

Kitchen Tips

and

Simple Recipes

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1. Introduction

Remaining independent within the kitchen can seem a daunting task when faced with a visual impairment. Things you may have done almost automatically may now seem extremely difficult or even impossible. However, with the help of useful tips, specialist equipment, support from Sight Advisors and training from your Rehabilitation Officer, most fears and obstacles can be overcome.

We have compiled this short booklet to outline some of the most important areas of consideration when in the kitchen, provide some handy tips which have helped other visually impaired people, and describe some of the specialist equipment available. We have also included some easy recipes for you to try.

We hope this will prove a valuable introduction. However, there will be areas where you may need extra help. Where this is the case, please do not hesitate to contact the Sight Support team and we will try to support and provide advice as best we can.

2. Cooking with sight loss - Handy hints and tips

This section outlines some important considerations and includes a collection of handy tips which may help to solve some of the most common difficulties experienced in the kitchen.

Safety

The most important consideration when working in the kitchen is your safety. The extent of the potential dangers in this area are such that whenever you undertake any work in the kitchen, it is vital to concentrate on the tasks and to be aware of the possible dangers and how to avoid them.

Time

It is also important to remember that everyday tasks will take longer when coping with a visual impairment. Recognising and accepting this can help to avoid unnecessary frustrations. Always allow plenty of time and approach each task individually.

Organisation

Before beginning any task, you should always set out all your equipment and ingredients and during the task always return things

used to their allotted place. Involve family and explain the importance of this, as others can sometimes be over helpful!

Equipment

As well as all the specialist equipment available, it is worth bearing in mind the existing basic equipment you have. Good sharp knives, sturdy saucepans and appropriate dishes will all form a good basis for your cooking preparations. See Section 3 of this guide for a list of some of the specialist equipment available. If you would like to see or try any of the equipment, we have samples of most things in our Sight Support Resource Centres in Bristol and Devizes, so give us a call to arrange an appointment.

Colour and contrast

As with all areas, when adjusting to sight loss, the use of colours and strong contrasts can be of enormous help for some people. Think about the colour of plates, cups, trays, utensils etc, even the colour of your chopping board. Using contrasts effectively can maximise your abilities and improve your skills quite dramatically.

Lighting

Good task lighting can also help when preparing and cooking in the kitchen. Check the strength of your existing bulbs and consider using task lights on work surfaces or under cupboard lighting.

Labelling

Tactile and visual guides can be used to mark cooker dials if you can no longer see the controls properly. Bold print, braille or moon labels can be made for cans, jars etc. Also, rubber bands around jars can help to differentiate similar items.

Quick Tips

- Roll out pastry in a plastic bag to contain all the flour.
- Make sandwiches with frozen bread if spreading is difficult.
- Use a tray when pouring to catch any spills.
- Keep knives blades down in a jug at the back of the work surface.
- Use yoghurt pots or tablespoons for easy measuring.
- Use the back a spoon if spreading is difficult.
- Use the back rings of the cooker in preference to the front where possible.
- For manual ignition of gas cooker, use a proper gas lighter or long matches only.
- When boiling on the hob use a wire basket inside your saucepan for easy draining over the pan.
- Consider the use of specialist equipment.

3. Specialist Equipment

In this section we have included some of the most common equipment that is specifically designed for people with visual impairments. If you would like to sample or try out any of the equipment listed, we have most things available to try in our Sight Support Resource Centres – give us a call and make an appointment.

Liquid Level Indicator: A very popular device which gives an audible and vibrating indication of liquid levels in a cup, bowl, pan. Commonly used to solve the problems associated with the essential art of the cuppa!

One-cup dispensers are another good, safe option for pouring, only pouring one cup of water at the touch of a button.

Bumperstops: These versatile, tactile and visual indicators (often called ‘bump-ons’), can be used to mark a wide range of equipment around the home including the cooker dials, microwave, heating controls etc.

Timers: Timers are available with raised dots which allow tactual setting. They are also produced in large bold print. Talking timers are

also available, or you can even use home assistant WIFI devices like Alexa.

Microwave: There is a talking microwave available which tells you the buttons you have pressed and has some pre-programmed settings. Also, on other microwaves consider putting bumperstops on the dials or keypad.

Scales: Similarly, there are also talking scales available for easy measuring. Some also weigh liquids.

Milk saver: Placed in the bottom of a pan the milk saver will rattle when the contents begin to boil.

Dycem: This is a handy non-slip material which can solve many slipping and griping difficulties. It also comes in strong colours and can aid location.

Freeze Alert: This device ensures food is kept at the right temperature – for example it will buzz if the freezer door is left open and the temperature therefore increases.

Bread Slicers: These have an adjustable guide to ensure perfect slices. They can of course be used for many things in addition to slicing bread.

Folding chopping boards: Can be used flat but the sides fold to form a funnel for transferring food once it has been cut or chopped.

Coloured chopping boards: Can be used to create contrast between food and board – for example carrot on a white chopping board.

Peelers: Peelers tend to be safer to use than a knife and there are a wide range to choose from. Remember to try and get used to peeling away from the body as opposed to towards your wrist!

Measuring Spoons: These allow easy measuring without the use of scales and are available in various sizes.

Safety Can Openers: Some can openers now remove the lid without leaving a sharp edge, making it safe to use with confidence.

Measuring Jug: Talking measuring jugs and jugs with a tactile gauge for metric and imperial measurements are available.

A lot of this equipment can be purchased from high street and online stores. You can also purchase direct through Sight Support, or from the following:

RNIB – 0303 123 9999

Partially Sighted Society – 01302 965195

Colbolt Systems – 01493 700172

4. Simple Recipes to Try

There are of course thousands of places to find good recipes, and you may not need any inspiration. But for the first-time cook, or those returning to cooking who want to start with something simple, on the next few pages we have put together some very easy recipes for you to try.

Chilli con Carne

Ingredients

1 lb 1/2 kilo Minced beef

1 large onion

2 tins of chopped tomatoes

1 tin red kidney beans

2 teaspoons of chilli powder

1 clove of garlic crushed or garlic salt

Pepper

One dessert spoon of tomato ketchup or tomato puree

Method

- Place mince and onion in casserole dish, mix with fork and cook for 5 mins on high.
- Drain tinned beans and rinse well in colander.
- Add the beans and all the other ingredients to the mince, mix well, put on lid.
- Cook on medium heat for 20 - 25 mins.
- Allow to stand with lid on for further 5 - 7 mins.
- Can be eaten with rice, jacket potato or pasta.

Gloucester Pie

Ingredients

8oz 225 grams slices of bread with crusts removed

3oz 85 grams butter

3oz 85 grams mature Cheddar / double Gloucester

6 medium tomatoes, sliced

1/4 pint milk

1 beaten egg

1 teaspoon mustard

Salt & pepper to taste

Watercress to garnish

Method

- Make 4 sandwiches from bread, butter, tomato and cheese.
- Cut into triangles & arrange in oven proof dish.
- Beat together egg, milk, seasoning and mustard
- Pour over sandwiches and leave to soak for 3 mins.
- Dot the top with butter.
- Cook for 30 mins - Gas mark 5 – 190c
- Garnish with watercress

Marmalade or mincemeat cake

Ingredients

12oz 340 grams Self raising flour

6oz 170 grams Soft margarine or butter

6oz 170 grams Sugar

2 Heaped tablespoons of marmalade or mincemeat

2 Eggs

Method

- Cream together sugar and margarine.
- Add the eggs.
- Fold in sieved flour.
- Add marmalade or mincemeat.
- Add enough milk till mixture drops off spoon easily.
- Put into well-greased tin.
- Cook on gas mark 5 – 190c. for 45 mins

Pilgrims Pie

Ingredients

1 lb 1/2 kilo Good minced meat

1 Can condensed scotch broth or vegetable soup

12 oz 240 grams Short crust pastry

Method

- Mix together mince and soup
- Place in pie dish and spread evenly.
- Roll out pastry big enough to cover meat mixture.
- Crimp edges & cut small slash in middle.
- Brush with milk.
- Cook for 30 mins - Gas mark 5 – 190c
- Turn down heat to gas mark 4 - 180c and cook for further 30 mins.

Pasties

Ingredients

8oz 225 grams self-raising flour

3oz 85 grams margarine

1 tin of corned beef

1 large carrot

1 large onion

Salt & pepper

A little butter

Method

- Make pastry
- Peel and cook potatoes in boiling salt water.
- Peel and grate carrot, peel and slice onion.
- When potatoes almost done, add onion and cook until soft in with potatoes.
- Strain potatoes and add butter and seasoning, grated carrot and chopped or sliced corned beef.
- Roll out pastry into circles, add mixture, wet the rim and make up the pasties. Brush with milk.
- Cook for 30 mins - Gas mark 5. 190c.

Cheese and potato pie

Ingredients

1 lb 1/2 kilo grams Potatoes

1 Medium onion

1 oz 30 grams Strong tasty cheese

Butter and milk for mashing potatoes, salt and pepper

Method

- Peel and boil potatoes with a little salt
- Fry thinly sliced onions until soft.
- Grate cheese.
- Mash potatoes with butter, milk, seasoning.
- Add onions and 3/4 cheese. Mix well.
- Place in heatproof dish, sprinkle remaining cheese
- Cook for 30 mins - Gas mark 5. 190c.

Corned Beef quiche

Ingredients

12 oz 340 grams Corned Beef

6 Eggs

1 Carton of cottage cheese

1 Large onion

Mushrooms and Tomatoes to taste

Method

- Chop up corned beef, onions, mushrooms tomatoes.
- Beat eggs and mix in the cottage cheese.
- Pour egg mixture over prepared ingredients.
- Cook for 30 mins - Gas mark 4. 180c.
- Serve hot or cold.

- Bread and butter pudding

Ingredients

4 Slices of bread

Butter

2 oz 60 grams Mixed fruit or sultanas

1 oz 30 grams Sugar

1 Egg

1/2 pint Milk

Nutmeg / Spices to taste

Vanilla essence

Method

- Spread butter on bread and cut into triangles.
- Arrange a layer in dish, add some fruit, layer bread and fruit and finish with a layer of bread.
- Mix egg, milk, vanilla essence and spices and pour over bread in dish.
- Allow milk mixture to soak into bread for approx. 30 mins.
- Cover top with sugar and cook on gas 5 - 190c for 30 mins until top is golden brown.

Fruity tea bread

Ingredients

- 8 oz 225 grams Self raising flour
- 1 oz 30 grams Melted butter
- 6 oz 170 grams Mixed fruit
- 1 oz 30 grams Mixed chopped peel
- 1 oz 30 grams Chopped walnuts
- 4 tablespoons of Honey
- 1 cup of cold tea
- 1 oz 28 grams Demerara sugar
- 1 beaten egg

Method

- Place mixed fruit, peel, honey and tea in large bowl, mix well and leave overnight or at least 4 hours.
- Add all other ingredients one by one, mixing well
- Place mixture in bread tin.
- Cook for 30 mins - Gas mark 5. 190c
- Take out, spread with honey and top with nuts.
- Replace and cook for 30 mins more gas mark 4. 180c
- Leave to cool on cooling tray.

Chocolate ring cake

Ingredients

4 oz 115 grams Soft Margarine or Butter

4 oz 115 grams Caster Sugar

3 1/2ozs 115 grams Self-raising Flour

1/2 oz 15 grams Cocoa

2 Mars Bars

2 tablespoons Milk

Method

- Mix all the ingredients together in a big bowl.
- Pour into a ring mould.
- Cook in microwave on high power for 4 mins.
- Leave to stand for 5 - 10 mins.
- For topping - break up Mars bars, add milk and cook on high for 2 mins.
- Pour mixture over ring and allow to cool.

Fruit Surprise

Ingredients

1 Can of fruit pie filling

1 Egg white

1 tablespoon Caster sugar

1 tablespoon Sherry

Chopped Nuts

Method

- Mix fruit filling with sherry.
- Divide between 4 wine glasses.
- Whisk egg white, fold in the sugar.
- Pile on top of fruit
- Heat for 2 to 3 mins on medium heat in the microwave
- Sprinkle with nuts and serve.

Mars Bar Crispies

Ingredients

3 standard Mars bars

3 ozs 90 grams of margarine or butter

3 cups of Rice Crispies

Cooking chocolate

Method

- Melt Mars bars and margarine in the microwave oven.
- Add Rice Crispies and mix thoroughly.
- Press into a shallow baking dish.
- Melt some cooking chocolate and coat the top.
- Put in the fridge to set, cut into small squares.

5.Summary

We hope you have enjoyed reading our quick introduction to kitchen skills, handy tips and recipes, and found the information useful.

Please remember that if you are not feeling confident, feel you need help within the kitchen, or if you have any further questions, we will do our best to help.

Please do not hesitate to contact us at either:

Sight Support West of England - 0117 322 4885.

Wiltshire Sight - 01380 723682

