

Culinary Nutrition Symposium

From Global Evidence to Swiss Action

Abstract Book

4th June 2026, Bern University of Applied Sciences

Objective:

To clarify the foundations of culinary nutrition, assess the current Swiss landscape, and identify pathways to advance research, education, and practice in Switzerland.

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Theme 1 – Global Perspectives: Theory, Evidence, and Methodological Gaps

Culinary Nutrition and Cook-Ed: Tools for understanding and influencing cooking practices

Speakers: Roberta Asher / Tammie Jakstas from the University of Newcastle, Australia

Abstract: Culinary nutrition is increasingly recognised as a key strategy to improve diet quality, health and wellbeing within complex social, cultural and environmental contexts. The Cook-Ed model is framework that supports culinary nutrition educators to design, implement and evaluate culinary nutrition programs that address the complex array of personal, interpersonal, social and environmental factors influencing domestic cooking behaviour. The Cook-Ed matrix complements this framework as a practical tool mapping essential food and cooking skills to food-based dietary guidelines. This presentation illustrates how the Cook-Ed model and Cook-Ed matrix can be used as content planning guides and complimentary tools to optimise public health initiatives and interventions that include culinary nutrition. The Cook-Ed model and matrix guide program design, evaluation, and policy by pinpointing where culinary nutrition can most effectively improve public health. They translate evidence-based guidance into everyday practice, and support sustainable behaviour change across diverse populations and real-world contexts.

Cooking, Ultra-Processed Foods, and Food as Medicine: What the Evidence Tells Us and Why Cooking Skills Matter

Speaker: Julia Wolfson, from John Hopkins University, USA

Abstract: Cooking skills and behaviors are foundational to dietary quality yet are often undervalued in public health nutrition research and practice. This talk examines cooking in the modern food system, the skills and capacities required for healthy cooking, and the role of food agency in shaping dietary outcomes. Evidence shows that cooking more frequently and spending more time cooking are associated with lower ultra-processed food (UPF) consumption and higher intake of minimally processed foods yet UPF intake remains high even in households that cook very frequently. These findings are situated within the rapidly growing Food as Medicine movement, recent federal nutrition policy shifts emphasizing "real food," and evidence on program effectiveness. The potential of integrating cooking skills into Food as Medicine and other public health approaches to improve diet quality and address diet-related chronic diseases is also discussed.

Methodological Gaps in Culinary Nutrition Research

Speaker: Fiona Lavelle, from Kings College London, UK

Abstract: The global decline in diet quality is marked by high consumption of ultra-processed, convenience and foods prepared outside the home. Cooking is proposed as a solution, as it is associated with better diet quality, improved food security, reduced food waste, enhanced wellbeing, and broader health benefits. Consequently, research in culinary nutrition has grown rapidly over the past 15 years. However, persistent methodological issues remain across populations and settings, including poor intervention design, limited use of theory, and a lack of validated measurement tools. These shortcomings persist despite repeated calls for improvement and the development of appropriate models and instruments. Although funding constraints and challenges in conducting gold-standard trials, such as double-blind randomised controlled trials, exist, there is clear scope for progress. Addressing these weaknesses requires interdisciplinary collaboration, wider use of validated tools, openness to innovative methods, and a supportive research culture to strengthen and sustain the field.

Theme 2 – Culinary Nutrition in Switzerland: State of the Art and Need for Action

Where are we now? What's missing? Why does Switzerland need action?

Current Status of Culinary Nutrition in Switzerland

Speaker: Christine Brombach, ZHAW

Focus: Mapping culinary nutrition across education, research, and practice in Switzerland

Abstract: According to Swiss national nutrition data, adults spend an average of 38 minutes preparing warm meals at home, with women reporting significantly longer cooking times than men. Approximately 41% of participants spend more than 40 minutes cooking, including half of all women but only one third of men. Home cooking is more frequent on weekends, while men are more likely to report never preparing warm meals at home. These findings highlight persistent gender-related differences in culinary practices in Switzerland.

Despite available national data, important knowledge gaps remain regarding barriers and facilitators of sustainable cooking in private households. Little is known about how households make cooking decisions, organize routines, and integrate sustainability into everyday food practices. This presentation addresses these questions by presenting current Swiss studies on culinary practices, sustainable cooking, and communication strategies across generations. The findings contribute to a better understanding of how culinary nutrition can support healthier and more sustainable dietary behaviours in Switzerland.

Current Practice & Lessons Learned

Speaker: Natalie Lötscher, Swiss Society of Nutrition SGE

Focus: Practical experiences, implementation challenges, and insights from the field

Abstract: The Swiss Society for Nutrition SSN plays a key role in translating evidence from nutrition science into practice. This presentation introduces two projects that strengthen food literacy and emphasize enjoyment. [pfannefertig](#) addresses young adults on social media to promote cooking skills and healthy food choices. Simple tips and practical guidance are intended to make everyday eating easier for young adults in their first own home. [Essen neu erleben nach der Pensionierung](#) supports people in the transition to retirement. The activities not only support food literacy but also social exchange and psychological wellbeing. Although the implementation of both projects involves challenges, they engage people through a culinary approach and motivate them to adopt a balanced and varied diet.

Food as an Artistic Medium and a Nose-to-Tail Recipe Collection as Art Practice

Speaker: Fabiana Senkpiel, Bern Academy of the Arts

Abstract: The presentation explores the utilization of food as an artistic medium within the context of contemporary art, whilst concurrently examining a recipe collection that adheres to the nose-to-tail principle as a form of artistic practice. It focuses on artworks that employ food to create multisensory experiences, engaging not only vision but also smell, touch, and taste. Drawing on the findings of the SNSF-funded project “[Lebensmittel als Material in installativen und partizipativ-performativen künstlerischen Arbeiten – Dokumentation, Analyse, Rezeption](#)” (2019–2023), the paper outlines methodological approaches for integrating such sensory experiences into art historical analysis. Building on archival research and material-aesthetic analysis, it then explores how Daniel Spoerri’s so-called “Recipe Folder Library” reconfigures the recipe and cookbook format within the field of art. Through its visual language and illustrative aesthetics, the collection creates space for creative engagement and critical reflection on cultural perceptions of offal and the nose-to-tail principle.

Educational Materials & Visual Tools

Speaker: Annika Bieri-Hecht, Schulverlag plus AG

Focus: Culinary nutrition in teaching practice: materials, didactic approaches, and visual learning

Abstract: The presentation offers an overview of «Tiptopf's» educational materials for nutrition education within the Economics, Work and Household (Wirtschaft, Arbeit, Haushalt WAH) curriculum at lower secondary school in Switzerland. It introduces the book as well as the accompanying digital resources, including the recipe website and the planning tool for teachers. It outlines the basic didactic structure, consisting of three phases: introductory, basic, and advanced—and explains how these can be implemented throughout the school year. The focus is on practical food preparation and the development of everyday skills. An additional emphasis is placed on the connection between nutrition, health, and sustainability. Lastly, «Der kleine Tiptopf» is presented as an introductory cookbook for younger learners, designed to teach basic skills in an age-appropriate manner.

Theme 4 – BFH CN research Spotlight & Looking Ahead

Social Kitchen - Promoting sustainable eating through dialogue between young people and older adults

Speaker: Fränzi Scheidegger-Balmer

Abstract: The postwar generation possesses a wide range of food and cooking skills, such as creatively using leftovers and reducing food waste. The younger generation, for its part, represents new (food) trends and—as “digital natives”—the role of social media in relation to nutrition. This intergenerational exchange holds the potential to pass on the knowledge of older people by linking it to the needs of younger generations. Through intergenerational dialogue, Social Kitchen aims to promote not only sustainable eating but also more differentiated views on aging. A preliminary study examined whether and how adolescents and older people can benefit from each other.

Essential - Co-Designing a Culinary Nutrition Program for Adults with Mild to Moderate Intellectual Disabilities

Speaker: Franziska Pfister

Abstract: Adults with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities (ID) experience persistent health inequalities, including unhealthy eating when transitioning to more independent living. Switzerland lacks structured culinary nutrition programs tailored to this group. Building on prior focus groups and a two-round Delphi process that identified 25 priority skills, an eight-module program was co-designed with an advisory group of individuals with ID. It combines practical cooking sessions with repetition of key skills across modules. Visually supported picture recipes were developed. A pre–post mixed-methods evaluation assesses feasibility, acceptability, and outcomes. The program translates priority skills into structured, adaptable sessions covering kitchen safety, food hygiene, cooking techniques, basic nutrition and meal planning. Initial implementation has begun in one institution supporting independent living. This work contributes to closing an important gap in Switzerland and may support healthier, more independent living among adults with ID. Pilot findings will inform further development for implementation in three additional institutions.

E Guete z'Basel - Enabling Participation in Everyday Nutrition Practices

Speaker: Karin Haas

Abstract: *E Guete z'Basel** is a community-based project aiming to promote balanced nutrition among older adults living alone. Instead of developing a predefined intervention, the project actively involved participants in identifying needs, priorities and possible forms of support related to everyday nutrition. This participatory approach used highlighted that nutrition in older age extends far beyond food intake itself. The resulting initiative addressed broader aspects of daily meals and social participation, including grocery shopping, nutrition literacy, cooking, shared meals, and opportunities for social interaction. Elderly people contributed according to their individual interests, resources, and capabilities. A key finding was that participation of this target group is not guaranteed, but requires ongoing support, trust-building, and capacity-building. The presentation addresses the opportunities and methodological challenges of participatory approaches in the areas of culinary nutrition and community health promotion.

**E Guete z'Basel is Swiss German for: "Enjoy your meal in Basel"*