University of Missouri Extension

Recipe Style Guide

General Writing Style

Use this guide as your first point of reference. If something is not found in this guide, use the Associated Press Stylebook and the Merriam-Webster dictionary as your references.

This style guide applies *only* to the recipe itself. Any wording introducing or accompanying the recipe should follow standard AP Style. Below are a few examples.

- Generally, spell numerals one through nine *in the text section*. However, use figures for 1 through 9 (and above) preceding a specific unit of measurement (inches, pounds, miles, quarts, temperature degrees, ages, etc.), except for time measurements.
    - This simple pasta dish is the perfect dinner for two.
    - These tiny 1-inch cookies are a great low-fat snack.
    - This recipe calls for 2 pounds of yellow potatoes, but you can use 1 pound of red and 1 pound of yellow for a more colorful dish.
    - This dish contains honey and should be served to children under 1 year.
- For time measurements *in text section only* (seconds, minutes, days, months, years, etc.), spell out one through nine.
    - This dish can be in the oven in just five minutes.
    - You can have this dish on the table in 30 minutes.
    - This sauce will stay fresh in the refrigerator for up to 10 days.
- Use figures in almost all uses for 10 or above. Exceptions: At the start of a sentence or in casual uses.
    - Twenty eggs might seem like a lot for one recipe, but this dish will feed 12 people.
    - This recipe is one of millions for tomato sauce, but we think it's the best.

Be consistent in style throughout each recipe as well as throughout documents and websites containing multiple recipes.

When writing/editing the ingredients list: Give simple preparation instructions; more detailed instructions can be given in the directions.

When writing/editing recipe directions: Use simple, easy-to-follow language in a numbered list of steps. If a step becomes too lengthy, separate it into another step.

Numerals

For temperatures, use a capital "F" with one space after the numerals.

- Heat oven to 350 F.
- Bake at 350 F for 5 minutes.

Use the % sign and not the word "percent" after a specific quantity.

- 100% orange juice

Use numerals for all specific measurements, times and oven settings in both ingredient list and directions.

- Bake for 30 minutes.
- Cut cookie roll into 3-inch slices.

- 2 cups kidney beans
- 8 ounces cheddar cheese

Exception: When two numbers follow one another in the *ingredients list*, separate numbers with parentheses.

- 2 (8-ounce) cans vegetable broth

Exception: When two numbers follow each other in the *directions*, spell out the number that is more easily spelled out.

- Fill two 9-inch baking pans with batter.
- Form into 24 two-inch balls.

For dimensional measurements, use an x-by-x format. Spell out the word inch instead of using a quote mark.

- 9-by-13-inch pan (not 9-by-13” pan)
- Roll dough out into a 10-by-10-inch circle (not a 10-by-10” circle)

Use the word “to” instead of dashes between numbers.

- 2½ to 3 teaspoons sugar (not 2½ -3 teaspoons sugar)
- Bake 3 to 5 minutes (not 3-5 minutes)

Fractions

In the ingredients list, use fractions, not decimals, for ingredient quantities. Hyphenate whole numbers and fractions. Exception: If a label on a can or package lists the quantity as a decimal, do the same in your ingredients list to avoid confusion.

- 1/2 cup
- 1-1/4 teaspoon
- 1 (15.5 ounce) can black beans

In the directions, use fractions for *specific* amounts but spell out *general* fractional amounts.

- Fill the muffin tins two-thirds full.
- Add the remaining 1/4 cup flour to the mixture.

Punctuation

Use only one space after punctuation, including periods.

Do not use serial commas.

- Add eggs, cheese and milk (not: Add eggs, cheese, and milk)
- Drain, rinse and chop (not: Drain, rinse, and chop)

In the ingredients list, parentheses to further specify/clarify something. Note: there is an optional ingredient, say “(optional)” in the ingredients list and “if desired” in the directions.

- 1/4 teaspoon dried oregano (optional)
- 4 ounces (about 8 slices) prosciutto, finely chopped
- 1 (8 ounce) can diced tomatoes (low sodium)

Use a comma after ingredient to describe a preparation step.

- 4 large eggs, beaten
- 1/2 cup whole almonds, sliced
- 2 cups cooked pasta, cooled

Hyphenate measurements or amounts used as adjectives preceding a noun.

- 2 carrots, cut into 1-inch-thick slices

Common words used in recipes (hyphenated and non-hyphenated uses)

- whole wheat (n.) whole-wheat (adj.)
- pan-fry (v.)
- stir-fry (v. and n.)
- open-faced (adj.)
- nonfat (adj.)
- low-fat (adj.)
- low sodium
- half-and-half (n.)
- dry-roasted (adj.)
- hard-boil (v.) hard-boiled (adj.)
- ovenproof or oven-safe (adj.)

Capitalization

For the proper name of the recipe, capitalize all words in a title except articles (a, an, the); prepositions of three or fewer letters (for, of, on, up, etc.); and conjunctions of three or fewer letters (and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet, etc.) unless any of those start or end the title.

- Stuffed Peppers With Beans and Rice
- Ants on a Log
- Sweet Potato Soup
- Spinach and Almond Salad

All ingredients are lowercase, unless they include a proper noun. (Note: do not capitalize when the food does not depend on the proper noun or adjective for its meaning: french fry, for example, refers to the style of the cut.)

- cheddar cheese

- olive oil
- Parmesan cheese
- Italian dressing
- french fries

All measurements are lowercase and spelled out, not abbreviated.

- cup, teaspoon, tablespoon
- ounce, pound
- inch

For ingredients listed without a quantity, capitalize the first letter.

- Example:
  3 large eggs, beaten
  1 cup cheddar cheese, grated
  Salt
  Pepper

Terminology

Use common terms for cookware and cooking utensils.

- sheet pan (not jelly roll pan)
- baking sheet (not cookie sheet)
- large heavy pot with lid (not Dutch oven)
- skillet (not frying pan)
- fine grater or zester (not micro plane)
- strainer (not colander)
- refrigerator (not fridge)

Use common terms for ingredients.

- green onion (not scallions)
- chickpeas (not garbanzo beans)
- powdered sugar (not confectioner's sugar)
- goat cheese (not chèvre)
- cooking spray (not nonstick cooking spray)

Brand Names

Do not use brand names for ingredients or cooking utensils

- slow cooker (not Crock-Pot)
- hot sauce (not Tabasco sauce)

Notes and Warnings for Specific Ingredients

- When honey is included in a recipe, include this warning:
  Note: Honey is not recommended for children under 1 year old.

- When eggs or flour are included in a recipe, include this warning:
  Note: Uncooked flour and raw eggs can contain germs that make you sick.
- When a recipe contains a dough or batter, include this warning:
  Note: Tasting or eating raw (unbaked) dough or batter can put you at risk for food poisoning.

Food Safety Tips

The Safe Recipe Style Guide was created by food safety experts and honed by leading food journalists. Below are instructions for including the Safe Recipe Style Guide in recipes, when relevant and space permits.

- Start recipes with the guideline, “Wash hands with soap and water.” Include this verbiage after each touch of raw meats, raw poultry, raw seafood, or eggs.
  NOTE: MU Extension prefers “Clean hands and food preparation surfaces.” If space does not permit, use “Clean hands and surfaces.”
- When giving instructions on the amount of time food should stay in the oven, or on the stovetop, grill or other cooking device, use the guideline “Cook until internal temperature reaches XX *(*fill in the blank as applicable to specific food) on food thermometer.”
- When instructing recipe user to place raw meats, poultry, seafood or eggs on a surface such as a countertop, serving plate or cutting board, include the instruction to wash the surface after the touch with the raw ingredients.
- If the recipe contains a marinade that is used to baste or marinate raw or cooking meat, poultry or seafood, add the line, “Do not reuse marinades used on raw foods.”
- When describing preparation process for raw meats or poultry, include the guideline, “Do not rinse raw poultry or meat.”
- When using any form of produce in a recipe, include the following relevant guideline in the instructions with the introduction of the ingredient: “Gently rub produce under cold running water,” or “Scrub firm produce with a clean vegetable brush under running water.”

Nutritional Information

- Specify what constitutes a serving portion (cookie, slice, loaf, tablespoon, etc.).
- List the basic nutrition information in small type at the end of the recipe.
  Nutrition information per serving: 650 calories; 240 calories from fat (37 percent of total calories); 27 g fat (11 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 265 mg cholesterol; 2,260 mg sodium; 66 g carbohydrate; 4 g fiber; 2 g sugar; 33 g protein.