

Best Practices in Recipe Demonstration Videos for Extension Professionals

Providing education through videos is a widely used tool for Cooperative Extension professionals. Across the nutrition and dietetics field, including Extension research, best practices to guide the development, use, and evaluation of recipe demonstration videos are limited. This article identifies best practices in the literature and combines these with experiences from Extension professionals who create recipe demonstration videos. These practices can help guide current and future professionals.

BEST PRACTICES

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Cooperative Extension is an early adapter of video technology for educational activities. More than thirty years ago, Florell & Nugent (1985) described using videodiscs for “Self-Learning Centers’ located in Extension offices...” or to “... bring specific Extension programming directly into the home” (Implications for Extension section). A decade later, Beaudin & Quick (1996) noted, “...Extension agents strongly recommended videos be used in... [agriculture] education programs...” (para. 1).

In the new millennium, Extension professionals described the importance of video technologies to support a wide variety of

educational programs and topics (Case & Hino, 2010; Cone, 2013; Dev et al., 2018; Epley, 2014; Kinsey & Henneman, 2011; Kinsey, 2010; Kinsey, 2011; Kinsey, 2012; Langworthy, 2017; Lindsay, 2010; Mills & Hawkins, 2015; Parish & Karisch, 2013; Powell et al., 2008; Rice, 2014; Sutherin, 2015; Thompson, 2018; Thompson et al., 2018; Waitrovich et al., 2018; Waterman & Laramee, 2018).

On January 26, 2021, a Boolean search in a popular internet search engine for ‘recipe videos’ OR ‘cooking videos’ yielded nearly 18 million results. When narrowed to educational

institution websites ending in .edu, there were 4,130 search results. Despite the immense volume of recipe demonstration videos available online, little research to-date has been conducted on developing or evaluating recipe demonstration videos for Extension audiences.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this article is to provide best practice recommendations around the development, use, and evaluation of nutrition and food safety recipe demonstration videos.

BACKGROUND

Within the nutrition and dietetics field, the literature on recipe demonstration videos is limited. As described in Table 1, existing studies explored viewers’ preferences of video length (Danforth et al., 2012), gains in nutrition knowledge (Danforth et al., 2012), acceptability of videos, such as video quality or being interesting to watch (Hyder et al., 2009; Fortmeyer, 2018), intention to make a recipe after watching videos (Hyder et al., 2009; Fitz et al., 2017; Fortmeyer, 2018), or being able to demonstrate skills shown in videos (Mechling & Gustafson, 2009; Mechling et al., 2013).

The only Extension-specific research describing and evaluating recipe demonstration videos to-date is from Hutchings & Hoffman (2019). They used Facebook Groups to present live, 15-minute lessons that included recipe demonstrations. The live lessons were recorded for participants to watch at a later time. In their evaluation data, around 85% of participants reported making recipes that were presented during the lessons.

GENERAL VIDEO PRODUCTION BEST PRACTICES

The following are best practices for video production based on the literature around video topics, length, production value, and evaluation.

TOPIC ASSESSMENT

Prior to filming videos, researchers recommended assessing topics of interest, such as a topic that is unique to a specific region or state (Cone, 2013), gaps in knowledge or skills based on needs assessments (Dev et al., 2018), analytics such as Google Trends (Parish & Karisch, 2013), or where Extension is not currently represented in video form (Parish & Karisch, 2013).

LENGTH

Most researchers produced videos that were five minutes or shorter in length (Case & Hino, 2010; Fitz et al., 2017; Kinsey & Henneman, 2011; Ramsay et al., 2012; Thompson, 2018), with other videos between five and twelve minutes (Langworthy, 2017; Mills & Hawkins, 2015). Only one study evaluated video length. Among videos between two and eleven and a half minutes, participants preferred videos between four to six minutes in length (Danforth et al., 2012).

PRODUCTION VALUE

To add production value, researchers suggested incorporating music, still photos or graphics, and B roll footage (Case & Hino, 2010; Epley, 2014; Kinsey & Henneman, 2011). For videos with audio information, captions should be added to meet accessibility needs or designed so the video can be watched without sound (Thompson, 2018; Waitrovich et al., 2018). Branding, such as the name and logo of the Extension institution that produced the video, should be included as well (Thompson, 2018).

EVALUATION

Evaluation of videos has been primarily based on number of video views (Case & Hino, 2010; Epley, 2014; Franzen-Castle & Henneman, 2012; Kinsey & Henneman, 2011; Kinsey, 2010; Kinsey, 2011; Mills & Hawkins, 2015; Rice, 2014; Langworthy, 2017; Sutherin et al., 2015; Waitrovich et al., 2018) or social media shares and engagement (Langworthy, 2017).

Other evaluation methods included asking open-ended questions about what viewers learned after watching (Ramsay et al., 2012) or asking about the likelihood of taking a desired action, such as eating a more plant-based diet (Fitz et al., 2017) or making highlighted recipes (Hyder et al., 2009). In these studies, evaluations

were conducted with a captive audience.

FINDINGS

To determine the development, use, and evaluation of recipe demonstration videos among current Extension Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) professionals, a multistate team of Extension professionals developed and distributed a survey via Qualtrics through the National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (NEAFCS) Facebook page and several state affiliate listservs. Fifty Extension professionals completed the survey, representing seventeen states within the United States.

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Among respondents, more than half (52%) served as Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) Agents/Educators, 14% as 4-H Youth Development Agents/Educators, and 10% as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) or Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) professionals. The remaining professionals (24%) reported serving multiple roles in FACS, 4-H, SNAP-Ed, and/or EFNEP, or reported other roles (Table 2). Sixty-eight percent of respondents reported that they began recording food demonstrations in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, while 18% reported filming videos both prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Respondents reported serving rural areas (54%), urban areas (18%), suburban areas (8%), or identified another service area (12%). Most respondents (78%) served one or two counties, with 16% serving three to four counties, and 6% serving regions of five or more counties. More than half of respondents (54%) reported being employed with Extension for two to ten years, with 34% working for more than ten years, and 12% working less than 2 years (Table 2).

VIDEO DEVELOPMENT, EDITING, AND APPLICATION

When creating videos, a majority (57%) of respondents stated that they produced their own video content. Thirty-four percent (34%) recorded videos and utilized a program assistant, intern, or another person to edit the videos. Video filming and editing were professionally done by media specialist teams or a local production company for the remaining 9% of respondents.

Respondents used a variety of editing software including iMovie (22%), Adobe (22%), WeVideo (11%),

Camtasia (4%), and PowerDirector (2%). The remaining 39% of respondents used another software or reported not editing at all.

Extension professionals reported use of webcams, tripods, laptops, Apple-branded phones and tablets, Samsung-branded products, cameras, and video conferencing software, such as Zoom. Additional equipment included ring lights, microphone clips, and camera stands.



VIDEO TITLES

Among the 31 professionals who responded to the survey question about how to name videos, more than half (55%) stated using the recipe or food name as the video title. Nineteen percent of respondents shared other titling methods, including titling the video the same as the lesson title, titling the video to describe the skill shown, such as “calibrating a meat thermometer,” starting the title with “How To” or “Let’s Make,” or choosing a series title that was consistent across each video. A quarter of professionals (26%) shared recommendations for video titles, with variations of the same theme: keep titles short and make clear what the video is about.

VIDEO LENGTH AND APPLICATION

Among respondents, a majority (53%) reported making videos between two to five minutes long, with 21% who made videos one to two minutes long, 13% made videos up to 10 minutes in length, and 13% made videos longer than 20 minutes.

Nearly half (47%) of respondents noted that recipe demonstration videos were included as part of another program. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of respondents stated videos were sometimes part of another program, and 24% of professionals made videos to be standalone.

VIDEO RECIPES AND FOOD SAFETY

Of the 38 professionals who shared which recipes they used in videos, more than half (58%) reported using recipes from at least two sources. Recipe sources were mixed: 26% of respondents reported using recipes pre-established through their state Extension resources, 15% used SNAP-Ed recipes, 14% used original recipes, 11% used recipes from pre-existing programs, 10% used recipes from MyPlate.gov, 8% used recipes from diabetes programs, 2% used EFNEP recipes, and 14% reported using other recipe sources.

Within food demonstration videos, 66% of respondents reported including food safety information throughout their video presentation, whether stated verbally in videos or demonstrated. The most common food safety skills mentioned by respondents were hand washing, taking internal food temperatures, avoiding cross contamination, washing produce, and knife safety.

VIDEO EVALUATION

Thirty-six (72%) survey respondents shared how they captured audience engagement on food demonstration videos. Most often, respondents used social media analytics, such as comments, likes, and shares. Other methods included paper or digital evaluations or feedback during live demonstrations, such as polls.

Only 38% (n=18) of all survey respondents reported knowing if the recipes in their food demonstration videos had been subsequently made by video viewers, based on a variety of metrics including comments and feedback from program participants, video comments, program survey evaluations, and visual observation by the Agent or Educator during live, virtual programs where participants had cameras on.

BEST PRACTICES

From the Qualtrics survey, Extension professionals offered their best practice recommendations for both live and recorded recipe demonstration videos in regards to set-up, filming, and editing video content.



SETTING UP FOR FILMING

Many professionals advised preparing in advance, including setting up cooking, filming, and lighting equipment and gathering ingredients. Several professionals recommended testing equipment in advance, making sure camera and audio work, and practicing the demonstration before filming to gauge speed of talking or hand movements. Others recommended gathering items to add visual interest to the video, such as background decorations, colorful placemats and dishware, wood cutting boards, and extra ingredients for garnish or decoration of the final recipe. For the person that will be on camera, several professionals suggested creating a professional appearance, such as wearing Extension-branded clothing and tying back hair.

FILMING DEMONSTRATIONS

Survey respondents recommended choosing recipes that are visually interesting and use healthy ingredients that are both available and affordable. Additionally, they suggested modelling food safety practices for viewers. While filming speaking roles, it was recommended to set up a microphone to capture sound and speak clearly and slowly.

For live, filmed recipe demonstrations, professionals recommended knowing the recipe well, measuring ingredients in advance, keeping notes nearby, having talking points to fill silences while foods are cooking, incorporating audience engagement, and having a final product ready to show.

When filming a pre-recorded video, professionals recommended filming each step individually and filming all recipe steps, noting that videos can be edited later to remove excess film and condense steps as needed. Filming B-roll, such as moving a plate of food on or off camera or showing a utensil lifting some food from the final plate, adds interest in the final edit.

Professionals noted that videos will vary in length and format based on the needs of the demonstration, whether a hands-only demonstration, face-on-camera demonstration, or a mix of the two. For hands-only, professionals recommended a top-down camera angle, and for face-on-camera demonstrations, face the camera head-on.

EDITING DEMONSTRATIONS

If video editing is needed, professionals recommended practicing with the software to get comfortable. Professionals recommended incorporating accessibility

into videos, such as adding on-screen text showing ingredient amounts, cook times, and equipment, using closed captioning for spoken audio, and allowing ample time for text on screen to be read.

Professionals also recommended adding royalty-free background music for recipes that do not have spoken audio. Other content may be necessary to add depending on requirements or policies from the university or county; these may include Extension logos, equal opportunity statements, compliance statements, disclaimers, and other needed language.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

A strength of this article is the combination of published literature with in-the-field experiences to help create a more complete picture of best practices. The survey of Extension professionals reached a wide number of individuals from many areas of the country. A limitation of the survey was that it did not include representation from every state Extension service.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

A practice not addressed in the literature or by professionals who completed the survey was incorporating diversity, such as persons of color being represented in videos or use of culturally relevant foods among certain regions of the country. One professional who responded to the survey recommended the best practice of translating videos into other languages. Future research could explore how diversity in recipe demonstration videos impacts a viewer's knowledge, skills, or behavior.

The aforementioned literature did not address nutritional values of recipes in demonstration videos. Research on videos that model nutritious foods and meals may serve as a tool to help individuals with or at risk for chronic conditions, make healthier food choices and improve their health status would be useful for future implementation.



SUMMARY

Although literature in nutrition and dietetics and Extension are limited regarding best practices to guide development, use, and evaluation of recipe demonstration videos, many Extension professionals have filmed live and recorded demonstrations and have gained knowledge and skills through their experiences.



You may click here to access the references, tables, and graphs for this article.



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Tables

Table 1

Recipe Demonstration Video Research and Impact

Research	Research Goals	Research Subjects	Video Style(s)	Video Length(s)	Results
Danforth et al., 2012	"...to determine which vodcast format was best suited to increase nutrition knowledge, interest, and intention to use a cancer preventing food."	Cancer patients	Three separate styles 1. Nutrition and preparation for one food 2. Quick recipe demonstration 3. Long recipe demonstration	2-11.5 minutes	"Participants preferred to see a recipe demonstrated and the best knowledge scores were seen in a 4-6 minute vodcast."
Fitz et al., 2017	1. "...examine the feasibility of creating and implementing survivor-specific cooking videos, and 2. determine participant satisfaction and perceptions of the videos, recipes, and delivery format."	Cancer patients	Dietitian-led cooking demonstrations in a home kitchen. Videos were narrated by the dietitian with on-screen text.	>5 minutes	"The implementation of online cooking videos was feasible and acceptable." "91% stated that they were more likely to consume a primarily plant-based diet after watching the videos. " "...93% reported that they enjoyed the videos, 95% stated that the videos were informative, 95% perceived the cooking techniques to be user-friendly, and 88% found the nutrient analysis beneficial."
Flores et al., 2003	"To improve the diets of the target population while utilizing traditional ethnic cooking approaches whenever possible."	Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Hispanic families	"...filmed in Spanish and feature Latino actors preparing dishes common to Hispanic families..." "The videos use a variety of techniques to highlight step-by-step instructions..."		
Fortmeyer, 2018	"...to determine the effectiveness and utilization of visual food demonstrations by CSA members..."	Members of a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)	Recipe demonstration videos		"Although participants who watched found the videos helpful, for the majority it did not translate into making the recipe or referring more to the newsletter recipes."

Hutchings & Hoffman, 2019	“Utilizing social media as a stand-alone educational method...”	Members of the public	Live lessons, including recipe demonstration	15 minutes	“An average of 70%... reported that they put their knowledge into practice.”
Hyder et al., 2009	“...develop and evaluate online heart-healthy recipe videos targeting South Asians...” “...evaluate the efficacy of providing online nutrition information to South Asians.”	South Asians	Cooking videos showing heart-healthy entrée.	6-8 minutes	“...participants rated excellent/good for visual appeal (77%), preparation time (77%), and overall quality (74%) for the videos.” “Over half of the participants (54%) indicated that they would definitely try the recipes.”
Mechling & Gustafson, 2009	“...investigating the effects of static pictures and video technology as prompting strategies for persons with disabilities.”	High school students with “moderate intellectual disabilities”	“...an adult model completing a step and included verbal cues corresponding to each step of the task analysis.” Videos were based on single steps or tasks, not entire recipes.	12 seconds – 25 seconds	“The percentage of cooking related tasks completed independently was greater for each of the six students when using video prompting compared to static picture prompts...”
Mechling et al., 2013	“... [video promoting] using commercially available videos would be as effective as custom-made videos when students with a diagnosis of autism completed cooking recipes.”	High school students on autism spectrum	Using commercial “Look and Cook” purchased materials and custom-made recipe videos from “point-of-view perspective of the model’s arm and/or hand...”	12-23 minutes (custom-made videos)	“...participants performed more steps of the recipes independently correct when using the custom-made videos.”

Note. Missing fields in table indicate data is unavailable.

Table 2*Demographics of Food Demonstration Video Survey Respondents (n=50)*

State Extensions	n (%)
Arkansas	4 (8)
Colorado	1 (2)
Delaware	1 (2)
Georgia	20 (40)
Illinois	7 (14)
Indiana	1 (2)
Kentucky	1 (2)
Maine	2 (4)
Michigan	1 (2)
New Jersey	1 (2)
North Carolina	2 (4)
Ohio	1 (2)
Oklahoma	3 (6)
Tennessee	1 (2)
Texas	1 (2)
Washington State	2 (4)
West Virginia	1 (2)
Job Titles (Agent/Educator)	n (%)
FACS ^a	26 (52)
4-H	7 (14)
Federal Programs (SNAP-Ed ^b , EFNEP ^c)	5 (10)
4-H and FACS	2 (4)
4-H, FACS, and Federal Programs	2 (4)
FACS and Federal Programs	2 (4)
Other	6 (12)
Service Area	n (%)
Rural	26 (54)
Urban	9 (18)
Suburban	8 (16)
Other	6 (12)
Numbers of Counties Served	n (%)
1-2	39 (78)
3-4	8 (16)
5 or more	3 (6)
Length of Employment (years)	n (%)
Under 1	1 (2)
1-2	5 (10)
2-5	13 (26)
6-10	14 (28)
11-20	9 (18)
More than 20	8 (16)

^aFACS = Family and Consumer Sciences

^bSNAP-Ed = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education

^cEFNEP = Extended Food and Nutrition Education Program