Food & Culinary Professionals DPG
Core Food & Culinary Competencies

This document identifies core competencies for registered dietitian nutritionists active or interested in food and culinary career options within the profession. The Food & Culinary Professionals DPG is looked to as the expert on these topics, and the DPG uses the core competencies to guide educational content and programs for our members, positioning them for success in food and culinary roles within the dietetics field.

I. Sensory Perception and Evaluation
   a. Physiology of taste and flavor, including factors affecting tasting ability
   b. Taste and flavor variability with age (across the lifecycle), disease, and culture
   c. Organoleptic properties of food
   d. Descriptive taste and flavor terminology
   e. Texture, color and flavor changes with fat, sodium, and other nutrient-modified foods
   f. Plate composition and presentation: food color, texture, flavor, and shape
   g. Comparative tasting and evaluation of food

II. Basic Cooking Skills
   a. Culinary terminology
   b. Measuring and weighing skills
   c. Cooking equipment for home and commercial kitchens – selection and appropriate use
   d. Knife skills and safety: appropriate use and care of knives
   e. Communicating cooking skills to “non-cooks”

III. Cooking Techniques
   a. Specific ingredients require appropriate techniques
   b. Basic food preparation techniques
   c. Dry-heat cooking techniques-sautéeing, grilling, broiling, roasting/baking, smoking
   d. Moist-heat cooking techniques-steaming, poaching, boiling, stewing, braising
   e. Preparation of basic savory and sweet sauces
   f. Basic baking techniques and optimal uses
   g. Nutrient retention in cooking
   h. Cooking foods to appropriate temperature or endpoint for optimal food safety and quality
   i. Techniques to improve status of nutrients of concern as recognized by current Dietary Guidelines for Americans, such as saturated and trans fats, cholesterol, sodium, and added sugars into foods, meals, and menus
   j. Techniques to improve status of food groups to encourage as recognized by current Dietary Guidelines for Americans, such as fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy, seafood, and whole grains into foods, meals, and menus

IV. Menu and Meal Planning
   a. Home and commercial menu planning principles for single-meal, daily, and weekly menus
   b. Menu planning for specific age, health and/or special dietary requirements, such as food allergies and intolerances
   c. Menu planning considerations for cultural, ethnic, and religious groups (specific foods, ingredients, cooking methods, and restrictions)
   e. Menu planning to accommodate for current dietary preferences and food trends
   f. Common food sources of essential nutrients
   g. Consumer food, ingredient, and purchasing trends
   h. Economical and available food choices in each food group
   i. Flavor balancing within meals
   j. Seasonal menu planning
   k. Food cost controls

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V. **Ingredient Selection**
   a. Functions, characteristics, and selection of ingredients
   b. Seasonal availability/quality indicators of foods from each food group
   c. Choosing ingredients using food labels and point-of-purchase systems and programs
   d. Food laws and standards – federal nutrition label requirements
   e. Standards of quality in purchasing and storing food
   f. Food storage for best quality and safety. Length of storage (dry, refrigerator, freezer)
   g. Beverages: cooking uses, health effects, pairing with food

VI. **Recipe Development and Modification**
   a. Use of herbs, spices, seasonings, condiments, aromatics, and marinades as well as cooking techniques for flavor development and enhancement
   b. Standard and appropriate portions of commonly consumed foods
   c. Ingredient substitution and food quality effects of substitution
   d. Creating, modifying, and writing standardized recipes for consumers and food service
   e. Nutrition analysis of recipes using calculation methods and software, and understanding of food laboratory analysis
   f. Altering recipes to improve the nutritional value

VII. **Communicating About Food**
   a. Selection of audience-appropriate messages (merging consumers’ desire for taste, convenience, and economy with nutrition/health messages)
   b. Writing for consumers and professionals
   c. Ability to present basic food demonstrations and presentations
   d. Communicating and partnering with chefs, food professionals, and the food industry
   e. Communicating newsworthy food topics
   f. Communicating on foods purchased away from home
   g. Understanding of the political, environmental, economic, and sociologic significance of food
   h. Working with and through the media, including traditional and social media
   i. Public speaking
   j. Communicating the enjoyment of food “Taste and Nutrition go hand-in-hand” (to health professionals and consumers)
   k. Knowledge of food photography and styling

VIII. **Food Retailing**
   a. Knowledge of food retailing locations (supermarkets, farmers markets, gourmet shops, online, etc.)
   b. Factors that influence consumers’ shopping needs and habits, including nutrition, location, cost, and convenience
   c. Helping consumers make point-of-purchase decisions using food labels (Nutrition Facts Panels, nutrition and health claims, ingredients, allergen labeling) and retail systems (shelf-edge communication, pricing, etc)

IX. **Food Safety**
   a. Home food safety: preparation, service, and storage
   b. HACCP, HARPC, and other food safety considerations and regulations for commercial food service, agricultural production, manufacturing, distribution, and retail systems
   c. National Restaurant Association’s Servsafe® certification or equivalent knowledge of food safety auditing, available tools, pest control, cleaning chemicals and SDS use
   d. Microbiology and common food-borne illnesses

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X. **Sustainable Agriculture**
   a. Basic understanding of agribusiness and food production on the farm or ranch
   b. Understanding national and international standards for production claims, including organic, fair trade, animal welfare, and local
   c. Communicating the potential environmental, economic, flavor, and other factors of locally produced and artisanal foods
   d. Understanding of technological advances in food production, including biotechnology, management information systems on the farm, food safety at farm level (product traceability, livestock biosafety), biofuels and their impact on food production, pricing, access to food and carbon footprint
   e. Knowledge of and ability to communicate about topics including: water stewardship, climate change, biodiversity, agricultural policy, integrated pest management, low-tillage approaches, composting, resource reduction (waste water treatment, recycling, energy efficiencies)

XI. **Food Trends**
   a. Identifying trends in eating habits, attitudes, behaviors, knowledge, and skills