platform or channel, share resources with the audience, and even make introductions throughout the event. This allows you to stay focused on cooking and providing instructions, while your co-host helps facilitate the one-on-one connection and more personalized experience.

**Pro tip:** If you are using Instagram Live, be sure to pin important messages within the chat so they are readily available throughout the live stream.

## 10. Wrap it up with your call to action

Once the dish is finished, what is next? Will you finish with closing remarks and then let families enjoy the meal on their own, or will you encourage attendees to enjoy the meal together on video with a live Q&A? If you have an email list of attendees, we recommend sending a follow-up email thanking them for their time and encouraging them to share photos of their dishes on social media.

**Pro tip:** Sharing a video recording of the class on your website and social media is a permanent way to help more people be a part of the experience. A photo competition for the event is another great way to encourage engagement on social media. Have attendees share their masterpieces and tag your program for a chance to win a gift card (and then be sure to reshare).

For more information visit:

<https://blog.yelp.com/2020/05/how-to-host-a-virtual-cooking-class>