

**Lunchmates: a campus lunch co-op**

**Tania Leon**

**University of British Columbia**

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# Lunchmates: a campus lunch co-op

UBC SEEDS Project | Directed Studies

Tania Leon

Global Resource Systems Program,  
Faculty of Land and Food Systems

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Submitted to:

Liska Richer, Program Coordinator, UBC SEEDS | Campus Sustainability

Brent Skura, Professor, Faculty of Land and Food Systems

Kelly White, Wellness Centre Coordinator, Health Services

## Abstract

There is a constantly growing need for enjoyable, nutritious, and affordable lunch options on campus. Students and staff members are becoming more pressed for time and decisions about food, sustainability, and the community seem to be growing in complexity. At the Vancouver Campus of the University of British Columbia (UBC), we are attempting to establish the feasibility of a campus based lunch co-op program to make it easier for students, and potentially staff members, to simply connect with others through the simple act of sharing food with others and eating lunch together.

The Lunchmates campus lunch co-op aims to reduce the amount of time, energy, and waste students generate when cooking a typical individual meal. The Lunchmates each take turns cooking a homemade lunch for the entire group one day per week.

To determine the feasibility of a lunch co-op on campus, we conducted a six-week trial run that identified the issues and challenges related to purchasing ingredients, food safety concerns, and nutritional requirements. We also looked into appropriate dining locations on campus, waste and energy reduction, and how the co-op project can contribute to community building at UBC.

The Lunchmates project aims to include students and staff from all departments and faculties across campus. There are potential collaborations between the lunch co-op project and the UBC Wellness Centre Nutrition Team and also the UBC Vancouver Collegia program.

There are three key recommendations for the subsequent stages of the lunch co-op project. Additional research opportunities and funding can be considered to ensure the project's successful continuation.

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## Introduction

Due to demanding schedules, many students and staff members often struggle to plan and prepare nutritious and affordable packed lunches on a regular basis. Although purchasing lunch on campus can be fairly convenient, it is not necessarily budget-friendly or nutritious. There are a few food outlets at the University of British Columbia (UBC) Vancouver campus that strive to provide nutritious and budget friendly options but these options may become repetitive.

With growing concerns about global food security, many people are beginning to recognize the level of food insecurity at our local level. Davis and Tarasuk (as cited in Health Canada 2012) define food insecurity as “the inability to acquire or consume an adequate diet quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so.” With the ongoing Food Movement in Vancouver, people are demanding more local, organic, and socially responsible foods. While there is growing support from local residents in community-based food system projects and activities, Statistics Canada revealed that 5% of individuals in Vancouver reportedly experience household food insecurity (as cited in City of Vancouver 2013). While this may seem like a small number, the actual number of individuals that are food insecure may be higher and there are also many vulnerable individuals and households within the city. The high cost of living in Vancouver, coupled with educational expenses can contribute to the feeling of food insecurity among students at UBC. This highlights the need for a better functioning and sustainable food system in Vancouver and at UBC.

By creating a campus lunch co-op, we can provide an opportunity for students to connect and share meals together. There are also opportunities to learn from each other by sharing recipes, tips on improving cooking skills, knowledge about food safety and nutrition, and also stories about daily life and culture. Participating in these collective meals also provide the benefit of saving time

and other resources that would normally be used to prepare individual lunches. The Lunchmates campus lunch co-op brings individuals together that form small groups of three to four students. Each student takes their turn cooking a homemade lunch for the entire group one day per week. Meals are prepared at home and brought to campus, where the group meets to eat together and have a chance to take a break from school and casually interact.

The concept is based on the idea that it is more efficient and cost effective to cook for a group of people compared to an individual meal. Purchasing groceries is more economical since fresh ingredients are more likely to be consumed in a timely manner instead of going to waste or perishing. Initial and informal discussions with students have revealed that they would often forgo purchasing fresh and perishable foods because they feel that it is a waste of money. When cooking multiple servings, buying produce and purchasing larger quantities can often present opportunity for discounts as well. The collective effort also means that participants will save time since a different member will cook for others once every weekly rotation. Group members can begin to build a community network through common interests and by sharing recipes, cooking skills, and other ideas that help improve student life and promote actions towards a sustainable campus lifestyle.

There are three main objectives for the current campus lunch co-op project:

1. To determine the feasibility of creating a lunch co-op at UBC and criteria for organizing lunch groups
2. To develop a set of meal guidelines and policies that address food safety concerns and food appropriateness for participants
3. To develop an online system for UBC students to connect and register for lunch groups, post recipes, and find information about nutrition and food safety

First, the project aims to determine the feasibility of creating a lunch co-op on campus at UBC Vancouver. Criteria for organizing lunch groups will be explored and defined. This will involve considerations that will help students form lunch groups, including the ideal size of lunch groups and length of each cooking rotation within each group. Next, the goal is to develop a set of meal guidelines and policies that address food safety concerns and also appropriate food for participants. This step will examine the food safety conditions of packed, homemade lunches. Proper steps will be outlined to ensure that students are aware of how to keep their lunches food safe by adhering to food safety guidelines. We also aim to develop an online system for UBC students to connect and register for lunch groups. This webpage will also act as a resource centre, offering student-tested recipes and information regarding topics on nutrition and food safety.

This report discusses the first objective in detail and provides recommendations for addressing the last two objectives, as the project progresses.

## Literature Review

Four campuses in North America were sampled to explore similar student-run food initiatives and clubs: The University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley); McGill University; Harvard University; and The University of Washington. As well, a number of individuals and organizations have written blogs that share how similar lunch co-op ideas have been implemented on a smaller scale.

### Student-Based Initiatives

At UC Berkeley, there are several food and sustainability-related initiatives organized through student clubs. The campus has a strong focus on providing food for those in need but there are also clubs that raise awareness for nutritious, culturally-specific, and sustainable foods (University of California, Berkeley Division of Student Affairs 2012). The

Berkeley Student Food Collective is a student-run organization that connects students and the community to the local food system while emphasizing the importance of healthy, environmentally and socially sustainable foods. The collective operates a cooperative grocery store similar to Sprouts at UBC, but also offers other products including natural cleaning products and other packaged goods (Berkeley Student Food Collective n.d., UBC Sprouts 2013). UC Berkeley students also run the ASUC Sustainability Team (STeam), which concentrates on increasing campus sustainability by providing training and tools to implement sustainability-related initiatives and projects.

McGill University's Office of Sustainability supports a number of student and community-based initiatives that target environmental stewardship and issues regarding sustainable food systems. The McGill Food Systems Project is a collaborative effort between students, the McGill Office of Sustainability and the Food and Dining Services that aims to improve campus food systems sustainability at McGill (2012). McGill University students also launched the McGill Students' Culinary Society (n.d.) that offers workshops, potlucks, and restaurant dining experiences. Their goal is to provide students an opportunity to learn new cooking skills and to try a variety of cuisines.

At Harvard University, Dining Services plays a central role in educating students on food preparation, nutrition, and sustainable food sources. The Food Literacy Project (FLP) approaches food systems education by supporting many projects and special events. The group also operates two farmers' markets and also a variety of cooking classes on campus (Harvard University Dining Services n.d.).

The University of Washington Student Food Cooperative (UWSFC n.d.) is a student owned and operated organization that aims to improve food systems impacts from many different disciplines. The group runs two main projects: the UWSFC Bulk Buying Club and a

café catered towards serving local, sustainable and ethical food and beverages. The university also has a number of environmentally focused student groups and green teams, such as the UW Tower Green Team, which has sponsored “locavore” lunches and gardening events (University of Washington Environmental Stewardship & Sustainability n.d.).

Although the universities sampled did not have campus-based lunch co-ops established, many of the food and sustainability initiatives have similar aspects to the lunch co-op concept. Their experiences were documented online, often through blog sites and other social media platforms linked from the university website.

## Organizations

Village Vancouver (2013) supports grassroots, community-based food and sustainability activities in neighbourhoods across the city. The Kitsilano Village network of Village Vancouver arranges drop-in spaghetti nights that bring together neighbours while sharing a meal cooked over one stove. This activity aims to reduce transportation and energy consumption while connecting the community (Village Vancouver 2013).

Staff members from Slow Food USA (2011) organized a workplace lunch co-op where one person would cook for the other group members once during their eight-day rotation. The co-op aimed to incorporate as many organic and local ingredients as possible for less than \$5 per person. The group also outlined a few dietary considerations, such as vegetarian meals and taste preferences. The lunch co-op scheduled each rotation by sharing a Google Docs calendar and sent menus out for feedback and to build up excitement and anticipation. While the group initially experienced issues with cleaning responsibilities and intervals of low creativity, the Slow Food USA (2011) lunch co-op successfully continued for nine months by the date of the blog posting and their members agreed that the experiment

was a successful learning experience that cut the cost of food and allowed coworkers to connect on a daily basis.

Another workplace lunch co-op was discovered on the blog Eat Here 2 (2011). This group followed a similar process to the Slow Food USA lunch co-op by also setting a number of ground rules at the planning stage. This included food intolerances and preferences and also a maximum meal cost of \$5 per person.

## Trial Run

The purpose of the trial run was to assist in determining the potential challenges of implementing a lunch co-op and also to documenting the experience and feasibility of the program. The trial run originally began with two people but after the second week, three individuals participated. The entire trial run continued successfully from February 25<sup>th</sup> to April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013 – six weeks leading up to the last day of classes. During this trial period, general observations were recorded to track the cost of meals, challenges, and lessons learned (Appendix A). The key considerations and challenges with respect to the trial run are discussed in further detail below.

## Sourcing Ingredients

There were distinct contrasts between the availability of supermarkets and grocers, the price of groceries, and the types of food products offered based on different areas in Vancouver. The test run participants lived in the communities of Riley Park – Little Mountain, Oakridge, and Marpole; and acquired distinct experiences within these contrasting neighbourhoods. We followed the \$5 per person per meal guideline indicated in the previous literature reviews because we felt that it was approximately the cost of a typical lunch purchased at a UBC food outlet.

Within the Riley Park – Little Mountain neighbourhood, there are few large supermarkets but a number of small-scale grocers that offer a variety of organic goods and culturally specific ingredients. There is also a Winter Farmers Market every Saturday at the Nat Bailey Stadium, which provides fresh local produce and a number of artisanal food products at fair prices (Vancouver Farmers Market 2013). Despite the community's strong interest in food and sustainability, there are very few community gardens (City of Vancouver 2013).

The Oakridge neighbourhood offers a large Safeway supermarket, and a number of small specialty grocers. As of 2012, the area contained two community gardens (City of Vancouver 2013). Still, the participant from Oakridge decided to purchase groceries from low-cost stores such as No Frills.

Marpole is considered a food desert. Although the neighbourhood is considered to have relatively high income levels, access to large grocery stores or fresh produce markets are fairly minimal. While there are two community gardens present in this neighbourhood, there are a limited number of smaller markets available to purchase regular grocery store items as well. As a result, the participant from the Marpole area chose to shop outside of this neighbourhood for the majority of their ingredients.

We sought ingredients from outside of our respective neighbourhoods. This can be attributed to the difference in price, transit convenience, and also the quality and availability of ingredients. We did not take advantage of existing community gardens, nor did we produce our own ingredients. However, we began to share bulk ingredients between us, such as rice and whole-wheat dinner rolls, at no cost. This allowed our group to expand our cooking options when we had limited time and money to purchase such ingredients. Our group also incorporated many seasonal vegetables and food available year-round to

enhance our knowledge of locally produced ingredients. In Southwest British Columbia, produce such as kale and mushrooms are grown throughout the year. However, there are many produce items that are stored locally throughout the winter months (Farm Folk City Folk 2012).

### Food Safety: Container Choices

After recent health concerns surrounding Bisphenol A (BPA) found in certain plastics, the general public has generally become more wary about using specific types of food containers. During our test run, we used two types of food containers. We selected reusable glass Mason jars with metal lids for cold salads and hot lunches that required reheating with microwaves. Plastic containers were used for meals such as sandwiches and wraps that did not require reheating.

Glass Mason jars were selected for two main reasons. First, we chose to avoid microwavable plastic containers due to general concerns from the group. Secondly, we aimed to reduce waste by reusing Mason jars repurposed from pasta sauces. We also used plastic containers solely for the purpose of transporting cold food. These containers were made of polypropylene (PP) and are acceptable for use in food packaging (Health Canada 2009).

Plastic food containers have raised concerns because several contain phthalates, BPA, and styrene; which are potentially endocrine disrupting chemicals (Bang et al. 2012). However, Fankhauser-Noti and Grob (2006) indicate that plasticizers applied to the metal lids of glass jars could potentially migrate into foods, given direct contact or heat. The study also showed that oily foods had higher levels of plasticizer migration. We mitigated these concerns by leaving space between the top of the jars and the food, and also keeping the jars

upright during transportation. We also removed the metal lids before microwaving to ensure safe reheating.

There was a challenge between choosing glass or plastic containers. Glass containers were generally heavier than plastic containers; however, we felt safer and more eco-friendly when microwaving our meals in glass rather than plastic. We agreed that the weight of glass containers was manageable up to four containers and that three to four Mason jars fit perfectly upright in our backpacks.

### Food Safety: Transportation and Food Temperatures

Another food safety aspect we examined was the temperature change of our meals during transportation. As we did not have proper access to a refrigerator, we were concerned that the food would reach and remain at the “danger zone” for an extended period of time. Health Canada (2010a) indicates that food must be kept out of the “danger zone” of 4°C to 60°C, or 40°F to 140°F, to prevent the growth of harmful bacteria. Health Canada (2010b) also recommends heating leftovers to an internal temperature of 74°C or 165°F.

We initially tested the temperature for one meal that consisted of solid foods and was contained in a glass Mason jar. Since we only had access to a meat thermometer, we could only test how hot our food was microwaved. We estimated a typical microwave time of 2 minutes, and the food measured just over 60°C. This meant that we had to stir the food and microwave the jars for a second time to reach the 74°C minimum level for leftover meals.

In a more structured test, I set up two Mason jars to determine the temperature change for a typical solid and liquid meal at room temperature. Vegetable soup was used as

the liquid meal and leftover roasted vegetables were used for the solid meal. A Traceable® Digital Thermometer with a range of  $-50^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $150^{\circ}\text{C}$ , or  $-58^{\circ}\text{F}$  to  $302^{\circ}\text{F}$  and accuracy of  $\pm 1^{\circ}\text{C}$  was used to measure room temperature and the two types of meals at each time interval. Room temperature was recorded at  $21.1^{\circ}\text{C}$ . To determine what time intervals to use, I estimated that the minimum time that a student would need to retrieve the meals from their fridge and the moment the lunch group meets is approximately one hour. The results indicated that already within one hour at room temperature, both solid and liquid meals were in the “danger zone” (Table 1). However, this test may not represent accurate outcomes since these test jars were exposed to room temperature on a countertop rather than realistically in a backpack. Storing these containers in a backpack or lunch bag may yield a difference in the rate of change in temperatures due to the insulating abilities of certain fabrics. We predict that the change in temperature would be less rapid than shown in this single test.

Table 1. Change in temperature of solid and liquid food stored in two separate glass Mason jars exposed to room temperature at  $21.1^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

<b>Temperature Measured</b>	<b>Solid Meal (Roasted Vegetables)</b>	<b>Liquid Meal (Vegetable Soup)</b>
0 hours at room temperature (immediately from refrigerator)	$3.6^{\circ}\text{C}$	$3.1^{\circ}\text{C}$
1 hour at room temperature	$7.9^{\circ}\text{C}$	$8.2^{\circ}\text{C}$
1 hour 30 minutes at room temperature	$10.7^{\circ}\text{C}$	$10.1^{\circ}\text{C}$
2 hours at room temperature	$14.1^{\circ}\text{C}$	$13.7^{\circ}\text{C}$

As a result, we were able to follow the Health Canada guidelines for microwaving leftovers, but we were generally unsuccessful with keeping our food outside of the “danger zone”. Although our meals were within this temperature range, we did not experience sickness or any foodborne illness. Although perishable food can still be generally considered

safe if exposed to the “danger zone” for up to four hours, it is important to encourage behaviour that is food safe (B. Skura, personal communication, May 13, 2013). To be cautious, meals will need to be stored in cooler bags or access to refrigerators need to be established to ensure that the “danger zone” is avoided in the future.

## Nutritional Considerations

Canada’s Food Guide recommends that adults between the ages of 19 and 50 should eat 7 to 8 servings of vegetables and fruits, 6 to 7 servings of grain products, 3 to 4 milk and alternatives, and 2 to 3 meat and alternatives (Health Canada 2011). In order to meet the recommended number of servings proposed, we attempted to balance our meals by incorporating ingredients from at least three of the four different food groups during each meal. For instance, a quinoa salad consisted of one type of grain product, several vegetables, and also a portion of lean meat. We chose a number of dark leafy vegetables such as spinach and kale as well bright orange vegetables, including squash and carrots. We focused on meals that were low in sugar and sodium, and selected predominantly lean meats.

Our group also brought together a mix of different cultures, cooking skills, and family upbringings. Therefore, we had the opportunity to sample a variety of different cuisines that provided a unique combination of nutrients and other potential health benefits beyond our normal diet.

We explored a variety of diets, including vegetarian and low-carbohydrate meals. This allowed each group member to expand their food options at home by trying alternative food products. Our initial ground rules also established specific considerations for different taste preferences and food intolerances. Our ground rules made sure that meals would be suitable for all members and that no one would be left without a meal due to errors in

communication or misunderstanding. We sought recipes and ideas from each other and utilized online resources when we were unsure of what to make.

## Dining Locations

During our trial run, we selected five dining locations on campus to meet and share our meals. These locations were in the School of Population and Public Health (SPPH) building, H.R. MacMillan, The Global Lounge, the Fred Kaiser Building, and also an outdoor seating area (Figure 1). We chose these locations due to the distance between our classes, awareness of available seating areas within these buildings, and general access to kitchen facilities. It was important for our group to have reliable access to a microwave and compost bins.

Since we often had one-hour windows each day to meet and have lunch together, we sought out convenient locations that were not exceedingly busy. Through our past experiences on campus, we noticed that some of the busiest dining areas on campus such as the Student Union Building (SUB) were generally less enjoyable places to eat. These locations seemed less clean, required longer wait times to use the microwaves, and presented unnecessary stress during our lunch breaks. We intended to have a relaxing time between classes to eat and have casual conversations and discussions about the meals we brought for each other.

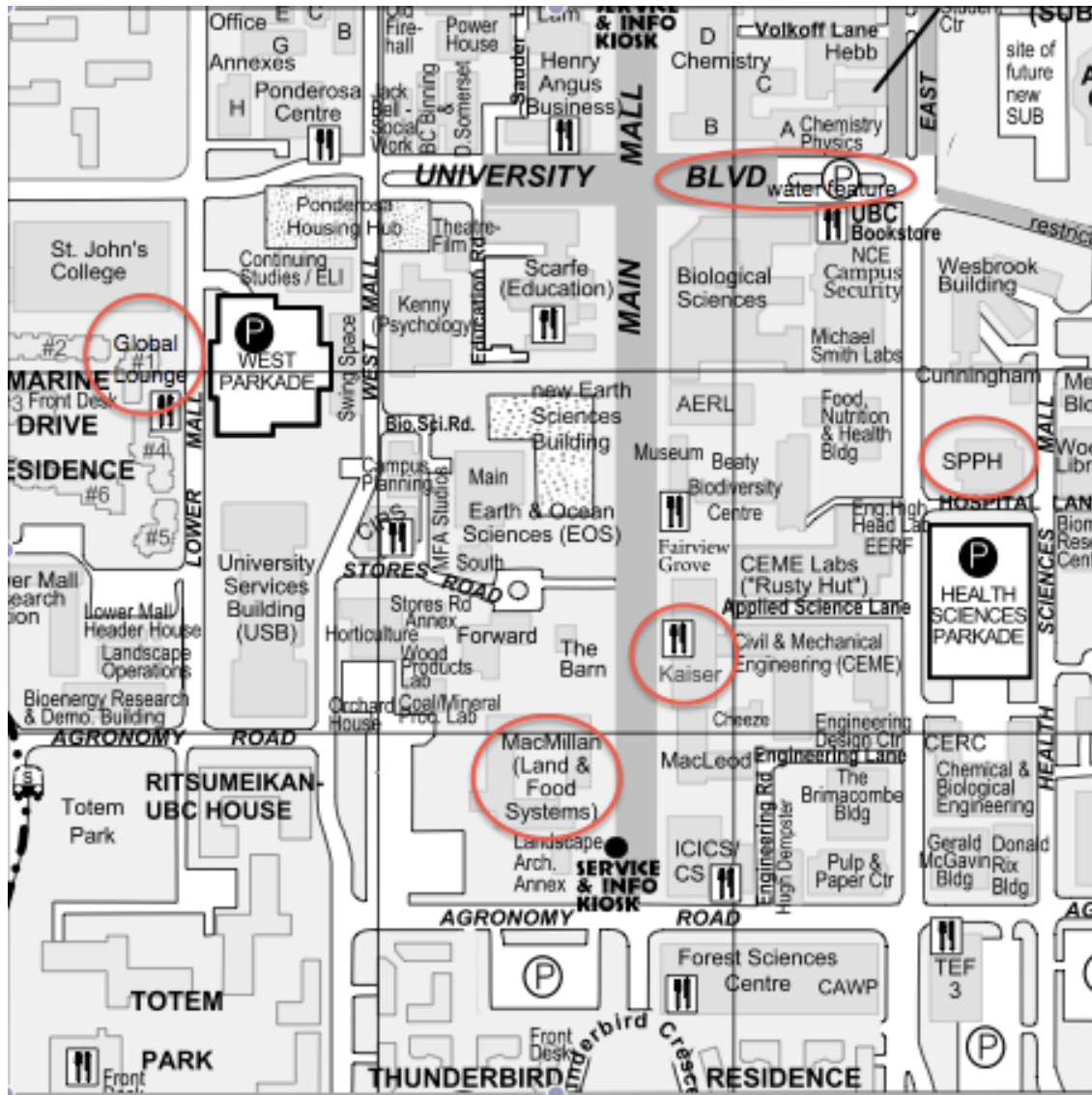


Figure 1. Map of dining locations used in trial run. (Modified from: UBC Campus & Community Planning 2011)

The lunchroom on the second floor of the School of Population and Public Health building offered ample seating in a quiet environment. The facility also included composting and recycling bins, a full sink, microwaves, toaster ovens, a refrigerator, and a dishwasher. Although this space felt semi-private and catered to students and staff members of the SPPH, we generally felt welcome, as we were respectful of the space and mindful of others. However, we did not feel comfortable using the lunchroom refrigerator and dishwasher.

The Agora dining area in the basement of the H.R. MacMillan building is open to all students and has provided our group with plenty of seating options and a casual environment to interact. Microwaves were available but often in use during the peak lunchtime, and compost bins were accessible outside. However, there were fewer amenities compared to the lunchroom at the SPPH building.

The Global Lounge is also open to all students on campus. Although this building is slightly further from the central part of campus, it offered our group an opportunity to explore another part of the campus and also avoid overcrowded spaces. A sink, kettle, dishes, dishwasher, refrigerator, and a compost bin were available for both staff and students. The lounge space was a comfortable area for dining and is relatively quiet, compared to other dining locations on campus. It was also a great place to learn more about events relating to sustainability and different cultures. Again, we refrained from using the refrigerator since we did not feel that we had proper permission to store our food prior to our visit.

The Fred Kaiser building is an open and multipurpose seating area for dining and studying. Seating was easy to find but there were no appliances available at this location. We tried this dining location on a day where we had cold food that did not need to be reheated. Since a Starbucks café was located across from the dining and seating area, we noticed that the space was open to students outside of the Faculty of Engineering. Thus, we felt comfortable eating in a space that we knew we were permitted to use.

As the end of the term approached, the weather improved enough for us to attempt eating outdoors. Outdoor spaces, such as the new fountain, were excellent places to have lunch while getting some fresh air. Here, we chose to pack a cold lunch that did not require

the use of a microwave. Although there are a limited number of days for which UBC students can take advantage of eating outside, it was an enjoyable change of scenery.

Through our trial run, we discovered a number of challenges with finding appropriate dining facilities. First, it is difficult to identify whether some dining spaces are faculty or department specific lunchrooms. There is currently no complete listing or guideline that outlines which campus locations are suitable for public eating. It was a bit difficult to feel comfortable in a place that we were unsure of whether we were allowed to use. Informal searches through a number of different UBC undergraduate society blogs as well as faculty and department websites have indicated that access to eating locations vary by building and department. This is a concern because some students may not feel comfortable in an unfamiliar location and students may fear the uncertain risk of being asked to leave a dining area.

## Waste and Energy Reduction

We considered that the amount of energy spent on cooking one large meal is far less than the energy used to cook several small meals. Since our trial run consisted of three members, we often prepared meals that generated four to five servings. This allowed us to save the additional servings for dinner or to place in the freezer as leftovers for another night. Storing leftover meals in the freezer meant that we had last-minute meals readily available when our schedules became hectic, but it did not sacrifice our nutrition, unlike many other instant meals. Reheating food also saves time and energy, since it uses less energy to reheat leftovers than to cook a meal (BC Hydro 2013).

Cooking larger meals also had benefits when many fresh ingredients are quickly perishable within one week of purchase. Since many supermarkets and grocery stores did

not sell significantly smaller produce items, such as prewashed boxed salads and carrots in bunches, it was difficult for an individual to finish these ingredients before they wilted or passed the expiry date. This reduced food waste and encouraged us to purchase a variety of fresh ingredients that we normally would not try.

On campus, we benefited from the abundance of composting facilities. Although most of our food items were prepared at home, we did have certain items such as orange peels that needed to be disposed of responsibly. We also reduced waste generated by the use of paper towel by bringing our own tea towels to wipe and clean our containers and cutlery.

## Community Building

One major challenge university students typically face is finding opportunities to connect with other students but more importantly, build strong and lasting friendships with the people they meet. During this test run, our group had a chance to catch up with each other almost everyday and make meaningful connections with each other. We provided support, not only for food-related concerns but for school and daily life as well.

Often, students make friends with classmates but many of these friendships do not necessary continue after the class is over. Students make many short friendships, unless these friends take multiple classes together throughout their years in university. One group member even expressed that we would never see each other anymore if we didn't have these lunches together.

Providing a reason to meet and share food and stories on a regular basis allows lunch co-op members to bond with others, have a sense of belonging, and a feeling as though they are a part of a group and community. We were able to learn cooking skills from

each other and share common resources as well. Our friendships now extend beyond meeting for co-op lunches, as we continue to share experiences and conversations with each other off-campus as well.

The lunch co-op has also allowed us to discover more about the UBC community and also what the campus has to offer its students. Together, we have discovered many different facilities and events together and have been able to share our own experiences with campus life.

## Summary of Results

The trial run yielded many positive results. Through informal discussions, we determined that a lunch co-op program was definitely feasible at the Vancouver campus of UBC and that a set of guidelines would be helpful for students wishing to join the co-op.

Although we tested the lunch co-op with two and three members in one group, we expect that the ideal number of participants is 3-4 individuals per group. This estimate considers the typical cooking capacity of student rental apartment or basement suites and also the reasonable weight for packed lunches during the transportation process. This also allows members one or two days of flexibility in case there is a need for scheduling changes or holiday considerations.

Though we often purchased ingredients from a number of different locations, we did not sense that it was a constraint to cooking our lunches in a timely and efficient manner. We were familiar with our local grocery stores and did not have issues finding the ingredients we required to prepare our meals.

Our group determined that we felt safer using glass containers for hot food and plastic containers for cold foods. This helped us avoid the current uncertainty and health

concerns surrounding microwavable plastic food containers. The trial run exposed many challenges with meeting food safety guidelines since our meals often entered the “danger zone”. We did not have the proper access to refrigerators or coolers to keep our lunch items below the designated “danger zone”.

In terms of nutrition, we had very well balanced meals by alternating many types of cuisines on a daily basis. This included rotating between vegetarian options, lean meats and meat alternatives. We incorporated many fresh vegetables in our meals and ensured that our serving sizes were reasonable. During the trial run, we also created a collection of recipes that reflected different dietary considerations and cultural culinary backgrounds (Appendix B). We hoped that this recipe collection will be expanded in the future and will assist students that may need some meal ideas.

We realized that dining locations were generally sufficient and we did not have trouble finding places to sit but we were unaware of the protocols pertaining to certain places and whether some locations were considered public spaces or faculty and department-specific lunchrooms only. As a result, we tried a few new dining locations but we did not expand our dining area options extensively.

Ensuring minimal food and packaging waste was important to our commitment to sustainable actions. We shared and reused all of our food containers and tea towels to avoid waste. Since we were often able to cook large batches of food, we saved energy by minimizing the number of meals we needed to cook from scratch.

The Lunchmates test run experience helped solidify friendships between the members and began the process of building a community around food and campus life in general. The opportunity to meet on a regular basis meant that we were able to share a

number of interests and also ideas to reach the common goal of having fun, nutritious, and affordable school lunches together.

## Future Directions

The Lunchmates campus lunch co-op has the potential to develop into many areas throughout UBC. The vision is to expand this project to include all students in the Vancouver campus and also UBC staff members as well.

The Lunchmates co-op is planning to partner with the Nutrition Team from the UBC Wellness Centre to gather and share information about how to achieve proper nutrition and deliver creative food options catered to students' abilities. We aim to incorporate other information to spread the general knowledge about sustainable food systems and how we can contribute to more social, ethical, and environmental awareness on campus. This information will be offered online, potentially through a webpage linked to the Wellness Centre website. We hope to expand our recipe collection, so that students can also submit their own personal favourite recipes to the webpage to share with other members. The Nutrition Team can provide online tools to help analyze the nutritional content of these recipes. We will need to establish clear rules on copyrighted recipes and images to ensure that students are conscious of this concern before posting their recipes. We also anticipate setting up a system to connect students wishing to join the lunch co-op. This system will match students with similar lunch schedules and food preferences. Students that have already organized their own groups can also register their groups through this system and have access to the resources provided by the co-op and the Wellness Centre.

In January 2014, we anticipate gaining a prospective partnership with the UBC Vancouver Collegia program to promote the Lunchmates co-op program to their members as well. The Collegia is expected to launch in September 2013 and will be a part of the Ponderosa Commons (UBC

Campus + Community Planning 2012). This will target commuter students within the Metro Vancouver area and hopefully provide them with a sense of connection to the UBC community. Each Collegium can provide registered students with dedicated cooking facilities where they can store their Lunchmate meals and also comfortable lounging spaces to gather and share food.

Potential collaborations can be created between the awaited UBC Community Kitchen and the Lunchmates co-op, which will allow students to learn additional cooking skills with other community members. This can be presented as a potential small project with the community-based experiential learning course, LFS 450.

There has been interest in expanding the lunch co-op to UBC staff members as well. Staff members have equally as many priorities and responsibilities to juggle and may benefit from having others cook for them several times per week. Since many departments have their own staff lunchrooms and kitchens, it may be a great way for coworkers to take a break from work and enjoy home-cooked meals together. Learning new cooking skills is continually an ongoing life experience, and many staff members can benefit from the opportunity to discover different cultural foods and generally, what others are eating.

## Recommendations

While this report is a preliminary study on the feasibility of a campus lunch co-op at UBC, there are three main recommendations to expand and ensure the continuity of this project.

First, more research is needed to assess the nutritional value of typical homemade student lunches. While some students may be more inclined to make healthy lunches, others may have a habit of cooking less healthy alternatives. Dietetics students involved with the Nutrition Team at the UBC Wellness Centre can potentially undertake a comparative analysis between the nutritional value of a standard lunch purchased at a UBC food outlet and a typical lunch co-op meal.

Another aspect that requires further examination is the reduction of waste and energy through forming lunch co-ops. During the trial run, we measured waste reduction in two forms: the absence of packaging waste and diverted food waste through composting. Energy reduction is assumed to include the savings of cooking one meal instead of three or four. However, a general analysis is needed to determine whether there is a difference between energy consumption when preparing one large meal per week rather than several smaller meals. This can be achieved through several calculations. The average time spent on cooking four small meals in comparison to one large meal can be considered, as well as determining the typical wattage used in preparing the food in both scenarios. If there is a substantial difference, how much energy in kWh can students potentially cut from their electricity usage over the course of one term?

Despite being well aware of food safety concerns and how to prevent foodborne illnesses, we were not able to keep our food cold enough while on campus and during transportation. Since most existing refrigerators on campus are not open to all students, it may not be feasible for students to rely on daily access to refrigerators. Therefore, I recommend seeking funding from UBC initiatives, such as the AMS Sustainability Fund, to purchase cooler bags for co-op group members. Depending on the size of the funding, these cooler bags can be offered at no cost, or at a very low cost, to the co-op members. Not only will this ensure that food safety concerns are taken seriously, members will have easy access to a cooler bag and avoid neglecting the issue of food safety. The bags can also act as a branding tool to gain attention for the campus lunch co-op while encouraging others to learn more about the initiative and potentially join the Lunchmates Lunch Co-op.

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## Appendix A: Trial Run Observations and Notes

week	day	cook	where	meal	rough cost of groceries		cost per person	notes	online sources
1	Feb-25	tania	SPPH	butternut squash soup + toast	2 packs frozen butternut squash	\$ 6.00	tania + louise	nesters was out of fresh butternut squash, so had to buy frozen (would have been cheaper if fresh @1.29/lb)	www.nigella.com/recipes/view/spicy-butternut-squash-soup-3089
					1 onion + couple cloves garlic	\$ 0.50		recipe modified from Nigella Lawson community website - spicy butternut squash soup - SO GOOD - we both loved it	
					milk	\$ 0.10		used glass mason jars to transport, spillproof, also brought bowls and spoons (bowls, may have been overdoing it - rookie mistake)	
					spices	\$ 0.05		brought a tea towel which was helpful after rinsing our empties	
					bread	\$ 0.30		all containers are reusable, no food/packaging waste at school, prep at home - composted onion/garlic skins/ends	
					total	\$ 6.95	\$ 3.48		
1	Feb-26	louise	MCML	stirfried noodles with veg + chicken	zucchini	\$ 1.00	tania + louise	used mason jars again + chopsticks, worked well	
					taiwanese cabbage	\$ 1.00		microwavable with the metal lid taken off	
					onion	\$ 0.50		SO GOOD, will get the recipe from Louise	
					garlic	\$ 0.10		all fresh produce - louise was able to keep 2 meals for herself after cooking ours	
					red and orange pepper	\$ 1.50		no food/packaging wasted at school (but need better way to cleanly/greenly transport cutlery)	
					mushroom (handful)	\$ 0.60			
					chicken breast (1/2)	\$ 2.00			
					noodles + oil	\$ 1.30			
					total	\$ 8.00	\$ 4.00		
1	Feb-27	tania	SPPH	orzo risotto with spinach	orzo pasta	\$ 2.00	tania + louise	cost reflects lunchmate meals, but also had some for dinner for two	
					butter	\$ 0.75		parmesan was slightly more expensive because I went to choices (was in the neighbourhood) instead of more inexpensive grocers	
					onion	\$ 0.50		used mason jars again + spoons (though jars seemed a little big for such a rich/dense meal)	
					parmesan	\$ 2.50		brought fruit for the first time, with a small paring knife that had a cover (kuhn rikon) - worked really well	
					chicken stock	\$ 1.00		brought tea towel again, which was useful (didn't waste any paper towels)	
					spinach + cilantro	\$ 0.60		spph dining area had compost bin to dispose of orange peels	
					orange	\$ 0.20		pretty filling meal!	
					total	\$ 7.55	\$ 3.78		
1	Feb-28	louise	Global Lounge	quinoa salad with veg + chicken	veggies (same as stirfry above)	\$ 1.20	tania + louise	cheapest meal yet but filling and nutritious!	
					quinoa	\$ 1.60		used mason jars again + spoons	
					chicken	\$ 1.20		jars seem to stay cold for quite a while, didn't need to microwave anything this time (1st cold meal)	
					staples (s+p, balsamic, spices)	\$ 0.40		on top of that, louise was able to make 5 servings out of the recipe	
					total	\$ 4.40	\$ 2.20		
2	Mar-04	tania	SPPH	bacon-wrapped chicken tenders + kale salad	chicken	\$ 2.75	tania + louise	really inexpensive considering we had 2 types of meat - fair enough since we have been semi-vegetarian so far	
					bacon	\$ 0.80		used mason jars for salad and an extra rectangular glass container for the chicken, forks and knives, tea towel	
					bay leaves and olive oil	\$ 0.10		first time trying this recipe, but turned out great!	
					kale	\$ 1.50		2nd week in, getting more creative with our meals - we are definitely starting to expand our cooking skills!!	
					dried cranberries, sliced almonds	\$ 0.30			
					parmesan, olive oil, balsamic, honey	\$ 0.50			
					total	\$ 5.95	\$ 2.98		
2	Mar-05	louise	MCML	chinese tomato, egg, bok choy + rice	rice	\$ 0.30	tania + louise	Louise was able to make 3 meals out of this recipe	
					4 tomatoes	\$ 2.00		Now the cheapest meal we've made!	
					egg	\$ 1.25		Quick to make and nutritious	
					bok choy + onion	\$ 2.25		Culturally, considered a typical/traditional chinese meal we have both had growing up	
					total	\$ 5.80	\$ 1.93		
2	Mar-06	tania	SPPH	pasta + bolognese sauce	pasta	\$ 1.50	tania + louise	recipe made 6 servings, a massive pot of sauce!	
					canned diced tomatoes	\$ 1.00		ground beef was pretty expensive but made a lot of sauce	
					canned tomato sauce	\$ 3.00		very filling meal though	
					zucchini, onion, garlic, spices, herbs	\$ 1.00		jars have continued to work as our container of choice	
					ground beef	\$ 7.00		oranges are extremely inexpensive - bought a 4lb bag (approx 14 oranges) for about \$3	
					oranges	\$ 0.40		spph lunch room has been great since they compost, we had a place to put our orange peels	
					total	\$ 13.90	\$ 2.32		
2	Mar-07	louise	MCML	korean japchae	sweet potato noodles	\$ 2.00	tania + louise	cheapest meal again!! Louise made 5 meals out of this recipe, sipmle and plenty of leftovers	
					carrot, zucchini, onion, cabbage	\$ 3.50		we noticed that dishes that originate from asia/south america are much more affordable than typical western meals	
					sesame oil, soy sauce	\$ 0.50		Jars and forks, Louise has picked up my habit of bringing a small tea towel to wrap the cutlery in! No paper towels wasted!	
					total	\$ 6.00	\$ 1.20		
3	Mar-11	tania	SPPH	california rolls + edamame	nori (seaweed)	\$ 1.50	tania + louise + chrissy	1st time with 3 people, Chrissy loved the experience! She also learned about the great lunch room facility at spph	
					rice	\$ 0.50		used a rectangular glass container for sushi and a mason jar for the edamame	
					imitation crab	\$ 2.00		very inexpensive! California rolls are usually about \$3 per roll, but this made over 1.5 rolls for each person + edamame for less!	
					avocado	\$ 1.25		brought low sodium soy sauce in a small hotel jam jar which worked out great, and was spillproof	
					edamame	\$ 1.00			
					total	\$ 6.25	\$ 2.08		
3	Mar-13	louise	SPPH	spaghetti squash goulash	zucchini	\$ 1.00	tania + louise + chrissy	one pot meal was awesome and made 4 servings	
					mushrooms	\$ 0.70		carb-free meal yet filling	
					onions	\$ 0.70		mason jars + forks, we realized that 3 jars fit very well upright and side-by-side in our backpacks	
					tomatoes	\$ 1.40			
					spaghetti squash	\$ 2.50			
					chicken	\$ 3.70			
					total	\$ 10.00	\$ 2.50		

week	day	cook	where	meal	rough cost of groceries		cost per person	notes	online sources
3	Mar-14	chrissy	MCML	tofu bean salad	3 kinds of organic beans	\$ 3.00	tania + louise + chrissy	took 30min to make, yielded 6 servings! extremely inexpensive vegetarian but full protein, tasted fantastic used mason jars and forks **Brent suggested bringing a thermometer next week to check temperature/food safety just to be sure**	
					1 package tofu	\$ 2.50			
					cucumbers, tomato, grated onion	\$ 4.00			
					salad greens	\$ 0.75			
					olive oil, salt, balsamic vinegar	\$ 0.25			
					total	\$ 10.50	\$ 1.75		
4	Mar-18	tania	SPPH	ham turkey sandwiches + oranges	whole wheat bread	\$ 1.00	tania + louise + chrissy	used plastic sandwich tupperware containers since no heating involved, tania came straight from home we showed eachother how we peeled our oranges - 3 different ways! composted orange peels in sphh lunch room	
					ham and turkey deli meats	\$ 4.50			
					baby arugula	\$ 0.75			
					mustard, salt and pepper, butter	\$ 0.25			
					oranges	\$ 0.50			
					total	\$ 7.00	\$ 2.33		
4	Mar-20	louise	SPPH	turkey wrap + cucumbers	tortilla wraps	\$ 1.00	tania + louise + chrissy	used one large plastic container since no heating involved, louise came straight from home very tasty, all ingredients we liked a friend of mine asked if I could send him our recipe collection when my project is complete!	
					spinach	\$ 0.50			
					avocado	\$ 1.25			
					turkey breasts	\$ 3.60			
					red onion, mustard, black pepper	\$ 0.50			
					cucumbers	\$ 1.25			
					total	\$ 8.10	2.70		
4	Mar-21	chrissy	MCML	penne with beans and zucchini	zucchini	\$ 1.00	tania + louise + chrissy	chrissy made 5 servings from this recipe extremely inexpensive, yet filling and nutritious vegetarian ingredients purchased from superstore seems to be some relationship b/w the number of servings prepared and the cost per person Chrissy brought Louise and I each a bag of whole wheat buns! Now we're sharing lunch AND bulk ingredients! =)	
					box of penne	\$ 2.50			
					small onion	\$ 0.25			
					haricot beans	\$ 1.00			
					lemon, olive oil, garlic powder, parsley	\$ 0.50			
					total	\$ 5.25	\$ 1.05		
5	Mar-25	tania	SPPH	chicken satay with rice + cucumbers	chicken breasts	\$ 3.00	tania + louise + chrissy	marinated 5 servings from this recipe extremely inexpensive, considering the use of chicken breasts food was cooked immediately before commuting to campus (30min bus) tested temperature after microwaving meals once, measured just over 60 °C (140 °F), so needed to be reheated more Health Canada recommends that leftovers should be heated to 74 °C (165 °F) ingredients purchased from no frills	www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/prod/micro-f-a-eng.php
					peanut butter, soy sauce, honey	\$ 0.75			
					lime, garlic, curry powder	\$ 0.50			
					coconut milk	\$ 0.50			
					rice	\$ 0.25			
					cucumber	\$ 1.00			
					total	\$ 6.00	\$ 1.20		
5	Mar-27	chrissy	outdoors!	kale salad with tofu	kale, avocado, feta	\$ 3.50	tania + louise + chrissy	first time eating outside at the new water feature, made us so happy, relaxed, attracted the attention of many people walking by filling salad, yet completely vegetarian I was able to learn how Chrissy prepares tofu - it was deliciously easy!	
					seeds, honey balsamic dressing	\$ 1.50			
					tofu	\$ 1.00			
					total	\$ 6.00	\$ 2.00		
5	Mar-28	louise	MCML	tofu, beef, and peas on rice	rice (free, from Tania)	\$ -	tania + louise + chrissy	Louise was able to make a rice dish after I gave her a small bag of rice from my large bag at home! simple meal that her parents used to cook for her as a child food was microwaved to meet 5D reduction for food safety - Chrissy and Louise taught me after learning about it in microbiology after our lunch, we went for a long walk across campus to soak up the sunshine and grabbed some frozen yogurt, so therapeutic	
					ground beef	\$ 2.50			
					tofu, frozen peas	\$ 1.50			
					total	\$ 4.00	\$ 1.33		
6	Apr-02	tania	MCML	fried rice + leftover pie (aphrodites)	rice	\$ 0.50	tania + louise + chrissy	fried rice that my mom came over and helped me prepare fried rice is another easy way to use up a variety of veggies and homemade fried rice is much healthier and less oily leftover strawberry rhubarb pie to share a belated birthday celebration =)	
					mixed veg	\$ 1.50			
					eggs	\$ 1.00			
					bbq pork	\$ 1.50			
					total	\$ 4.50	\$ 1.50		
6	Apr-03	louise	SPPH	roasted veg and eggwhite sandwiches	bread	\$ 1.50	tania + louise + chrissy	delicious new way to make sandwiches discovered egg whites in carton as an alternative to whole eggs also discovered yam in sandwiches is really tasty	
					egg whites in carton	\$ 1.00			
					zucchini, pepper, yam	\$ 2.50			
					total	\$ 5.00	\$ 1.67		
6	Apr-04	chrissy	Fred Kaiser	ham, lettuce avocado sandwiches	whole wheat buns	\$ 1.50	tania + louise + chrissy	Chrissy did a vote yesterday for our preferred deli meat, so apparently we all like ham! last official meal for our test run, but we still plan to meet in the summertime for picnics and cooking together at my new place! "i would never see you anymore if we didn't have these lunches together" this was an amazing experience for all of us, we became much closer friends we learned from each other and shared not only food, but memories and mutual support through school and life in general!	
					lettuce, avocado	\$ 1.50			
					ham	\$ 2.00			
					total	\$ 5.00	\$ 1.67		

food considerations/allergies:  
avoid fennel seeds, mangoes, beansprouts, raw apples

average cost per person over six weeks \$ 2.18

## Appendix B: Recipe Collection

# lunchmates recipe collection

UBC Campus Lunch Co-op



Recipes and Pictures by Tania Leon, Louise Ng

# Spicy Butternut Squash Soup

Serves 4 (adapted from Nigella Lawson Community Recipes – Posted by KaffaCakes)

## Ingredients

1 large (or 2 medium) butternut squash  
1.5 pints (3 cups) vegetable stock (or low sodium chicken stock)  
1 medium onion  
2 cloves garlic  
olive oil  
1 oz (2 tbsp) butter  
1 teaspoon cumin (just sprinkle all over)  
2 teaspoons dried chili flakes  
½ cup milk (gradually add)  
teaspoon sea salt  
teaspoon black pepper  
2 teaspoons garam masala (a good sprinkling all over)

## Method

- 1 Pre-heat the oven to a medium-high temperature (450 degrees)
- 2 Cut the squash lengthways into quarters, arrange in a baking tray and drizzle with olive oil. Sprinkle the oil-glossed squash with the chili flakes and cumin, and season with salt and pepper, then roast in the oven for around 40 minutes.
- 3 Once the squash is cooked through, leave to one side to cool before peeling off the skin
- 4 In a medium pan/pot, heat the butter on a medium heat, then gently sweat the garlic and onions until translucent and soft. Pour in the stock and allow to simmer gently before adding the chunks of cooked squash. Add a generous amount of garam masala and stir.
- 5 Simmer gently for around 5 minutes, then blitz with a hand blender or food processor until smooth. Adding a little splash of milk, blend a few seconds more until you reach the right consistency and taste you like, and return each batch to the pan/pot. Serve with your favourite bread nicely toasted!

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# Stir Fry Noodles with Chicken and Vegetables

Serves 4

## Ingredients

1/2 cabbage  
1 pack shanghai noodles  
1 zucchini  
1 red pepper  
1 orange pepper  
1/2 red onion  
put whatever veg you think will work!  
1 chicken breast  
garlic

## Method

- 1 Chicken: marinate with soy sauce, garlic powder, a bit a salt, bit of sugar, and cornstarch to seal in juices
- 2 Stir fry the vegetables first: add oil and garlic and then salt and pepper to the vegetables
- 3 Stir fry noodles separately: add dark soy sauce, regular soy sauce, garlic powder (a lot...), a bit of sugar
- 4 Fry the chicken separately: with oil and garlic
- 5 Put it all together! TADA... put in amounts accordingly and tasting along the way :)

# Quinoa Salad

Serves 5 – depends on how much quinoa you add

## Ingredients

once again, put whatever you like

1/4 red onion

1 chicken breast

1/2 zucchini

~ 2 cups of quinoa

2 small red peppers

handful of spinach

1 carrot

## Method

1 Bake the chicken breast: adding Montréal chicken spice and pepper

2 Cook quinoa in a pot.

3 Warm the vegetables and wilt spinach

4 Put it all together and add pepper, dill, a bit of lemon juice, balsamic vinegar and salt

5 taste and see what works best! Quinoa salad is unique every time!

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# Orzo Risotto with Spinach and Parmesan

Serves 4 – 6 (adapted from Mark Bittman's How to Cook Everything)

## Ingredients

2 tablespoons butter or olive oil

1 onion, minced

3 cups chicken or vegetable stock

1 ½ cups orzo pasta

handful of baby spinach

salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

¼ cup minced fresh parsley or cilantro

## Method

1 Place the butter in a 3- or 4-quart saucepan and turn the heat to medium, when the foam subsides, add the onion and cook, stirring until it becomes translucent. Meanwhile, heat the stock in a separate pan.

2 Add the orzo to the onion and stir once or twice, season with salt and pepper and add the stock all at once. Cover and reduce heat to medium-low.

3 Cook, stirring every few minutes to prevent sticking, until the liquid is absorbed and the pasta is tender, about 15 minutes. Taste and adjust seasoning if necessary. In the unlikely even that the pasta is underdone, add ½ cup more hot water or stock and cook another 5 minutes or so until it is absorbed and the pasta is done. Stir in the parmesan, parsley, and spinach. You can garnish with any remaining parsley and/or parmesan. Serve.

# Bacon-Wrapped Chicken Tenders

Serves 2 (adapted from [Martha Stewart Everyday Food](#))

## Ingredients

4 fresh sage leaves (or 2 bay leaves torn in half)  
4 chicken tenders (I used 1 large chicken breast cut lengthwise into 4)  
4 slices of bacon (I used maple bacon, and the leanest I could find)  
½ teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil

## Method

1 Place a sage leaf on each chicken tender, then wrap each with a slice of bacon.  
2 In a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high. Add tenders, sage down, and cook until fat is rendered and bacon is browned, about 6 minutes. Flip and cook until tenders are cooked through, 6 more minutes.  
3 With tongs, transfer to a wire rack or paper towel to drain.  
Serve with salad!

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# Simple Kale Salad

Serves 2

## Ingredients

2 tablespoons dried cranberries  
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar  
1 tablespoon honey  
sea salt and freshly ground pepper to taste  
½ bunch of kale (I used curly kale), stems removed, leaves ripped into bit-sized pieces  
2 tablespoons sliced almonds  
2 tablespoons finely grated parmesan cheese

## Method

1 Wash and prep kale, shake to dry and toss into a large salad bowl.  
2 In a small bowl, add olive oil, balsamic vinegar, honey and whisk until even.  
3 Pour all over kale, mixing and making sure it's fully coated. Add salt and pepper to taste.  
4 Throw in the dried cranberries and sliced almonds. Toss lightly.  
5 When ready to serve, sprinkle with parmesan.

# Chicken Satay

Serves 3 (adapted from Nigella Lawson Community Recipes – Posted by Princesska)

## Ingredients

3 tablespoons peanut butter  
2 tablespoons soy sauce  
3 tablespoons lime juice  
2 chicken breasts  
2 cloves garlic  
3 tablespoons liquid honey  
1 ½ tablespoons curry powder  
6 tablespoons coconut milk

## Method

1 cut meat into strips, squeeze lime juice, crush garlic, and combine in a bowl with the soy sauce, peanut butter and honey (mix more on the side if you like a lot of sauce)  
2 marinate the meat in a bowl in the fridge for at least 3 hours (overnight to really get the flavour in!)  
3 place meat on skewers and grill for 3-4 min on each side (you can use an oven set to broil, and watch to make sure they do not burn, 3-4 min on each side is still good – use a meat thermometer if unsure)  
4 for the sauce: put the remaining marinade in a pan, bring to boil, add coconut milk, cook for at least a minute and serve skewers on a bed of rice and drizzled sauce. Enjoy!

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