

Activity: Food/Cooking **Goal: Cognitive/Intellectual**
Populations: Senior/Dementia

TH Activity Plan – Lavender Cookies

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Photo by D. Relf, Sweet Sour Savory & Paper Street Parlour



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Prepare and sample cookies made with lavender flowers.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Stimulate mental activity through reminiscing; increase focus & sustained attention in a group activity

Physical: Exercise fine motor skills; practice hand dexterity/strength

Psychological/Emotional: Use community or group activity as mechanism for emotional wellbeing

Sensory: Use sensory activities as mechanisms for experiencing joy, happiness, pleasure

Social: Cultivate sense of belonging; increase social interactions through storytelling & group work

Materials

½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter/margarine, room temp
1 cup sugar
2 eggs
1 ½ cup all-purpose flour
2 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon dried lavender flowers, finely chopped
Measuring teaspoons
Measuring cup
Medium mixing bowls
Pastry cutter, hand mixer, or fork to mix dough
Mixing spoons
Spatula scraper, spatula turner
Baking sheets
Cooling rack
Disposable gloves, wipes
Paper plates, napkins
Oven mitts
Oven (375F)

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Preheat oven to 375° F. Keep participants out of reach from hot surfaces, as appropriate. Gather supplies and place on the table for everyone to share. Review safe food handling.
2. Facilitator begins session by discussing preparation of cookies, then assists the participants to put on gloves, as needed.
3. Participants take turns creaming the butter and sugar together with a pastry cutter, hand mixer, or fork, until light and fluffy.
4. Stir in the eggs, vanilla, and lavender, one at a time, and mix well.
5. In separate bowl, add baking powder to the flour and mix together.
6. Pour flour, a little bit at a time, into creamed mixture. Take turns mixing until combined.
7. When the dough is completely mixed, use the spatula scraper to scrape remaining ingredients along the bowl edges and bottom to ensure that all ingredients are well blended.
8. Drop cookie dough by teaspoonfuls onto an ungreased baking sheet, 2 inches apart. Allow each participant to drop 2-3 cookies on the baking sheet until all the dough is used. Recipe makes 4 dozen cookies.
9. Bake 8 to 10 minutes, or until lightly browned on the edges. Cool on the baking sheet for a minute or two.
10. Use spatula turner to transfer the baked cookies to a cooling rack.
11. Serve and enjoy!

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: When possible, harvest lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) flowers from the garden and involve participants with stripping flower buds off stems. Or, purchase culinary lavender in

spices/baking section of grocery or natural foods market. During this process, note the lavender aroma and ask open ended questions about past experiences of gardening or baking or other memories. Provide opportunities for participants to take turns, waiting patiently and actively/passively participating in each step of the mixing, baking, and tasting process. Promote sharing of stories, memories and moments of joy related to baking, cooking with family, tasting/smelling/touching sensory experiences during session or from Christmas' past with therapeutic goals of increasing social interactions, sense of belonging, joy during the hands-on activity. People living with dementia, depending on the stage will need to be supervised more closely so that items are not put in mouths (except baked cookies!), measuring, stirring and handling of eggs, bottles etc. are done safely and without disruption for other participants. Both passive and active engagement in a group activity can provide social interactions based on functioning skills of people living with dementia.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: The facilitator should pay attention to specific dietary/swallowing requirements of participants and check that the lavender will not counteract medications. Consult medical staff as needed. Do not eat raw dough. Offer drinking water to aid in swallowing and washing down cookies. Monitor safe use of kitchen equipment and high heat items and equipment, such as hot food, baking sheets, or ovens. Practice handwashing and other sanitary practices when handling food items.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Not all lavender is created equal – Lavender is in the mint family, and there are many different types of lavender. Some types of lavender have a pleasant perfume, while other types have a more pungent, sometimes unpleasant odor. Use culinary English lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*, popular varieties: 'Hidcote' or 'Munstead') or even lavandin (*Lavandula x intermedia*, popular varieties: 'Grosso' or 'Provence'). This activity can be part of a multi-session program about lavender. Participants can plant and grow lavender in the garden, then harvest summer flowers. Work with participants to utilize the lavender they grow in a myriad of creative ways. Make a variety of food items and drinks containing lavender and other herbs, or use in making floral arrangements, potpourris/sachets, or spa products. Research and discuss the non-culinary benefits of lavender and how people use lavender for relaxation, sleep aid, and more.

Refer to THAD *Drying Herb Flowers* activity plan.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Chala, J. (2021). How to cook with lavender so your food doesn't taste like soap. *Bon Appetit*.

<https://www.bonappetit.com/test-kitchen/how-to/article/cooking-with-lavender>

Forney, J.M. (n.d.). Culinary lavender 101. HGTV.

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York, P.S. (May 22, 2023). How to prune, harvest, and dry lavender. *Southern Living* magazine.

<https://www.southernliving.com/garden/plants/how-to-harvest-lavender>



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TH Activity Plan form developed by Lesley Fleming, Susan Morgan and Kathy Brechner (2012), revised in 2023.