

ENVR E-129 Fall 2014
From Farm to Fork: Why What You Eat Matters
Healthy and Sustainable Meal Project

Due Monday, November 24. Note that we do not meet in class that week due to the Thanksgiving holiday but your assignment is due to the course drop box by 5.30pm EST.

The goal of this assignment is to prepare a dish that applies what you have learned in the classroom to your own kitchen. Specifically, you will create a meal based on principles of health and sustainability that are attentive to personal, local, and global considerations. Note that you may elect to modify a favorite meal so that it's healthier and more consistent with principles of sustainability; create something new; or select a favorite recipe that fits the assignment's goals. Remember, thinking about the implications of the meal and finding suitable sources and ingredients is as important as creating or modifying a recipe that promotes individual health; these are the criteria on which the assignment will be graded. If you are unclear as to whether your dish is a good fit for the assignment, please run it by your TA or Dr. Newby (pknewby@post.harvard.edu). In particular, the dish should be complex enough such that it would be adequate for a dinner meal and would contain various dietary elements. For example, you may choose to make a mixed dish including protein, grains, and vegetables/fruits or prepare a main dish and side(s) that come together to make a complete meal. (Including a beverage is optional.) That said, there is no reason to cook something overly elaborate: this should be a meal that you would actually make in your life.

This project should be completed on your own. However, there is a group component that allows you to share your dish in a virtual group meal with classmates and describe the experience in the final question of the assignment.

Individual Project Report

Address each of the following questions in your report, making sure to fully consider your meal in detail, from farm to fork. Please make sure your paper is no longer than 4 pages, single-spaced; number each question and make sure to answer every part to each question. There are 35 total points for this assignment and it comprises 25% toward the final grade for undergrads/non-degree students and 20% for graduate students. Please make sure to proofread your report; points may be deducted for grammar, spelling errors, and/or typos. As well, please do not wait until the last minute to complete this assignment; questions asked of TAs within 24 hours of the due date will not be answered.

1. Tell us more about the meal you prepared. How/why did you select your dish for this assignment? In other words, what factors drove your decision to make this particular meal? Is it similar or different to your usual diet? Are you pleased with the results of your cooking endeavors? If yes, why? If no, why not? (5 points)
2. Think through each of the four quadrants of the nutritional ecology model and other environmental issues we've covered in class, and describe how your meal reflects these principles by considering the impacts your meal has on the various systems involved across the food production (life cycle) chain. Make sure to state where you purchased your food and discuss any other relevant notes about the ingredients you used in the dish. (8 points)
3. Did you encounter any conflicting goals (e.g., nutrition versus environmental impacts; ethical versus economic considerations; etc.) when purchasing the ingredients for your dish? If so, how did you weigh these differences in your decision-making? (4 points)
4. Create your own "Nutrition Facts" panel for your dish; there are online resources to assist you with this piece. Make sure to include an ingredient list(s) as well. (Providing a complete recipe is optional.) Depending on what you are making, one panel and one ingredients list may suffice for your "main" dish; check with your TA if you are uncertain. (6 points)

5. How does your dish adhere to current USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans and Harvard's Healthy Plate? Make sure to consider both nutrients (drawing inferences from the facts panel generated above) as well as food groups in your answer, highlighting areas of particular relevance. (International students may also wish to compare their dish with the nutrition guidelines of their own country.) What might you do differently if you make it again to improve the nutritional profile? (8 points)
6. What was the most interesting thing you learned from your classmates' cooking projects? How was your own experience similar or different? Any other key learnings from sharing a meal together? (4 points)

Optional: You are welcomed and encouraged to create a video showcasing your meal and discussing a few key points from your report. Videos do not contribute to grade but will be uploaded to our website and shared with the class. Should you choose to do this, make sure your video is no longer than 4 minutes.

Virtual Group Meal

You will be grouped with approximately 6 fellow students with the goal of sharing a virtual meal together where you discuss your projects over dinner. (Ideally this would be the meal you cooked for the project.) Whatever means you wish to achieve this is completely up to you; there are a variety of technologies available for online collaborations and our experience is that at least one person in the group has the knowledge and software to make possible this assignment. Within each team, every student will present and discuss his/her dish in no more than 10 minutes (you should assign someone in the group to keep time), followed by an open discussion reflecting on some of the questions from the written report. The final question of the written report, above, will allow individual students to reflect on the virtual meal experience.

Have fun with this assignment!

This is an opportunity for you to bring together concepts in the class when it really matters: shopping and preparing a healthy and sustainable meal for yourself and/or your friends and family.