



MY DIGITAL TOOLKIT

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Introduction: Kitchen Catalysts

What Is Kitchen Catalysts?

Kitchen Catalysts is part of Barking & Dagenham's wider mission to make sure every resident has access to healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food. It is rooted in the borough's [Good Food Plan](#), which aims to transform the local food system into one that is fair, diverse, sustainable, and community powered.

Kitchen Catalysts brings this to life by supporting residents to:

- cook nourishing meals
- share food stories
- learn together
- build stronger connections

It sits within the council's [Grow Cook Eat](#) programme and supports the development of community cooking clubs across the borough. These clubs give residents a place to learn, cook together, and bring their own recipes and cultural traditions to the table

Why Kitchen Catalysts Exists

Kitchen Catalysts was created to help make community cooking more accessible, confident, and sustainable.

It strengthens cooking clubs by:

1. Training and developing facilitators

The council's goal is to build a strong network of trained community cooking facilitators who can support new and existing clubs.

Facilitator development includes:

- training on inclusive, practical cooking
- guidance on running low-cost, plant-forward, sustainable recipes
- skills for adapting activities for different communities

2. Supporting more organisations to run cooking relative activities and clubs

At least three new organisations are supported to start cooking clubs each year, including pilots in temporary accommodation or other community settings. Facilitators may be linked with these new organisations to run sessions.

3. Celebrating community voice and cultural diversity

Participants are encouraged to bring their:

- own recipes
- cultural food traditions
- food stories
- Many of these recipes are included in the [Come Cook With Us!](#) community recipe book.

4. Helping residents build food-related skills for life

This includes:

- Level 2 Food Safety courses
- practical recipe knowledge
- kitchen confidence
- community leadership pathways

The Bigger Picture

Kitchen Catalysts is not just about cooking – it's about good food, community empowerment, and local action.

It contributes to the borough's wider goals of:

- improving health
- strengthening community connections
- supporting local food systems
- reducing food waste
- promoting sustainable, culturally diverse cooking



Cooking Clubs Facilitator Overview

A comprehensive reference guide for all Kitchen Catalysts facilitators

1. About Cooking Clubs

1.1. Mission

Cooking Clubs exists to:

- Ensure accessible, healthy, and affordable food for all residents especially those with limited access to cooking facilities
- Support individuals and families who may need additional guidance or resources.
- Celebrate the rich cultural diversity within our communities.
- Build stronger connections through shared cooking experiences.

1.2. Ethos: Transforming Community Cooking

“Transforming Community Cooking” means:

- Empowering communities to cook confidently and creatively.
- Making cooking approachable and enjoyable, regardless of skill level.
- Encouraging shared ownership of learning and decision-making.
- Promoting sustainable, budget-friendly cooking practices.

1.3. What Is a Cooking Club Session?

A typical Cooking Club session includes:

- A warm welcome and light introduction
- A shared cooking activity
- Learning through doing
- Eating together
- Space for cultural exchange, conversation, and food stories

2. The Role of a Facilitator

2.1. What a Facilitator Is

- A guide who encourages participation
- A host who creates a welcoming space
- A communicator who explains steps clearly
- A role model for Cooking Club values
- A bridge between community members
- A champion of inclusive, community-led learning

2.2. What a Facilitator Is Not

- Not the only expert in the room
- Not a top-down instructor
- Not expected to know every recipe or answer
- Not responsible for enforcing perfection - Cooking Club is about learning together

2.3. Your Primary Responsibilities

- Prepare for each session (recipe, ingredients, equipment)
- Deliver activities in a calm, supportive way
- Encourage participants to share their ideas and skills
- Promote safety and hygiene without being strict or intimidating
- Represent the Cooking Club brand professionally
- Reflect on sessions and improve continuously

3. Communication Essentials

3.1. Clarity

- Use short, simple sentences
- Avoid jargon or technical cooking terms
- Break tasks into small steps
- Check for understanding: “Does that make sense?” / “Shall I show it again?”

3.2. Pacing

- Speak at a steady, relaxed pace
- Pause after key instructions
- Allow time for participants to catch up before moving on

3.3. Body Language

- Smile warmly
- Maintain open posture
- Make gentle eye contact
- Use hand gestures to support explanation

3.4. Active Listening

- Nod to show understanding
- Ask follow-up questions
- Clarify when necessary
- Acknowledge contributions positively

4. Building Connection Through Storytelling

4.1. Why Stories Matter

- Build trust
- Make you relatable
- Bring cultural richness into sessions
- Spark conversation

4.2. Examples of Useful Facilitator Stories

- A favourite family recipe
- A cooking mistake that became a lesson
- The first meal you learned to cook
- A cultural food tradition from your background

4.3. The 2-Minute Cooking Tip Activity

This tool can be used in future sessions:

1. Ask participants to pair up
2. Each shares a short cooking tip
3. Swap roles
4. Encourage positive, strengths-based feedback

5. Cooking Club Brand Identity

5.1. Brand Values

- Friendly: approachable, warm, conversational
- Practical: simple, real-life cooking skills
- Inclusive: welcoming to all ages, backgrounds, abilities
- Community-Led: shaped by the people who attend

5.2. Visual Style

- Clean, simple layouts
- Real photos of real food and people
- Warm, natural colours
- Clear, readable text

5.3. Why Branding Matters

- Creates consistency across all clubs
- Builds trust with participants
- Strengthens recognition in the community

6. Crafting Your Facilitator Story

6.1. Key Components

1. Who you are
2. Your connection to food and cooking
3. Why you facilitate
4. What you hope participants will gain

6.2. Template Example

"My name is _____. I grew up in a home where cooking was how we connected as a family. I love showing people how simple, tasty, and affordable cooking can be. I'm excited to learn from you as well - Cooking Club is a place where we share skills together."

7. How to Introduce a Session

7.1. What to Include

- A warm welcome
- Your name and role
- A short food-related anecdote
- What today's session will involve
- Reassurance that all levels are welcome

7.2. Tips for a Smooth Opening

- Start with a smile
- Use encouraging language
- Don't rush the introduction
- Invite participants to introduce themselves (if appropriate)

8. Promotion Basics

8.1. Do

- Use real photos of people cooking
- Keep the message short and clear
- Include essential details:
 - Date
 - Time
 - Location
 - Cost (if any)
 - Contact information

8.2. Don't

- Overload your flyer with text
- Use blurry or poor-quality images
- Use jargon or overly complicated language

8.3. Example Promotion Text

"Join us for a friendly, hands-on Cooking Club session! Learn simple, affordable recipes and meet new people. Everyone welcome."

9. Freelance Facilitation Basics

9.1. Becoming Self-Employed

As a facilitator, you are considered self-employed.

You must:

- Register as a sole trader with HMRC
- Track your income and expenses
- Submit a yearly tax return

Register here: <https://www.gov.uk/become-sole-trader/register-sole-trader>

9.2. Invoicing

In your invoice include:

- Your name and address
- The organisation's name and address
- Date of the session
- Hours worked
- Rate agreed
- Your bank details

9.3. Finding Opportunities

Facilitators often work with:

- Councils
- Schools
- Community centres
- Cultural groups
- Charities
- Residents' associations

Primarily, Barking and Dagenham Council will promote where cooking clubs and activities are taking place on their website:
<https://bdopportunities.org/events>

9.4. Insurance

Public liability insurance protects you if an accident occurs during your session.

Providers include:

<https://www.simplybusiness.co.uk/>

9.5. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

Facilitators are required to hold an enhanced DBS check, as many of the venues will be

locations that support vulnerable members of the community, such as schools or youth clubs. You may also be engaging directly with vulnerable individuals. Facilitators will be expected to cover the cost of this service.

9.6. Partner agreement

Agree in writing the service you will be delivering with the venue manager or host organisation. Ensure your fee includes sufficient time for preparation before the session and for cleaning up afterwards. Also, agree in advance with your host on expectations regarding clean-up.

10. Your Next Steps

- Practice your facilitator introduction
- Shadow an experienced facilitator
- Try leading part of a session
- Build your own recipe ideas
- Stay engaged with the facilitator community
- Keep learning and reflecting – growth is ongoing



Group Management & Supportive Facilitation

Cooking Clubs bring together people with different backgrounds, personalities, and levels of confidence. A facilitator's role is to encourage participation, keep the space safe, and guide the group with calm, positive leadership.

This page offers practical tools to manage communication, conflict, and group dynamics while maintaining an inclusive, friendly environment.

Creating a Positive Group Atmosphere

- Greet everyone warmly; use names when you can
- Encourage conversation about food, culture, and family cooking traditions
- Celebrate all cooking styles - there is no single "right" way
- Promote shared decision-making (ask: "What do you think we should add?")

Confidence grows when participants feel respected and involved.

Handling Loud or Dominant Voices

Some participants may take over tasks or make others quiet. Use:

- "Let's give someone else a turn at chopping."
- "Who hasn't had a go yet?"
- "Can we hear a different idea?"

Shift focus politely - encourage balance, not control.

Encouraging Quieter Participants

Not everyone jumps in right away. Try:

- Offering them a small starter task (stirring, seasoning, peeling)
- Asking friendly questions: "Do you make this at home?"
- Pairing them with a supportive partner

Many quiet participants become confident cooks with encouragement.

Sharing Tasks Fairly

Use a simple rotation:

Task	Examples
Prep	washing veg, chopping, mixing
Cooking	frying, boiling, stirring sauces
Serving	plating, garnishing, tasting
Cleaning	washing up, wiping tables, sorting tools

Cleaning should be shared - not left to the facilitator.

Managing Conflict or Negative Behaviour (Calmly)

Keep your tone friendly, neutral, and focused on learning:

- "Let's try it this way so everyone can learn."
 - "We all have different ways to cook - that's what makes this fun!"
 - "Let's pause and taste it together before deciding."
- Redirect tension into curiosity or group decision-making.*

Respecting Cultural Food Differences

Avoid judgemental language (e.g., "wrong", "weird"). Use:

- "How do you prepare it at home?"
- "In your culture, would you use different spices?"
- "Can you show us your version?"

Turn differences into shared learning.

When Safety Comes First

If behaviour becomes unsafe:

- Pause cooking immediately
- Stay calm and assertive
- Remind: "We must keep everyone safe - let's slow down."
- Reassign tasks if needed

Safety always overrides behaviour or opinion.

Promoting Teamwork Through Food

End with shared reflection:

- "What was your favourite step?"
- "What would you change next time?"
- "Whose recipe should we try next week?"

This builds ownership and encourages participants to return.

Kitchen Catalysts Facilitator Essentials

Kitchen Catalysts?

Kitchen Catalysts is a community cooking initiative designed to empower residents to cook, learn, and connect through food. It supports people to improve cooking confidence, understand nutrition, share cultural food traditions, and build stronger community relationships. It is part of the wider "Transforming Community Cooking" mission, helping residents access healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food.

Kitchen Catalysts- Facilitator ...

Facilitators play a key role in making these sessions welcoming, safe, educational, and inclusive.

1. Basic Nutrition for Facilitators

Facilitators help participants understand simple, practical principles of healthy eating.

Portion Control

- Smaller plates naturally reduce portion sizes.
- Use standard scoops or serving tools for consistency.
- Clear guidance helps participants serve balanced meals.

Food & Body Basics

- Food provides energy, helps the body repair, and supports overall health.
- Overeating can lead to health issues.
- Balanced eating promotes better focus and well-being.

Nutrients

- Macronutrients (carbohydrates, proteins, fats): provide energy and structural support.
- Micronutrients (vitamins, minerals): support essential body functions.

Food Groups

Encourage a variety of:

- Fruits & vegetables
- Starchy foods
- Proteins
- Dairy or alternatives
- Fats and oils (in moderation)

Food Labels

Help participants understand:

- Serving sizes
- Added sugars and sodium
- % daily values

Special Diets

Facilitators should adapt meals, when possible, to respect:

- Health conditions
- Allergies
- Cultural or religious dietary needs

Food Safety

- Store foods correctly
- Avoid cross-contamination
- Follow hygiene best practices

2. Essential Certifications

Facilitators may require key certifications to ensure safe, responsible cooking sessions.

Food Hygiene & Safety (Levels 1-3)

- **Level 1:** Basic awareness of hygiene and cleanliness
- **Level 2:** Safe food handling, storage, and preparation
- **Level 3:** Supervising food safety (HACCP principles)

Supervising food safety (HACCP principles)

HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) is a system for keeping food safe. It involves identifying risks, monitoring key steps, taking corrective action if needed, and keeping records to ensure food is handled safely.

Please note: Level 2 Food Hygiene and Safety is considered the minimum standard for anyone handling or serving food to the public. Please refer to the Food Standards Agency for further guidance.

Basic First Aid

- Respond to minor injuries
- Know emergency procedures
- Maintain a stocked first aid kit

Fire Safety

- Know location and use of extinguishers
- Follow evacuation procedures
- Report hazards promptly

Renewal

Training should be refreshed every three years or sooner if regulations change.

3. Cultural Awareness

Kitchen Catalysts embraces and celebrates cultural diversity.

Why Cultural Food Awareness Matters

- Builds inclusivity and respect
- Ensures culturally suitable menus
- Improves participant experience
- Supports religious or spiritual dietary requirements such as Halal, Kosher, vegetarian, or fasting routines

Developing Cultural Awareness

Facilitators should aim to:

- Attend cultural food training
- Explore global cuisines
- Engage with diverse communities
- Learn cross-cultural communication skills

4. Community Development Approach

Cooking clubs are a space for building confidence, belonging, and social connection.

Inclusion Strategies

- Celebrate cultural diversity through food stories, themed dishes, and shared meals
- Teach self-sufficient skills: cooking, nutrition, and food safety
- Share personal or cultural food stories to build connection
- Provide meals that accommodate allergies, health needs, religious diets
- Choose accessible, family-friendly venues

5. Cooking Techniques*

Facilitators should help participants learn a range of cooking methods.

Dry-Heat Methods

- Sautéing
- Tempering spices
- Grilling
- Baking

Frying Methods

- Pan-frying
- Deep-frying

Moist-Heat Methods

- Boiling
- Simmering
- Poaching
- Steaming

Combination Methods

- Braising
- Stewing

*Facilitators are not required to know all these terms

Technique Tips

- Even cuts improve cooking and presentation
- Marinating deepens flavour and tenderises
- Blanching helps preserve colour and texture
- Deglazing creates rich, flavourful sauces

6. Lesson Planning for Facilitators

Good planning helps sessions stay organised and enjoyable.

Planning Essentials

- Maintain a recipe portfolio with costings
- Plan timing and steps to keep the group on track
- Prepare ingredient checklists ahead of sessions
- Multitask safely without compromising quality

7. Reducing Food Waste in Cooking Clubs

Kitchen Catalysts encourages sustainable, responsible food practices that minimise waste. These include:

- Proper food storage to reduce spoilage
- Creative reuse of leftovers
- Use seasonal and local ingredients
- Reduce food waste through planning
- Source ingredients ethically where possible
- Compost food scraps when facilities allow
- Use higher-welfare meat and dairy with recognised quality marks.
- Encourage participants to bring containers and keep a few spares.
- Minimise food waste use veg peelings for stock and compost leftovers when possible.



Quick Troubleshooting Guide

A facilitator's quick reference when things don't go to plan in the kitchen. The Cooking Club is about learning together – not perfection.

Issue	What to Do
Food is cooking too fast / burning	Lower heat. Add a splash of water or broth. Move pan off heat for 1 minute.
Dish is too salty	Add potatoes, more veg, rice, pasta, yoghurt, or water. Avoid adding sugar.
Dish is too spicy	Add yoghurt, coconut milk, tomato, or a bit of sugar/lemon. Serve extra bread/rice.
Not enough food	Add bulk items: rice, pasta, lentils, beans, potatoes, extra veg.
Lumpy sauce/soup	Blend or mash lightly. Add more liquid, stir well.
No one is participating	Ask: "How would you make this at home?" Let participants chop, season, stir.
Recipe takes too long	Cut ingredients smaller. Increase heat slightly. Skip optional steps.
Food is bland	Season gradually. Taste together. Add lemon, salt, herbs, or spices.

Accessibility & Inclusion in Practice

Everyone can participate, even if hands-on cooking isn't possible.

Communication & Language	Physical Accessibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use simple language and visuals Avoid jargon Allow people to work in pairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer seated stations Provide roles like washing veg or mixing Keep frequently used items reachable
Social Inclusion	Dietary Inclusion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage participants to share their food stories Celebrate different cooking methods Welcome recipes from different cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask about allergies or religious needs Offer ingredient swaps Highlight plant-based options

Budget Example for Cooking Clubs

A simple guide for planning affordable, inclusive sessions.

Example		Budget Tips
Item	Estimated Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use plant-based proteins (Lentils and beans cost less than plant-based proteins like tofu) Buy frozen veg when cheaper Avoid expensive meat substitutes Use seasonal vegetables Bulk buy grains
Ingredients	£15–£25	
Cleaning materials	£3–£5	
Printed materials	£0–£3	
Total	£18–£33 (£1.80–£3.30 per person)	

Emergency Procedures Cheat Sheet

Keep calm. Move safely. Know what to do.

Fire Safety	Knife Injuries & Cuts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Turn off heat• Never add water to a burning pan• Cover with lid or use extinguisher• Evacuate if flames persist	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apply pressure with clean cloth• Clean with warm water• Apply bandage• Record the incident
Burns	Allergic Reaction
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cool under running water for 20 minutes• Do not apply oils or creams• Cover loosely with clean cloth• Seek medical help if severe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Signs: swelling, itching, difficulty breathing, dizziness• Stop eating immediately• Administer medication (e.g., EpiPen) if available• Call 999• Record incident

Sharing Food Safely

Because we cook, eat, and share together.

Serving & Sharing Meals	Storing Food
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use clean utensils• Label dishes with allergens• Avoid double dipping or shared tasting spoons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours• Store in labelled containers• Do not reheat food more than once
Transporting Food	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use sealed containers• Keep cold foods chilled• Avoid transporting hot food for long periods	



Facilitator Pre-Session Checklist

A. Preparation

- I have chosen a recipe appropriate for skill level, equipment, and time
- Ingredients have been purchased, weighed, washed, or pre-prepared as needed
- Recipe costings and quantities are correct
- All dietary needs, allergies, and cultural considerations have been reviewed
- Session plan / timings are written or printed
- Handouts, prompts, or visual aids are ready (if using any)

B. Equipment & Space

- The venue is confirmed and accessible
- All equipment needed is available and in working order
- Cooking stations are clean and set up
- Utensils and tools are counted and laid out
- Cleaning materials are available (cloths, sanitizer, gloves)
- Waste bins, compost, and recycling areas are set up

C. Safety & Compliance

- I have my Food Hygiene certificate
- I have checked fire exits and extinguishers
- A first-aid kit is available
- I know who the first aider / key contact on site is
- Allergens for the recipe are clearly identified
- A sign-in sheet is ready, including emergency contacts if required

D. Environment & Atmosphere

- Space is welcoming and culturally inclusive
- Background materials (music, ingredients display, welcome table) are set

- I have prepared a short story or personal introduction
- Table layout encourages conversation and teamwork
- Serving plates / communal eating arrangements are planned

E. Final Pre-Start Checks

- I have all my equipment and ingredients
- Participants' numbers are confirmed
- I am set up 20-30 minutes before start time
- I feel ready, calm, and confident to lead the session

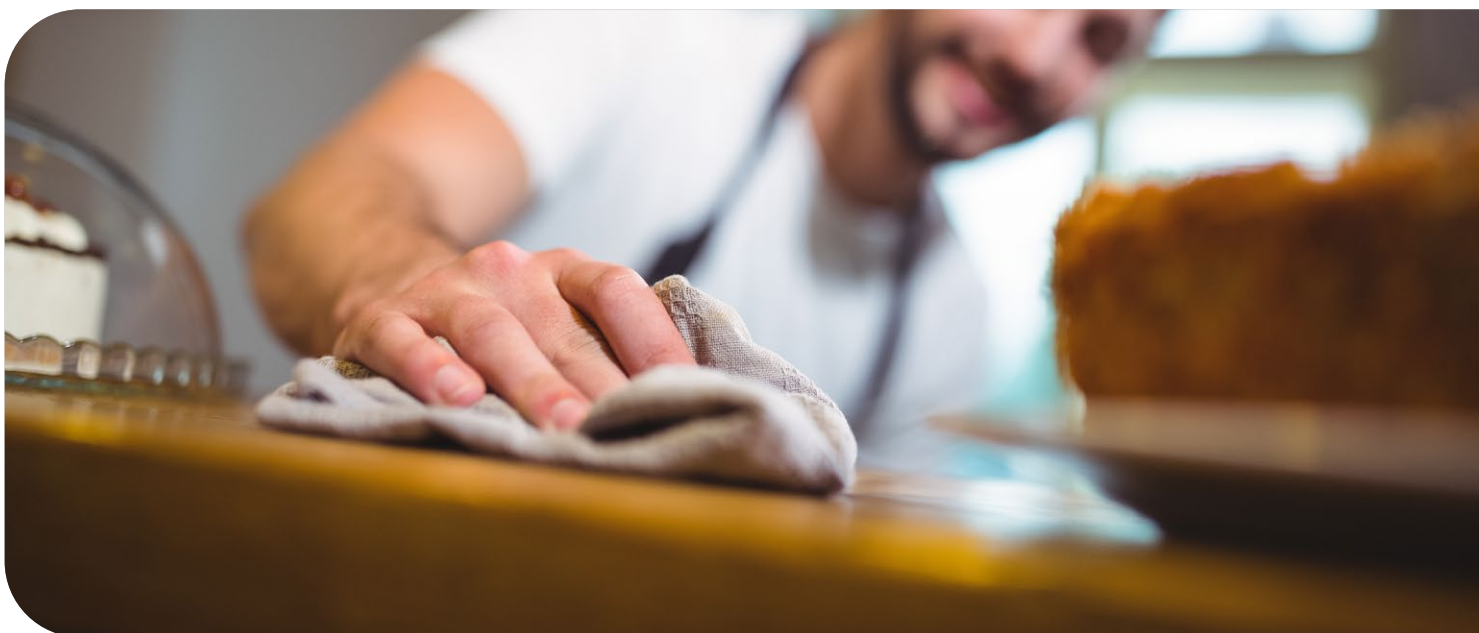
Test the Environment Before Delivering a Session

It is strongly recommended that facilitators run a test session or walk-through in any new cooking environment before leading a group.

Every kitchen is different, and a short trial helps you:

- check where equipment, sinks, and cleaning materials are
- test hobs, ovens, and ventilation
- understand any limitations (e.g., number of hobs, fridge space)
- identify safety hazards early
- confirm accessibility for participants
- adjust your recipe or session plan if needed

A 20-30 minutes test run prevents problems on the day and helps you feel confident, organised, and familiar with the space.



Social Media Brand Guidelines

These guidelines are designed to ensure consistency and recognition across all social media and promotional materials related to the Kitchen Catalysts programme. All partners, facilitators, and contributors should adhere to the following standards when creating, sharing, or promoting content.

1. Branding and Logos

The following logos must be used on all promotional materials, social media posts, and digital assets related to Kitchen Catalysts:

- Kitchen Catalysts (main programme logo)
- Barking Enterprise Centre (BEC)
- Barking & Dagenham Council (LBBD)
- Marks Gate Relief Project

Logos should be displayed clearly and proportionally. Please do not re-colour any logo. Ensure all logos are visible and maintain adequate spacing between them.

2. Social Media Guidelines

When posting about Kitchen Catalysts activities (including Cooking Club Facilitator Training or any related events), please adhere to the following requirements:

- Always tag the following organisations in your posts:
@BarkingEnterpriseCentre (BEC)
@lbbdcouncil (London Borough of Barking and Dagenham)
@MarksGateReliefProject
- Include the Kitchen Catalysts logo on all graphics or visual materials, you can use phrase like: 'Supported by Barking Enterprise Centre (BEC) and the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham as part of the Kitchen Catalysts Project.'
- Ensure tone of voice is inclusive, community-focused, and positive.
- Do not post content that omits recognition of BEC or LBBD as funding partners or Marks Gate Relief Project (MGRP).

3. Visual and Content Style

- Use imagery that reflects inclusivity, diversity, and community engagement.
- Ensure high-quality visuals-no blurry or distorted images.
- Use clean, easy to read fonts (e.g., Arial, Calibri, or Open Sans).
- Avoid cluttered designs- leave enough space around text and logos.

4. Example Post Caption

"Fantastic morning cooking at our local community hub with Asma! We're helping make community cooking more inclusive, healthy, and accessible- supported by @BarkingEnterpriseCentre, @MarksGateReliefProject and @lbbdcouncil as part of the Kitchen Catalysts programme. #CommunityCooking #BarkingAndDagenham #KitchenCatalysts"

5. Contact

For any queries or need any assistance, please contact:

Shanice Bako – Project management Lead

Email: Shanice.Bako@barkingenterprisecentre.co.uk / Reception@BarkingEnterpriseCentre.co.uk

Tel: 0208 227 3030

6. Official Logos



Kitchen Catalysts



**Barking Enterprise
Centre CIC**



**Marks Gate Relief
Project**



**London Borough of
Barking and Dagenham**

Risk Assessment Template: New Cooking Club

Facilitator Name:	
Date of Assessment:	
Club Name & Location:	
Session Date(s):	
Expected Number of Participants:	
Age Range of Participants:	
Session Type (e.g., baking, knife skills, cultural cuisine):	

Brief Description of cooking session(s) including ingredients, equipment & techniques involved:

1. Identified Risks & Mitigation Measures

Hazard Category	Specific Risk	Who Might Be Harmed?	Risk Level	Control Measures in Place	Additional Actions Needed
Food Safety	Allergic reactions to ingredients	Participants	Medium	Pre-session allergy check; clear labelling; avoid cross-contamination	Emergency contact list; EpiPen awareness
Equipment	Burns from ovens/hobs; cuts from knives	Participants & facilitator	High	Safety briefing; age-appropriate tasks; PPE (gloves/aprons); first aid kit	Visual supervision; knife skill training
Venue Safety	Slips/trips due to spills or clutter	All present	Medium	Clean-as-you-go policy; clear walkways; non-slip mats	Venue walk-through before session
Fire Risk	Flammable materials near heat sources	All present	High	Fire exits identified; fire blanket/extinguisher accessible	Fire drill awareness
Safeguarding	Inappropriate behaviour or disclosures	Children/vulnerable adults	Medium	DBS checked facilitator; safeguarding policy; DSL contact	Report concerns via safeguarding protocol
Hygiene	Poor handwashing or food handling	All present	Medium	Handwashing station; hygiene briefing; gloves for raw meat handling	Reinforce hygiene checks throughout session
Cultural Sensitivity	Misunderstanding dietary practices or taboos	Participants	Low	Inclusive planning; dietary needs survey; respectful dialogue	Adjust menu if needed
Emotional Wellbeing	Anxiety or distress during group activity	Participants	Low	Welcoming environment; opt-out options; positive reinforcement	Debrief space available

2. Emergency Procedures

First Aid Kit Location:	
First Aid kit has been fully replenished? Yes/No	
If No, what is missing from the kit?	
If No, to above, then have measures been put in place to replenish the First Aid Kit before the cooking session?	
Ambulance parking available on site?	
Nearest Hospital / Clinic:	
Emergency Contact for Venue:	
Facilitator Emergency Contact:	
Fire Exit Routes:	
Safeguarding Lead (if applicable):	

3. Final Checks

- Venue walkthrough completed
- Kitchen utensils inspected to ensure they are safe to use, with no faults or damage present
- No cracked, chipped or broken cutlery present on site
- Sharp knives stored under a locked cupboard
- Blunt child-friendly knives available for under-age or vulnerable participants to use
- Participant allergies noted
- Equipment tested and safe (All equipment should be PAT tested)
- Emergency contacts confirmed
- Safeguarding procedures understood
- Hygiene and food safety briefing prepared

4. Facilitator Declaration

I confirm this risk assessment has been completed to the best of my ability and all reasonable steps will be taken to ensure safety and wellbeing.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Food Allergies Checklist

Potential Allergens [if needed you can add more below]	
	Milk
	Eggs
	Peanuts
	Tree nuts (e.g. almonds, walnuts, cashews, etc.)
	Fish
	Shellfish
	Soy
	Wheat
	Sesame
	Gluten
	Mustard
	Lupin

Additional Notes

Cooking Club Recipe Template

Session Date	
Recipe Name	
Recipe Shared By (Facilitator/Participant)	
Cultural Background / Family Story (e.g. Where is this dish from? Is it linked to a celebration or tradition?)	

Allergy or Dietary Info (Optional)

Does the dish contain gluten, dairy, nuts, soy, or eggs? Is the dish vegan or vegetarian?

Plant-Based or Allergen-Friendly Swaps (Optional)

List any alternative ingredients or plant-based versions used or suggested.

Photo of the Dish (if available)

Attach or draw a quick sketch if preferred!

Ingredients & Equipment needed

List all ingredients and equipment used for this recipe

Ingredients	Quantity	Notes (e.g. optional, substitutions)	Equipment

Method (Step-by-Step Instructions)

Write each step of the recipe. Use the checkbox to tick off as you go.

	Step 1
	Step 2
	Step 3
	Step 4
	Step 5
	Step 6
	Step 7
	Step 8
	Step 9
	Step 10

Tips from the Group

Notes, cooking tips, or cultural context shared during the session.

Taste Test Feedback

Rate using: 😊 = Delicious | 😐 = Okay | 😞 = Needs work

Adapting Meat Recipes to Plant-Based

Purpose of this guide

This guide has been designed to help facilitators lead inclusive and accessible cooking sessions. It provides practical guidance on how to adapt common meat-based recipes to plant-based alternatives – supporting a wide range of dietary needs, cultural preferences, and budgets.

Why plant-based?

- Supports participants who are vegetarian, vegan, or reducing meat
- Often more affordable and sustainable
- Encourages healthier eating habits
- Makes recipes more inclusive and adaptable

Why this matters?

By adapting meat recipes to plant-based versions, you're helping to:

- Promote health and wellness
- Save money for families
- Reduce environmental impact
- Foster inclusion in the kitchen

Facilitator Tips

- **Encourage participation** - Ask participant for ideas on swaps
- **Taste as you go** - Let the group experiment with spices and textures

- **Be flexible** - Adjust ingredients based on what's available
- **Include everyone** - Offer gluten-free and nut-free options where accessible
- **Share stories** - Invite people to share how they cook at home, this builds community and confidence

Key things to consider before adapting a recipe

Ask these guiding questions when adapting any meat-based recipes:

- **What role does meat play in the recipe?**
Protein / texture / flavour / heaviness
- **What are the dietary needs of the group?**
Allergies / religious or cultural restrictions / gluten-free or nut-free needs
- **What's your budget and ingredient availability?**
Use what's seasonal and locally accessible
Opt for dried goods or bulk buy purchases when possible

Common plant-based swaps for meat

Meat type	Plant-based alternative	Notes
Minced meat	Lentils, Mushrooms, Crumbled tofu, Plant-based mince	Great for sauces, tacos shepherd's pie
Chunks / pieces	Chickpeas, Tofu, Tempeh, Jackfruit	Ideal for curries, stir-fries, stews
Shredded meat	Jackfruit, mushrooms, lentils	Use for pulled "pork", wraps, sandwiches
Burgers / patties	Black beans, chickpeas, oats, quinoa	Add breadcrumbs / oats for binding
Meat in soups / stews	Beans, lentils, chunky veg	Add potatoes or grains for more heartiness

Budget Tips

- Use dried beans and lentils – soak in advance to save time
- Buy in bulk when possible (grains, legumes, spices)
- Use seasonal vegetables
- Make large batches and freeze portions
- Avoid expensive meat substitutions – use them only if accessible

Simple plant-based flavour boosters

Since meat adds depth, you'll want to enhance flavour with:

- Umami – miso paste, soy sauce, tamari, tomato paste, nutritional yeast
- Spices – smoked paprika, cumin, onion, garlic, curry powder, chilli
- Texture – roasted chickpeas, toasted nuts / seeds, baked tofu
- Richness – coconut milk, tahini, olive oil in small amounts

Example recipe adaptations

1. Spaghetti Bolognese

Original: minced beef in tomato sauce
Swap: use green lentils and finely chopped mushrooms
Tip: add herbs, tomato paste, and soy sauce for richness

2. Chicken Stir-fry

Original: chicken strips with vegetables
Swap: use tofu or tempeh, pan-fried until golden
Tip: marinate tofu or tempeh in garlic sauce, soy sauce, and ginger before frying

3. Beef Stew

Original: beef chunks with potatoes and carrots
Swap: use butter beans or chunky mushrooms
Tip: add a dash of soy sauce or balsamic vinegar to deepen flavour

4. Pulled Pork Sandwich

Original: shredded pork with BBQ spices
Swap: use jackfruit (canned in brine), cooked with BBQ spices
Tip: simmer jackfruit, shred with fork, bake to crisp edges

Example recipe adaptations – Culturally relevant plant-based swaps

5. Keema (minced meat curry – South Asian / Pakistani)

Original: minced lamb or beef cooked with onions, tomatoes, peas, and spices
Swap: brown lentils or finely chopped mushrooms with the same masala base
Tip: add a splash soy sauce or tamari to deepen the flavour, serve with rice or roti

6. Jollof Rice (West African – Ghanaian / Nigerian)

Original: rice cooked with tomato stew and meat
Swap: keep the rice and stew base, add mixed vegetables, black-eyed peas or kidney beans
Tip: use smoked paprika, or a little liquid smoke to add depth, serve with fried plantain or grilled tofu

7. Chichen Curry (South Asian / Pakistani)

Original: bone-in chicken simmered in spicy tomato and onion gravy
Swap: use chickpeas or cubed tofu instead of chicken
Tip: add spinach, potato, or aubergine and mix in traditional spices like garam masala and cumin

8. Egusi Soup (Nigerian)

Original: ground melon seeds with meat and leafy greens
Swap: use mushrooms or tofu instead of meat with added spinach or kale
Tip: substitute ground peanuts if melon seeds aren't available, serve with pounded yam or eba

9. Pilau / Pulao Rice (South Asian/Pakistani)

Original: Spiced rice cooked with meat
Plant-Based Swap: Use vegetable stock and add chickpeas, peas, or kidney beans
Tip: Include whole spices like cloves, cardamom, and cinnamon. Top with fried onions.

10. Stew with Meat or Fish (Ghanaian/Nigerian)

Original: Tomato-based stew with meat or fish
Plant-Based Swap: Use black beans or tofu sautéed in spices, then added to the stew
Tip: Keep the rich, spicy base with scotch bonnet, ginger, garlic, and thyme.

11. Pakora (South Asian/Pakistani)

Original: Often made with chicken or other meats
Plant-Based Swap: Use potatoes, spinach, onions, or aubergine in chickpea flour batter (also labelled as 'besan')
Tip: Add ajwain (caraway) or cumin seed to the batter for authentic taste. Serve with mint chutney.

12. Stuffed Cabbage Rolls (Eastern European/Polish)

Original: Cabbage leaves stuffed with minced meat and rice, cooked in tomato sauce
Plant-Based Swap: Use lentils, mushrooms, or rice with grated carrot and herbs
Tip: Add smoked paprika for warmth and use tomato passata for sauce.

13. Bigos / Hunter's Stew (Polish)

Original: Sauerkraut stew with mixed meats and sausage
Plant-Based Swap: Use mushrooms, beans, and smoked tofu
Tip: Add caraway seeds and bay leaves for traditional flavour.

14. Beef Stroganoff (Russian/European)

Original: Sliced beef in creamy mushroom sauce
Plant-Based Swap: Use mushrooms and tofu or seitan in a plant-based cream sauce
Tip: Add Dijon mustard and paprika. Serve over noodles or mashed potatoes.

15. Goulash (Central/Eastern European)

Original: Beef stew with paprika, onions, and potatoes
Plant-Based Swap: Use kidney beans or lentils with mushrooms and root veg
Tip: Cook low and slow with lots of paprika for full flavour.

Microwave Recipes

A collection of healthy, inclusive, plant-based, recipes that can be prepared using only a microwave. Ideal for low-resource cooking environments.

1. Microwave Mug Lentil Soup (Origin: Mediterranean-Inspired)

Ingredients:

¼ cup red lentils (rinsed)
½ cup water or vegetable broth
1 tbsp tomato paste
¼ tsp cumin
Pinch of salt and pepper
Chopped parsley (optional)

Instructions:

In a large mug combine lentils, water/broth, tomato paste and spices
Microwave uncovered on high for 5-6 minutes, stirring halfway through
Let it sit for 2-3 minutes before stirring and serve with parsley

2. Microwave Scrambled Tofu (Origin: Western-Style)

Ingredients:

½ block firm pressed tofu (crumbled)
¼ tsp turmeric
¼ garlic powder
1 tbsp plant-based milk or water
Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

Combine all ingredients in a microwave-safe bowl
Microwave on high for 2 minutes, stir, return to microwave for another 1-2 minutes
Serve with toast or in a wrap

3. Microwave Veggie Rice Bowl (Origin: South Asian Inspired)

Ingredients:

½ cup pre-cooked rice
¼ cup frozen mixed vegetables
1tbsp biriyani paste or curry paste
2 tbsp water
Fried onions (optional)
Coriander (optional)

Instructions:

Combine all ingredients in a microwave safe bowl
Cover bowl and microwave on high for 2-3 minutes
Stir and serve with fried onions and coriander

4. Mexican Bean Chilli (Origin: Mexican-Inspired)

Ingredients:

½ cup canned mixed beans
2tbsp chopped tomatoes
1tbsp tomato paste
¼ tsp chilli powder
¼ tsp cumin
Salt to taste

Instructions:

Mix all ingredients in a microwave-safe bowl
Microwave on high for 2-3 minutes, stir and repeat if needed
Serve with tortilla chips or over rice

5. Microwave Apple Crumble (Origin: British)

Ingredients:

1 apple (chopped)
½ tsp cinnamon
1tst brown sugar
2 tbsp oats
1 tsp vegan margarine

Instructions:

Place chopped apple in a mug along with the cinnamon and brown sugar
In a separate bowl, mix the oats and margarine, then sprinkle this over the apples
Microwave on high for 2-3 minutes until the apples are soft and the oat topping is warm

Air Fryer Recipes

Quick, healthy, budget-friendly recipes for every household.

Air fryers are a brilliant tool for residents who want to cook tasty meals quickly, cheaply, and with less energy use. This recipe series has been created to support residents across Barking & Dagenham, including those with limited access to traditional cooking facilities, to make nourishing meals using simple ingredients and an air fryer.

All recipes use:

- low-cost ingredients
- minimal equipment
- simple steps
- reduced oil
- options for allergens and dietary needs
- family-friendly seasonings
- shorter cooking times to reduce energy use

5 More Quick Air Fryer Ideas (No Recipe Needed)

- Frozen veggies → 180°C for 8–10 mins
- Toasties → 170°C for 4–5 mins
- Hard-boiled eggs → 130°C for 10–11 mins
- Chickpea “crunch snacks” → 190°C for 12 mins
- Garlic bread → 180°C for 5 mins

Money-Saving Air Fryer Tips

- Cut veg small = faster cooking = lower energy cost
- Use foil or parchment to reduce washing
- Marinate leftovers to refresh dry meats
- Air fryers reheat food better than microwaves – crispy without new ingredients

Safety Tips for Residents

- Don't cover the air fryer with foil blocking airflow
- Shake the basket safely with heat-proof gloves
- Keep the air fryer on a flat, heat-safe counter
- Don't overcrowd the basket
- Keep children away from the hot drawer

Adaptations for Residents in Temporary Accommodation

- Recipes use 1–3 ingredients where possible
- No oven or hob needed
- Air-fryer + microwave friendly
- Options using tinned foods, frozen veg, and cupboard staples
- Low washing-up designs

1. Air Fryer Falafel Wraps (Origin: Middle Eastern)

Ingredients:

- 1 can chickpeas
- 2 garlic cloves
- ½ cup fresh parsley
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- ½ tsp ground coriander
- ½ small onion
- 2 tbsp flour
- ½ tsp baking powder
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

Blend all ingredients in a food processor into a coarse paste
Form the paste into small balls or patties
Preheat air fryer to 190°C
Place falafels in basket and cook for 10–12 minutes, turning over halfway
Serve in wraps with tahini sauce, salad, and lemon juice

2. Air Fryer Plantain Bites (Origin: West African/Caribbean)

Ingredients:

- 2 ripe plantains
- Pinch of salt
- Light oil spray

Instructions:

Peel and slice plantains into rounds
Lightly spray with oil and sprinkle with salt
Air fry at 180°C for 12 minutes, flipping halfway
Serve with black bean dip or avocado salsa

3. Crispy Tofu Bites (Origin: East-Asian Inspired)

Ingredients:

- 1 block firm tofu
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- ½ tsp garlic powder
- 2 tbsp cornstarch

Instructions:

Press tofu for 30 minutes to drain excess water before chopping into cubes
Mix cubes with soy sauce and garlic powder before coating with cornstarch
Preheat air fryer to 200°C
Place tofu in basket and cook for 15 minutes or until crispy
Serve with spice peanut sauce and steamed greens

4. Stuffed Bell Peppers (Origin: Eastern-European Inspired)

Ingredients:

4 bell peppers
1 cup cooked rice
½ cup cooked lentils
1 small onion (chopped)
2tbsp tomato paste
1tsp mixed herbs
Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

Mix rice, lentils, onion, tomato paste, and herbs in a bowl
Cut off the tops of the pepper and remove the core and seeds
Spoon in rice filling into bell peppers
Lightly brush bell pepper with oil
Air fry at 180°C for 15-18 minutes
Service with plant-based sour cream or yoghurt

5. Air Fryer Pakoras (Origin: South Asian)

Ingredients:

1 cup chickpea flour
1 onion (thinly sliced)
½ cup spinach (chopped)
½ tsp turmeric
½ tsp cumin
¼ tsp chilli powder
Water (to make batter)

Instructions:

Mix flour, vegetable, and spices in a bowl
Gradually add water to the flour mix to form a thick batter
Scoop servings of the batter into the air fryer basket
Cook at 190°C for 12 minutes
Serve with mint sauce chutney or tamarind sauce

6. Herbed Potato Wedges (Origin: European)

Ingredients:

3 large potatoes (cut in the wedges)
½ tsp garlic powder
1 tsp dried rosemary
Olive oil spray

Instructions:

Toss potatoes into a bowl with the garlic, rosemary, and olive oil spray and mix
Air fry at 200°C for 15-18 minutes until golden
Serve with vegan aioli or tomato salsa

7. Air Fryer Spring Rolls (Origin: East Asian)

Ingredients:

8 rice wrappers
1 cup cabbage (shredded)
1 carrot (grated)
100g firm tofu (crumbled)
1 tbsp soy sauce

Instructions:

In a bowl, mix the cabbage, carrot, crumbled tofu and soy sauce together
Spoon the mixture onto the rice wrapper, roll the wrapper over filling and seal the edges
Spray lightly with oil
Air fry at 200°C for 8-10 minutes until crispy
Serve with sweet chilli sauce

8. Air Fryer Chicken Thighs (Budget-Friendly)

Ingredients:

4 chicken thighs (bone-in, skin-on or skinless)
1 tbsp oil
1 tsp paprika
1 tsp garlic powder
Salt & pepper to taste

Instructions:

Pat chicken dry and rub with oil + seasonings.
Place in air fryer basket in a single layer.
Cook at 180°C for 10 mins, flip, then cook 8-12 more mins until fully cooked.

Tips: Swap paprika for curry powder for a warmer flavour.

9. Air Fryer Veggie Loaded Fritters

Ingredients:

2 cups grated veg (carrot, courgette, cabbage)
1 egg (or 2 tbsp flour + water for vegan option)
2 tbsp flour
Salt & pepper to taste

Instructions:

Squeeze out moisture from veg.
Mix everything into a batter.
Place spoonfuls into air fryer on parchment.
Air fry at 180°C for 12-15 mins, turning halfway.

10. Air Fryer Tandoori Cauliflower Bites

Ingredients:

1 small cauliflower, florets
3 tbsp yoghurt (or dairy-free)
1 tbsp tandoori masala
½ tsp salt
1 tsp oil

Instructions:

Mix marinade & coat cauliflower.
Air fry 190°C for 12–15 mins until charred at the edges.
Serve with mint yoghurt or in wraps.

11. Air Fryer Crispy Tofu (High-Protein Vegan)

Ingredients:

1 block firm tofu, cubed
1 tbsp cornflour
1 tbsp soy sauce
1 tsp oil

Instructions:

Toss tofu in soy, oil & cornflour.
Cook 190°C for 10–14 mins, shaking halfway.
Use in stir-fries, bowls, or sandwiches.

12. Air Fryer Stuffed Peppers (Family-Friendly)

Ingredients:

2 bell peppers, halved
1 cup cooked rice
½ tin beans or lentils
¼ cup grated cheese (optional)
1 tsp mixed herbs

Instructions:

Mix rice, beans/lentils and herbs together to create a filling.
Stuff peppers with filling and top with cheese.
Air fry 170°C for 10–12 mins.

13. Air Fryer Salmon Bites

Ingredients:

2 salmon fillets, cubed
1 tsp honey or lemon
1 tsp soy sauce
1 tsp oil

Instructions:

Marinate salmon in honey, soy sauce, oil, along with preferred spice mix.
Cook 180°C for 7–9 mins.
Serve with noodles, salad, or steamed frozen veg.

14. Air Fryer Breakfast Hash

Ingredients:

3 potatoes, diced small
1 onion
1 tsp paprika
1 tbsp oil

Instructions:

Toss all ingredients together.
Air fry 190°C for 12–15 mins, shaking halfway.

15. Air Fryer Falafel (Low-Fat, High Fibre)

Ingredients:

1 tin chickpeas, drained
2 tbsp flour
1 garlic clove
1 tsp cumin
Salt to taste

Method: Blend or mash ingredients.
Shape into balls.
Air fry 180°C for 10–12 mins.
Serve with wraps, hummus, or salad.

16. Air Fryer Roasted Vegetables

Ingredients:

Any vegetables: carrots, cauliflower, broccoli, onions, courgette
1 tbsp oil
Salt & pepper to taste

Instructions:

Chop vegetables into bite size pieces
Toss vegetables with oil & seasoning.
Air fry 200°C for 10–14 mins.
Turn into a quick warm salad with couscous and your preferred dressing.

17. Air Fryer Apple Crumble Cups

Ingredients:

1 apple, chopped
1 tbsp sugar or honey
1 tbsp oats
1 tsp butter

Instructions:

Mix apple + sweetener; place in small heatproof bowl.
Top with oats & butter.
Air fry 170°C for 8–10 mins.

18. Air Fryer Toasted Spiced Nuts

Ingredients:

200g mixed nuts
1 tsp honey or oil
Cinnamon or chilli

Instructions:

Mix nuts with oil/honey + spices.
Air fry at 180°C for 5–6 minutes.

19. Air Fryer Banana “Cookies” (3 Ingredients)

Ingredients:

1 ripe banana
½ cup oats
1 tbsp chocolate chips or raisins

Instructions:

Mash banana, mix with oats & extras.
Form 6 small cookies.
Air fry 170°C for 8–10 minutes.

20. Air Fryer Jacket Potatoes

Ingredients:

1 large baking potato
1 tsp cooking oil
Pinch of salt
Toppings as preferred: cheese, baked beans, tuna etc.

Instructions:

Poke potatoes with fork.
Rub with a little oil + salt.
Cook at 190°C for 30–35 minutes, turning halfway
(Tip: Microwave for 6 mins first - then air fry for 12 mins to finish)
Once cooked, carefully slice down the centre of the potato and open
Add your preferred toppings and serve hot



Conclusion: Growing Confidence Through Cooking

Kitchen Catalysts is more than a cooking programme – it is a movement for community empowerment, confidence building, and cultural celebration.

By creating welcoming spaces where residents prepare food together, facilitators help:

- Build practical food skills for everyday life
- Celebrate cultural food stories and diverse traditions
- Promote healthy, affordable eating for all
- Reduce food insecurity through shared learning
- Strengthen community connection and belonging

Facilitators are key to this mission. Your contribution shapes how residents learn, how they feel in the kitchen, and how they connect with one another. Your work makes cooking accessible, inclusive, and joyful.

Thank you for choosing to support your community through food. Keep experimenting, learning, and sharing – every session is a chance to grow together.

Together, we are transforming community cooking.

Useful Resources & Further Learning

Below are recommended tools to support facilitators with food safety, inclusive cooking, community engagement, and recipe development.

Food Safety & Certifications

Resource	Purpose
Food Standards Agency (UK)	Food hygiene guidance, allergen rules, SFBB tools
Level 2 Food Safety Courses (Online)	Mandatory training for facilitators
NHS: Allergy Advice	Understanding dietary restrictions & allergens

Links to search online:

- “Food Standards Agency – Safe Food Better Business”
- “Level 2 Food Hygiene online course (UK accredited)”
- “NHS Food Allergy Guidance”

Nutrition & Inclusive Cooking

Organisation / Tool	Focus
NHS Eatwell Guide	Simple, culturally adaptable nutrition guidance
BDA (British Dietetic Association)	Factsheets on diets, health needs & community advice
VegPower / Meat Free Monday	Budget-friendly plant-forward ideas
Plant-Based Health Professionals UK	Science-based plant-forward resources
Eat Like a Londoner	Recipes and tips on reducing food waste
Bang in Some Beans	Campaign to increase consumption of beans
Plant Prospects plant-based	Made in Hackney have made plant-based toolkit

Cultural Food Understanding

Platform	What it Offers
BBC Good Food – World Cuisine	Culturally diverse and adaptable recipes
National Geographic Food Stories	Food culture, traditions & storytelling inspiration
Community Cookbooks & Local Food Hubs	Ask participants to share family recipes

Budget Cooking & Skill-Building

Resource	Support Provided
Money Saving Expert – Food Tips	Budget shopping & cooking resources
Too Good To Go / Olio	Reduce food waste & access surplus food
Stretch Your Food, Save Your Money	Everyday Food Saving Tip/guides
Jack Monroe – Cooking on a Bootstrap	Low-cost recipes & inclusive budgeting

Sustainability

Resource	Support Provided
Good Food Enterprise Charter	Guidance for Food Enterprises on Reducing Food Waste and Ethical Sourcing
Local Composting	Information on local composting services

Tools for Session Planning

- Use free cost calculator apps (e.g., Smart Recipes, SuperCook)
- Bulk-buy stores or cooperatives
- Recipe cost spreadsheet (can be shared among facilitators)
- Local allotments, community gardens, or food banks partnerships

Final Note to Facilitators

The most powerful ingredients you bring into the kitchen are: your openness, your encouragement, and your willingness to learn with others. Every dish tells a story - and every session helps someone find confidence in cooking.

Thank you for being a Kitchen Catalyst!

