



iMOTION

iMOTION - Framing Informal Moments (IM) in Trainings

Input: “Cooking and eating as a group-building bridge into digital settings”

Authors: Rachel Rentz, Julia Keil, January 2023

Within trainings in digital settings meals usually do not happen in groups together but are taken individually. In order to encourage informal moments and group-building, there are anyway creative ways to offer a similar experience to the participants. As mealtimes are not only occasions for the ingestion of food but serve crucial social functions they can enrich online-trainings.

One possibility is to invite the participants to share a specific recipe and to prepare a dish in advance. The respective meal is then shared during screentime. Informal moments offer a framework in which I voluntarily do something that is good for me or that I feel like doing. Many participants will enjoy a joint meal. But of course, cooking or eating together should not become a compulsion, because these moments are reserved for relaxation, for "digesting" what has been learned and for the group-building process, which is fundamental to gain a good learning atmosphere for all participants.

Eating lunch or dinner together is an already well-known essential during multi-day trainings that take place face-to-face and, for example, in a conference centre. During on-site trainings informal moments arise quite naturally throughout the training schedule and the common break and mealtimes it contains. Meanwhile, in digital settings, it is the case that the participants sit in front of their screens at home or at work and cannot meet at the cake buffet during the coffee break. However, the digital setting also offers the potential for not only eating together in different places, but even cooking together. If the



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

participants can use a laptop or tablet, the device can be taken into the kitchen, where the food can get prepared. In this way, not only the group-building moment of eating can create informal moments, but also the joint preparation beforehand. This more complex variation of “online-cooking” was established mainly in the corporate environment during the pandemic and was e.g. used for company activities around the festive season. In this article we offer you less complex as well as more complex examples of how to integrate additional senses: taste and smell into your online-training.

Variation A: Prepare before the Training – eat during the training

In particular in the context of language training eating together can be excellently embedded in the content of the online lesson by choosing recipes that are typical for the local cuisine of a region in which the language is spoken. Adult learners do often visit a language class by choice and will have a natural interest in what is perceived and construed as “the culture” attached to the new language. This usually includes food culture and eating habits. As language classes often extend over a longer duration with periodical meetings e.g. 2 hours a week, they allow some pre-announcement from the trainer’s side. A careful choice of recipes from the trainer’s side gives the participants a sort of flexibility to prepare and try the cooking according to their own schedule and possibilities. Pastries, cakes, cookies, desserts or soups are ideal for this, as they do not have to be prepared precisely before the online session. They can be preserved or reheated.

There are things to consider when choosing a recipe and sharing a meal online:

- The food should be relatively easy to cook, so that non-cookers feel like trying it out.
- The preparation should not take too long, so that nobody is excluded due to their everyday obligations as learners sacrifice free time. During in-situ trainings offers for informal moments during free time might be easier to frame due to the lack of alternatives in an environment away from the possibilities and responsibilities at home.
- The ingredients shouldn't be too special or expensive so they're easy to buy at the grocery store. However, it depends on the specific context of



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

the training: To discover new spices or local tastes can be appealing too - if they are available.

- It should be possible for the participants to choose from 2-3 different recipes. Due to allergies/intolerances or preferences, not all components of a recipe are suitable for all participants. Offer for instance a vegetarian and/or vegan option.
- Freedom of choice is essential for informal moments. In general, it is helpful to communicate that suggestions on how the recipe can be modified are welcome. Since not all eating habits can be considered in the same way, participants must be assured that creativity is ok – as it is very common among chefs also. 😊
- If participants choose not to participate in the preparing of a dish it is OK and does not require any explanations, they will have their individual reasons.
- The trainer must secure that nobody is to be judged for their cooking or baking skills and to communicate that this entire thing is not about competition.

By inviting the participants to this approach, they prepare themselves in a special way and can get ready for the training by putting the ingredients, shopping if necessary, cooking the dish and looking forward to eating it with the other participants to enjoy a nice informal moment together. Preparing the dish offers the possibility to include family members or roommates into the personal project of the learner. This may help to create a supportive environment for the learner to make their people understand their ambitious and personal goals. More content related, to offer the recipes in two languages including the learning language is an excellent method to practice new vocabulary within a context that addresses all senses.

Later during screentime participants can show off their plates both during a joint break or embedded during the training. Specific language phrases connected to food, hospitality and preferences can be initiated or general chitchat around food culture occurs. Either way the senses of taste and smell are stimulated and support memorizing the moment. Memorable moments help to support longtime effects of learning events.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Aside from language learning the basic idea of sharing a meal during screentime can be easily adapted to other environments. For instance, in groups of different origin participants can be either invited to exchange recipes or to present typical specialties from their respective cultures. Various you tube-videos can be exchanged. If we as trainers once have allowed ourselves to think outside the box, we realize that the online world is full of food and food culture, and this was the case even before the pandemic. If one training field in adult education struggled relatively little with online learning than cooking classes.

Variation B: Prepare and eat during the online training

This more complex variation requires much more time. It is therefore a precondition that you have the means to sacrifice a significant part of the content of your training for an informal moment of cooking online and having a meal together. However, if teambuilding, self-awareness, or recreation are your topics cooking is one of the activities that can be transferred relatively easy into the online context. Examples has been set in the corporate field, where for instance preparatory food parcels for employees were sent before an online session.

The challenge with preparing food during an online training is that participants firstly need a device that can be carried around and second must be willing to share a view into their kitchen. Without having the video turned on the aspired spirit would be difficult to convey. Allowing a colleague or even a foreigner as a trainer to “investigate” your home and family is not everybody’s piece of cake. To frame a joint cooking moment requires therefor a more specific knowledge of your participants than simply initiating to eat during screentime. Meanwhile the first will be mostly interpreted as a welcomed loosening of formal borders and stiffness the latter can be easily understood as intruding the personal space. Thus, to communicate the precondition of freedom of choice is even more important than in the other scenario.

Recipes to try out:

To get you on board some examples of recipes, they can be found in the Czech cuisine.

Have fun preparing and bon appétit!



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Image by [Karina from Pixabay](#)

Bohemian Buchty Buns with jam filling

As this a yeast dough, you need some more preparation time.

For this recipe you need:

- 1 packet of dry yeast (or vegan alternative)
- 200 ml cow milk or plant milk
- 500 g flour
- 80 grams of icing sugar
- 1 pinch of salt
- 80 g butter or margarine
- 2 eggs or vegan egg
- if you have and like: 2 tablespoons of rum
- some melted butter or margarine
- jam for filling

Mix flour with yeast. Heat milk with 80 g butter or margarine and mix with icing sugar, salt, eggs [and rum]. Add the flour and mix it with a mixer or by hand to form a smooth dough until it does not stick to the bowl. Cover and let rise in a warm place for about 30 minutes; the volume should double. Cut small pieces from the dough, flatten them, fill with jam and seal. Place in a buttered baking



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

dish, coat with butter and let rise again. Bake in the preheated oven at 180 °C top/bottom heat for about 25 minutes until golden brown. Sprinkle with icing sugar and enjoy slightly chilled.

original language (Czech): České Buchty s povidlovou náplní

Protože se jedná o kynuté těsto, budeme potřebovat více času na přípravu!

Pro tento recept potřebujeme:

- 1 balíček sušeného droždí
- 200 ml kravského nebo rostlinného mléka
- 500 g mouky
- 80 gramů moučkového cukru
- 1 špetka soli
- 80 g másla nebo margarínu
- 2 vejce nebo veganské vejce
- případně 2 lžičce rumu
- trochu rozpuštěného másla nebo margarínu
- džem na plnění

Mouku smícháme s droždím. Mléko zahřejeme spolu s 80 g másla nebo margarínu a smícháme s moučkovým cukrem, solí, vejci [a rumem]. Přidáme mouku a mícháme mixérem nebo ručně, tak aby vzniklo hladké těsto, které se nelepí na mísu. Přikryjeme a necháme na teplém místě kynout asi 30 minut; objem by se měl zdvojnásobit. Těsto nakrájíme malé kousky, zploštíme, naplníme marmeládou a uzavřeme. Buchty vložíme do máslem vymazaného pekáčku, potřeme máslem a necháme znovu kynout. Pečeme v předehřáté troubě na 180 °C horní/spodní ohřev asi 25 minut do zlatova. Posypte moučkovým cukrem a servírujeme mírně vychlazené.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Image by [ivabalk from pixabay](#)

Recept Kulajda Czech Potato-Mushroom-Soup (with poached eggs if you like)

For four servings you need:

- 6 potatoes, middle sized and sticky
- 1 onion
- 3 tablespoons of oil
- 4 tablespoons of vinegar
- 150 g of raw mushrooms e.g. porcini
- 1 cup of sour cream or vegan sour cream
- salt and pepper
- dill
- if you have: 3 juniper berries, 2 bay leaves
- if you like: 4 eggs
- 3 teaspoons of vinegar, for the cooking water of the eggs



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

1. Cut the raw mushrooms into bite-sized slices. Peel the potatoes and cut into thick slices. Dice the onion and fry in oil until translucent. Deglaze with the vinegar and add the potatoes and then the mushrooms. Pour in about 0.8 liters of water. Add the pepper and salt (and juniper berries and bay leaves if you have) and simmer for about 1/2 hour.

If you like eggs follow the instructions number 2. or skip to number 3.

2. In the meantime boil approximately 0.7 liters of water with 3 tablespoons of vinegar in a pot. Crack the eggs one at a time and slowly slide them into the boiling vinegar water. Poach the eggs for about 3 minutes, the yolk should still be liquid.

3. Then stir the sour cream into the soup, let it boil again and add salt if necessary. (Place the poached eggs in the soup bowls and pour the soup over them.) Add the dill for the specific taste of Kulajda.

original language (Czech):
Recept Kulajda
Česká bramborohoubová polévka
(se sázenými vejci - volitelné)

Na čtyři porce potřebujete:

- 6 středních lepkavých brambor
- 1 cibule
- 3 lžíce oleje
- 4 lžíce octa
- 150 g syrových hub, například hříbky
- 1 šálek zakysané smetany nebo veganské zakysané smetany
- sůl a pepř
- kopr
- volitelé: 3 bobule jalovce, 2 bobkové listy
- 4 vejce
- 3 lžičky octa na vaření vody z vajec



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

1. Syrové houby nakrájíme na středně tlusté plátky. Brambory oloupeme a nakrájíme na silné plátky. Cibuli nakrájíme na kostičky a dosklovate smažíme na oleji. Zalijeme octem, přidáme brambory a poté houby. Zalijeme asi 0,8 litry vody. Přidáme pepř a sůl (a pokud máme bobule jalovce a bobkové listy) a vaříme asi 1/2 hodiny.

Pro variantu s vejci budeme postupovat podle pokynů číslo 2, případně přejdeme na číslo 3.

2. Mezitím v hrnci svaříme asi 0,7 litru vody se 3 lžícemi octa. Vejce jedno po druhém rozklepneme a pomalu je vsuneme do vroucí octové vody. Vejce dusíme asi 3 minuty, žloutek by měl být stále tekutý.

3. Poté do polévky vmícháme zakysanou smetanu, necháme znovu provařit a případně dosolíme. [Sázená vejce dáme do polévkových misek a zalijeme je polévkou.] Pro specifickou chuť kulajdy přidáme kopr.



Image by [Couleur from pixabay](#)

Bohemian Onion Soup

For four servings you need:

- 500 g onions
- 1 tablespoon of oil



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

- 1 teaspoon of sugar
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 1 ½ liters of broth
- salt and pepper
- if you like: 4 tablespoons of grated cheese
- if you have: chopped parsley and chives

Peel, halve and thinly slice the onions. Heat the oil in a pot, turn the heat down and add the halved onion slices and sugar. Sweat on a low heat for about 8 minutes, not forgetting to stir. Add the flour, stir, fry for 2 minutes while stirring and pour in the cold broth. Season with pepper and stew everything for about 15 minutes until everything is soft. Season with salt. If you like cheese: Place the grated cheese in the center of the plate or soup bowl. Pour over with the hot soup and top with the herbs.

original language (Czech): Česká cibulová polévka

Na čtyři porce potřebujete:

- 500 g cibule
- 1 polévková lžíce oleje
- 1 lžička cukru
- 1 lžíce mouky
- 1 ½ litru vývaru
- sůl a pepř
- pokud máš rád_a: 4 lžíce strouhaného sýra
- případně: nasekanou petrželku a pažitku

Cibuli oloupeme, rozpůlíme a nakrájíme na tenké plátky. V hrnci rozežřejme olej, stáhneme plamen a přidáme nakrájené plátky cibule a cukr. Restujeme na mírném ohni asi 8 minut, nezapomeneme promíchat. Přidáme mouku,



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

promícháme, za stálého míchání opékáme 2 minuty a zalijeme studeným vývarem. Dochutíme pepřem a vše dusíme asi 15 minut, dokud vše nezměkne. Dochutíme solí. Nastrouhaný sýr dáme doprostřed talíře nebo polévkové mísy. Zalijeme horkou polévkou a posypeme bylinkami.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union