

# Creative Cooking

## *Skill Builders*

- 1. Become familiar with the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Pyramid or Vegetarian Food Pyramid. You can write to the USDA in Washington, D. C. or find this information in a nutrition textbook. See also pages 60-62 in the *Cadette Girl Scout Handbook*. Compare your own daily diet to the dietary recommendations of the USDA models. Is your diet lacking in some nutrients? If so, what changes would you make?**
- 2. Learn how to select the freshest and most healthful foods at the store - fruits, vegetables, meats, dairy, eggs, prepared food, etc. Check the labels to find food that is low in salt, low in fat, and low in chemical additives. Look for color and firmness in fruits and vegetables.**
- 3. Find a food, canned or fresh, that is not native to your area. Find out what region of the US or other country it is from, and where and how it is produced. Use this food as an ingredient in the preparation of two different recipes.**
- 4. Go to the cookware section of a store and familiarize yourself with the tools of the trade. When would you use such items as a mortar and pestle, peelers and choppers, mashers and ricers, spatulas and other "flippers", knives, food processors, juicers, bread makers, pressure cookers, and various pots and pans? What is the difference in the cost of items designed to do the same thing (Knives, choppers, and food processors, for example)? Is the extra cost worth it?**
- 5. Choose a recipe that can be easily prepared while camping or hiking. Review the information on this topic in the *Outdoor Education in Girl Scouting*. Test that recipe while hiking or camping.**
- 6. Pick a cuisine (Mexican, Caribbean, Indian, vegetarian, etc) and prepare two meals using recipes that include appetizers, entrees, and desserts. Familiarize yourself with the basic ingredients and seasonings of the cuisine you choose.**
- 7. Adapt a standard recipe for someone with special dietary needs: low fat, low salt, low sugar, lactose intolerant, vegetarian, etc.**

## *Technology*

- 1. Look at the technology used in cooking. Examine the advantages and disadvantages of different heat sources: electric or gas stoves, microwave ovens, pressure cookers, grills, crock pots. Name two foods that cook best in each of these.**
- 2. There is a lot of chemistry behind many cooking tips and recipe directions. Questions to consider: what items serve as thickeners in a recipe? As leavening? What would happen when baking a cake if you left out or changed one ingredient? For instance, lemon juice will curdle milk. Take a recipe and substitute similar ingredients such as currants instead of raisins, or walnuts instead of almonds. Does the substitution improve the recipe, or not? How about the texture?**
- 3. Visit the Web site of a cooking school or food company. Compare the recipes that you find with those that appear in older cookbooks. What has changed? How do these changes reflect the eating and health habits of today's consumers?**
- 4. New scientific discoveries have brought a lot of change to cooking, from how we create and store food to how we cook it. Investigate a new procedure that affects food in some way such as irradiated food, genetically engineered food, plants grown by hydroponics, or freeze drying. Describe the advantages and disadvantages of two such foods to your troop or group.**

### *Service Projects*

- 1. Volunteer at a soup kitchen for at least two weeks for several hours a week. Find out how food is prepared and served for a large number of people.**
- 2. Organize a basic cooking class for a community center or homeless shelter with some friends.**
- 3. Organize a food drive for a local shelter. Consult the proper nutritional guidelines or a professional dietitian for a list of recommended foods.**
- 4. Work with a local service that helps provide nutritious meals to people who cannot leave home. Help prepare at least three different meals. Make sure your meal meets the dietary needs of these homebound people.**
- 5. Using the Food Pyramid or other guidelines, evaluate the food service in a local facility you use (school, camp, or activity center). Discuss your evaluation with the personnel in charge. Offer alternative food suggestions and your reasons for them.**
- 6. Plan a menu for a full, festive meal. Cook and serve it to a group as a celebration of a cultural heritage, a holiday, or other event.**