TQ Cooking Tips for the Blind and Low Vision Part 1(Storage, Organization and Identification)

# Introduction

Hey guys and welcome to the first video in this new series, TQ cooking tips for the blind and low vision. In this series, I will share tips for performing various activities in the kitchen such as storing and identifying items, lighting the stove, frying, boiling, baking and much more. In today’s video, we will be going over some general tips in the kitchen, as well as tips for storing, organizing, and identifying items in your kitchen. This series promises to be an exciting one so get comfy and take notes. But before we get into it, please be sure to like the video if you love the content, subscribe if you are new and turn on my notification bell to be alerted whenever I post the next video. Also note that the instrumentals for this video have been provided by Inner Sanctum Entertainment Ltd. But without further ado, let’s get right into it.

# Start of video

Cooking can be challenging and even scary for a person who is blind or visually impaired, but there are a few strategies that you can use to make the process much easier. It’s great when you can give fast food a break and allow your creative juices to flow in the kitchen as you prepare your own meal just how you like it. It’s a nice feeling when you can get up and do something for yourself without fully depending on others. So today I am going to share some cooking tips with you to get you on that path of independence. First, we will start with some general tips for when you are cooking in the kitchen.

# General tips

* Get to know your space:

You want to make sure to get yourself familiar with the space in your kitchen. Practice walking around in the space and familiarizing yourself with where everything is. Get to know which appliance does what, and how to use them. This will be helpful when it’s time to move around in your kitchen and start cooking. It will also help to prevent accidents from happening.

* Free the area of any obstacles or danger:

Ensure that any spills on the floor are dried up to prevent you from slipping. Also make sure that any objects in the way such as kitchen stools are put away. This is so that you would not bump into them and spill something, or even fall. Also check to make sure that no sharp objects such as knives are left dangerously, such as on the edge of the counter, or with the handles hanging off. Always store your sharp objects pointing down, and when feeling or searching on surfaces or in the sink, always lightly tap as to prevent any piercing interaction from sharp objects.

* Give yourself enough time when cooking:

You don’t want to be stressed, tired, or rushing when handling items in the kitchen, especially hot or sharp ones. This as well as any distractions can result in mistakes and accidents in the kitchen.

* Gather everything that you will need before you start cooking:

You don’t want to be running all over the kitchen looking for items while the stove is lit and the pot is waiting for you on the stove. This is bound to cause an accident in the kitchen.

* Make adjustments to your kitchen to make it accessible:

There are various adjustments that you can make to the layout of your kitchen to make it more accessible. This will vary based on how your kitchen is setup. For example, I had a major issue with persons leaving the upper cupboard doors open in my kitchen.. Even though you can sometimes sense when the door is near you, I was getting tired of walking cautiously in my own space. So, we decided to get cupboards with sliding doors instead. If you can afford it, or if you have access to some grant or fund in your country to get this done, this is a great idea. These are much better as I no longer have to be worrying about walking straight into a cupboard door, and they can also prove to be cheaper than cupboards made out of treated lumber.

* Stop dwelling on the fact that you are not seeing and focus on using your other senses such as touch, smell, taste, and hearing:

If you practice using a combination of these senses in the kitchen, you will master the skill in no time.

* Don’t go into the kitchen with a sense of fear:

Being fearful will get you nowhere, and a jumpy attitude is more likely to cause accidents in the kitchen. Just be calm and tell yourself that you got this. You may not get it perfect the first time, but practice makes perfect.

Now let’s move on to tips for storing and identifying items in the kitchen.

# Storing

How well you are able to store, organize and identify the items in your kitchen will determine the simplicity and efficiency of the cooking process. Here are some tips to help you get this done:

* It is best to store similar things together:

So, you would store your pots and pans in one section, your plates and dishes in one section, your utensils in one section, your cups in one section, your sauces and seasoning in one section, your stuff like rice, flour, and sugar in one section, and your cans in another section. It is good practice to have a section for similar items in your fridge as well. This is just an example of how to group your items. You will have to group them based on the items that you have in your kitchen. Just make sure that at the end of the day, you know where everything is.

* Store your appliances in safe places:

Find a safe and accessible place for your appliances and don’t place heavy items too high.

* Store the items that you use more often closer to your reach:

Put the items that you use once in a while or on rare occasions on the higher shelves, and the ones that you use almost every day on the lower shelves. In the fridge, store the items that you use more often to the front of the shelves, or in the door. You can even put some of the things that you use every time that you cook on the counter. For example, I keep my salt and cooking oil on the counter.

# identification

Now, in order to properly label your items and store them away, you will first need to identify them. It is best to do this as soon as the items come from the store. I personally declare myself as the packer in the household. When anything new is bought, I make it my responsibility to pack them away so that I know where everything is. I don’t know about you, but I like to be independent in whatever I am doing. Here are some tips for identifying items in your kitchen:

* You can use your sense of hearing, touch, and taste to help you identify some of the items:

Based on the feel of some of the items such as rice, flour, or a box of milk, you can probably identify them without help. You may not be at this level, but there are some persons that can tell the difference of similar items by their weight, or sound and feel when they shake a bottle or tin. For example, when shaking a bottle, the ketchup will feel thicker than the cooking oil. I personally can tell the sugar different from the cornmeal and the milk powder different from the packaged salt, by feeling the texture of the content in the bag. Some persons also use their taste to determine what is in some bottles or packages, but I would not recommend that. But to each his own.

Now for the items that you can’t identify on your own, you will need some help with identifying them. Here are some methods that you can use:

* Ask for some sighted help:

Because they don’t mind, I generally ask my mother or someone near me to tell me what the item is. But if no one is around, or they are busy, I would use an app called be my eyes to call a live representative to help me identify the items. This app is easy to use and is available on both IOS and Android.

* Use an AI app to read the label:

If I don’t feel like using any of the other methods, I would use one of the AI apps on my phone to try to read the labels of the items. Some of these apps include:

Seeing AI and envision AI for IOS users

Google Lookout and Sullivan Plus for Android users

And super sense for both devices

With these apps, you would put it in the text recognition mode, point your camera to the label of the item, and it will try to identify the text and read it to you. Or you can take a picture of the label and run it through the OCR of the app. Please note that this is artificial intelligence, therefore there is no guarantee that it will be correct. This is why these AI apps are my last resort.

# labelling

Once you have identified each item, there are various methods that you can use to mark or label them. There are a lot out there but here are some that I use:

* Using Velcro strips, sticky markers or dots, brail markers, or tape:

You can use any one of these sticky items with various strategies to label your grocery items. For example, you can cut off a piece of it and paste it on the top of the tin corn, but for something else like the baked beans, put it on the side. Or, butter beans can have a longer piece taped onto it, and another type of tin food can have more than one piece on it. These are just some examples but you can be creative and come up with clever ways to use these items to label your groceries.

* Using elastic bands:

You can also try using elastic bands to label your items. For example, you can tell that the browning is the one with the elastic band around it, and the hot pepper sauce is the one with the tape on it.

* For low vision persons, you can use large print labels:

You can possibly use one of those tapes that can be written on, and something like a marker to make large print labels for your items.

* Use differently shaped containers or bottles to store some of your products:

For some of your products that come in bottles, for example, ketchup, or cooking oil, or any other product that you can think of using this method with, you can get some uniquely shaped bottles or containers to store them in once you have identified them. For example, you would identify the ketchup bottle different from the cooking oil bottle based on the shape, size, or even the type of cover on it. You can also use uniquely shaped containers to store items such as salt and sugar.

So, those are all of the tips that I have for labelling the items in your kitchen. You can use one or a combination of these strategies to label not only your food items, But also the buttons on your appliances. But those are all the tips and techniques that I have for storing, organizing, and identifying the items in your kitchen. I am sure that there are some more out there but these are the ones that I use.