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Annotation Guidelines: Difficulty Levels of Recipes

1. Introduction:

Each recipe needs to be assigned one of the following labels, consistent with the difficulty that that recipe would be to the average person.

Easy

Medium

Hard

2. Process:

- a. All consideration sections (sections 3 through 12) are divided into difficulty levels. Each section should be assigned a categorization. A **categorization** is defined as the ranking that is earned in each section, i.e. easy, medium, or hard. These categorizations are then taken into consideration to give an overall difficulty level of the recipe, by considering whether or not it has passed certain difficulty thresholds, as defined in Section B.
- b. Given a Count of the Number of Times a Recipe is a Certain Difficulty Category:
 - i. If a recipe consists of 2 or more medium categorizations, the recipe should automatically be considered medium. Similarly, if a recipe consists of 2 or more hard categorizations, the recipe should automatically be considered hard.
 1. For example, because our hard-level threshold is 2, if a recipe includes 8 active steps, deep frying, and making dough from scratch, we should automatically count it as a hard-level recipe, even if the majority of its steps are easy.
- c. Considerations for the Number of Steps Outweighing the Majority Difficulty Category:
 - i. If a recipe has 6 or more categorizations of easy, the whole recipe is classified as medium. Similarly, if a recipe has 6 or more categorizations of medium, the whole recipe is classified as hard.
- d. Summary of Difficulty Thresholds
 - i. Consider all recipes as easy until otherwise proven.
 - ii. Easy: All easy categorizations and <2 medium categorizations,

1. Example: 8 easy categorizations and 1 medium categorization = easy difficulty level
 - iii. Medium: 2-5 medium categorizations, or 1 hard categorization
 - iv. Hard: 2 or more hard categorizations, or 6 or more medium categorizations
3. Number of steps
 - a. Active steps
 - i. Easy: 2 or less
 - ii. Medium: 3-6
 - iii. Hard: 7 or more
 - b. Passive steps
 - i. Easy: 6 or less
 - ii. Medium: 7-10
 - iii. Hard: 11 or more
4. Active vs. Passive Time
 - a. Active time is considered all the time spent cooking that cannot be considered passive time, i.e. time where the chef's engagement is required.
 - i. Easy: <20 minutes
 - ii. Medium: 20min-1hr
 - iii. Hard: 1hr+
 - b. Passive time is considered the time needed for steps that require no supervision or action from the chef. Steps that are passive include: defrosting, baking, letting food reach room temperature, chilling in the fridge or freezer, proofing, airfrying, marinating, etc.
 - i. Easy: <2hr
 - ii. Medium: 2-10hr
 - iii. Hard: 10 hr+
5. Number of ingredients
 - a. Easy: <5
 - b. Medium: 5-12
 - c. Hard: 12+
6. Difficulty of preparation of ingredients pre-cooking
 - a. Easy: Mixing, sifting, pouring, cutting, chopping, slicing, assembly, draining, mashing, marinating, soaking
 - b. Medium: Breading, coating, chopping an onion, mincing, dicing, cubing, Julienne-ing
 - c. Hard: Kneading, deboning, removing shells

- i. Preparation that needs to be complete at least an hour before cooking commences or after all cooking is done
 - 1. Defrosting, Chilling, Marinating

7. Difficulty of cooking methods

- a. Heat
 - i. Easy: Baking, boiling, blanching, microwaving, airfrying, toasting, broiling, spreading, buttering, melting
 - ii. Medium: Saute, pan-fry, steaming, shallow-fry, poaching, steaming, braising, roasting, stove-top grilling, pan-frying, BBQ-ing, browning
 - iii. Hard: Deep-frying, caramelizing, charring
- b. No-heat methods:
 - i. Easy: Assembly, mixing, pouring, tossing
 - ii. Medium: zesting, beating, creaming, stuffing, folding
 - iii. Hard: piping

8. From Scratch

- a. Hard:
 - i. Dough that is not bought pre-made
 - ii. Crust, including pastry, pie, that is not bought pre-made
 - iii. Wrappers, pasta, custard

9. Foods that require extra attention when cooking and should be considered as medium or hard in combination with other steps:

- a. Sugar
- b. Milk, cream, half-and-half products
- c. Chocolate
- d. Garlic

10. Specialized Foods that are Hard:

- a. Compound butter
- b. Curry, cream or milk with savory items
- c. Attempting to create fake meat
- d. Meat with bones

11. Hand-craft work

- a. Easy: Rolling burritos, taquitos, making meatballs
- b. Medium: Icing, shaping cake
- c. Hard: Wrapping dumplings, shaping pasta

12. Specialized equipment:

- a. Easy to operate equipment:
 - i. Electric hand-mixer
 - ii. Immersion blender
 - iii. Blender
 - iv. Stand mixer
 - v. Microwave
- b. Medium to operate equipment
 - i. Ice cream maker
 - ii. Cast-iron pan
 - iii. Double boiler
 - iv. Stove-top grill
- c. Hard to operate:
 - i. Blow torch
 - ii. Outdoor grill
 - iii. Pasta machine
 - iv. Espresso machine
 - v. Mandolin

13. Disagreements and Resolution

- a. Recipe: "Cut the cabbage leaves up into easy-to-eat pieces.", "Shred the enoki mushrooms apart.", "Cut the bacon into 1 cm pieces.", "Line the bottom of a fairly deep heat proof container with the cabbage (Use a lot of Chinese cabbage; it's delicious!)", "Put the piece of cod on top of the cabbage, and sprinkle with sake and pepper.", "Top with the enoki mushrooms.", "Add the chopped up bacon, and bits of butter.", "Cover loosely with plastic wrap, and microwave for 3 minutes at 500 W.", "Take the container out of the microwave, re-wrap loosely, and cook for additional 30 seconds to a minute.", "When the cod and cabbage are cooked through, it's done.", "If it's a little bland, add a little ponzu sauce or soy sauce."
 - i. Final Label: Medium
 - ii. Justification: There are 9 steps, which is considered hard, however 2 of the steps are microwaving food and part of the prep is shredding cabbage leaves with your hands, as opposed to chopping, dicing. As chopping and dicing are considered easy, shredding and tearing with your hands would, by comparison, be easy as well. Considering all steps are easy, but the number of steps are classified as hard, this makes the recipe medium.
- b. Recipe: "Put cake mix in mixing bowl and cut in margarine and crisco with a pastry cutter or 2 knives until crumbly.", "Pat mixture into ungreased 13x9 pan and build up the sides slightly.", "Mixture is very crumbly so make sure to flour your hands well to work with it.", "Dot all over with the pecans.", "Bake 10 minutes at 350.", "Arrange apples on top of warm crust.", "Mix together

cinnamon and sugar.", "Sprinkle on top of apples.", "Blend sour cream and egg with a fork and drizzle over apples, it is not supposed to cover the apples so don't try to make it.", "Bake at 350 for 25 minutes or until pastry edges are lightly browned.", "Serve warm."

- i. Final Label: Hard
 - ii. Justification: There are a total of 10 steps. One step, though not explicitly stated, is making a crust. This is indicated by the mixing of cake mix and cutting margarine and crisco with a pastry cutter.
- c. Recipe: "Stir dessert into 1 1/2 cups of liquid (raspberry juice + water). Bring to a boil, stirring constantly.", "Boil 1 minute. Cool to room temperature.", "Add raspberries. (May add more fresh, if you like.) Fold in 1 cup of whipped cream. Fill baked pie shell. Chill. Serve with the remaining cup of whipped cream."
- i. Final Label: Medium
 - ii. Justification: There are a total of 6 active steps. Although all steps fall under a classification of easy, having more than 5 easy steps makes it a medium level recipe.
- d. Recipe: "In large skillet, cook ground beef and garlic-pepper blend until beef is thoroughly cooked, stirring frequently.", "Drain.", "In 3 1/2 to 4-quart slow cooker, combine cooked ground beef and all remaining ingredients except buns; mix well.", "Cover; cook on low setting for 6 to 7 hours.", "Spoon beef mixture into buns.", "Note: This recipe was tested in slow cookers with heating elements in the side and bottom of the cooker, not in cookers that stand only on a heated base.", "For slow cookers with just a heated base, follow the manufacturer's directions for layering ingredients and choosing a temperature."
- i. Final Label: Medium
 - ii. Justification: There are a total of 4 active steps, which receives a category of medium. The 1 passive step lasts for 6 to 7 hours, which also receives a category of medium. There is a garlic-pepper blend that has to be prepared ahead of time. The recipe says to stir frequently, which adds to the amount of attention one has to give to the recipe. Though ground beef is pretty easy to make (i.e. it is unlikely to go wrong), the amount of steps and attention required make this a medium.