

Recipe interview questions/prompts

About the recipe

- What is the name of the dish? Has it ever gone by another name?
- Where and when did you first learn how to make it?
- Who taught you to make it, and what do you recall about that person and/or the experience of learning to make the dish?
- How often did/do you make this dish? Is it for special occasions or everyday meals?
- Are there any “secret” ingredients or techniques/tricks?
- Have you changed the recipe over time? If so, how and why?
- Do you measure ingredients or cook “by feel”?
- What’s the most important step to “getting it right”?
- How do you know when it’s *done* or *perfect*?
- Have others tried to make it but get it wrong? If so, what usually trips them up?
- If you could give one tip to someone making it for the first time, what would it be?
- Have you ever had to or tried substitutions (i.e., Greek yogurt for sour cream OR didn’t have cinnamon so used cloves)? If so, share whether it went well or failed.

People and memories

- Why is this recipe special to you?
- Think about the person who gave or taught you to make the dish. What are the greatest lessons you have learned from that person? What do you admire about them?
- Do you like help in the kitchen when making this dish? If so, who is often helping you? Write about a time when you made this with a friend or family member.
- What happens around you while you cook/ed this dish — music, smells conversations?
- Was there anyone in the family known for making this dish especially well?
- What stories, jokes or family sayings come up when this food is mentioned?
- Do you associate this dish with a particular holiday, place or person?
- Can you remember the first time *you* made it by yourself?
- How did/do people react when you served/serve it?
- What emotions come up when you think about, taste or smell this dish?

Cultural and family roots

- Does this recipe reflect a particular culture, country, or region from our background? If so, where did it come from and are there any traditions or rituals associated with when or how to eat or prepare the dish?
- What does this recipe say about our family’s story or values? What values or stories from your culture/hometown/region are represented in this dish?
- Has it changed as it’s been passed down through generations or across places?
- Were there any ingredients that were or are hard to find? If so, what?
- Are there ingredients you can only find in certain places or during certain seasons?

- Has this recipe ever been adapted because of migration, cost, or availability?

Preserving the story

- Do you share this recipe or is it private? If private, why?
- Who do you hope will keep this recipe alive?
- If you could dedicate this recipe to someone, who would it be and why?
- If you could write a message next to the recipe for future generations, what would it be?
- What do you hope others know about this dish?
- How would you like people to remember *you* when they make it?
- Are there any funny mistakes or “disasters” that have become family legends?

Bonus prompts

- Describe the smell, sights and sounds of the kitchen while this is cooking.
- If this dish were a person in our family, what kind of personality would it have? Describe it.
- It's not really [insert holiday or gathering] unless we have [insert dish(es)].
- Write about each of your family members and the “signature dish” they either love to eat or make (or both :)