

## LEARNING TO COOK IN UGANDA



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report aims to explore how people living in urban areas of Uganda acquire cooking skills. The research hypothesis is that the acquisition of cooking skills has largely moved away from the traditional family/household kitchen space to digital platforms such as YouTube and social media in urban areas of Uganda. The study uses qualitative research methods, specifically through interviews with different categories of people selected from urban areas of Uganda using criteria such as regular cooking within households, willingness to participate, and diversity of ethnicity and regions.

The study examines the shift in the acquisition of cooking skills, the factors driving the shift, the impact on traditional ways of passing down the skills, the effectiveness and retention of skills from digital platforms compared to traditional methods, and the impact of modern cooking techniques on cooking skills, food culture, and overall well-being among urban Ugandans. The study aims to inform specific interventions or approaches for transition to clean cooking that are inclusive and culturally sensitive to cooking practices in Uganda.

Ultimately, the research study found that people are increasingly learning to cook on digital platforms like YouTube and social media due to factors like accessibility and convenience. The participants reported that they recalled skills better while learning from family members or in-person classes, proving the efficacy of traditional learning approaches as well. The study revealed the need for culturally relevant interventions to support the change to clean cooking in Uganda's urban areas by demonstrating how the shift toward digital platforms affected the conventional methods of passing down culinary skills within families and households. The survey offered insightful information about urban Ugandans' attitudes and perceptions towards the acquisition of cooking skills and the use of digital platforms for learning.

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## ACRONYMS

CREEC	Centre for Research in Energy and Energy Conservation
EPC	Electric Pressure Cooker
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
KII	Key informant interviews
LPG	Liquefied Petroleum Gas
MECS	Modern Energy Cooking Services
PWD	Persons with Disabilities

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

MECS is supporting the transition of low-income economies from biomass to the use of modern energy cooking services (i.e., cooking with electricity, gas or renewable energies). It calls for a greater focus on modern energy as the source of clean cooking and has evidenced that cooking with modern energy using energy-efficient appliances can be cost-effective, particularly for urban communities.

In a post on a Kenyan cooking page on Facebook, a discussion on where and how people 'could learn to cook' showed that many members felt frustration at not having been taught to cook, or had not found formal cooking classes – especially as they had moved away from their homes and were living in peri-urban or urban areas. Whilst a few group members offered their services to one another in the form of small group cooking lessons – either in person or online – several made reference to the learning via social media: "Cooking can be self-taught too. If you aren't able to take classes, YouTube can be of great help," and "Kuna YouTube channels. Just install Wi-Fi and you are good to go."

**Research hypothesis:** *The acquisition of cooking skills has largely moved away from the family/household kitchen space – i.e., from mother to daughter – with younger generations, including men, favouring learning to cook via digital platforms such as YouTube and social media platforms.*

## 1.2 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study was to explore how people living in urban areas of Uganda learn how to cook. The following goals served as the direction for the research questions when field research was undertaken.

- Investigating the shift in the acquisition of cooking skills from traditional family/household kitchen space to digital platforms in urban areas of Uganda.
- Understanding the factors that are driving this shift and the impact it has on traditional ways of passing down cooking skills within families and households.
- Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of digital platforms as a means of learning to cook and comparing it to traditional methods of learning in terms of effectiveness and retention of skills.
- Assessing the uptake and impact of modern cooking techniques on cooking skills, food culture and overall well-being among urban Ugandans.

## 1.3 Context of Study Area - Uganda

Uganda's cooking energy sector has for long relied on biomass (94%) as the primary source of energy (UBOS, 2021) with only 6% relying on alternative or modern energy. There have been concerted efforts by government and support organizations to promote the use of alternate and improved technologies but these have not yielded much progress. Some of the identified

hindrances to transition have for long been perceptions around taste, cultural influences, cost, safety, the steep learning curve for modern technologies, lack of awareness, and availability of technology. So, to be able to further understand perceptions around cooking, this study aimed to build on the already existing body of knowledge to understand how and where people learn how to cook and this would help inform specific interventions or approaches for transition to clean cooking that are inclusive and culturally sensitive to cooking practices.

Ugandan households residing in urban and peri-urban areas were the focus of the research study. Participants were chosen from the Urban and peri-urban areas of the Wakiso district and the Kampala district. **Kampala**, the capital city and economic engine of the country, has a diverse ethnic population coming from all parts of the country and neighbouring countries. Kampala is neighbouring urban and slum areas. **Wakiso** is a neighbouring and surrounding district to Kampala and has a mix of the urban and peri-urban populace with a diverse ethnicity as well.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted using qualitative research methods, specifically through interviews with different categories of people. The research participants were selected from the urban areas of Uganda and were interviewed either through focus group discussions or Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), while the KIIs were conducted with individuals who were considered experts or knowledgeable about cooking. The use of these methods allowed for the collection of detailed and rich data on the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of the participants towards the acquisition of cooking skills and the use of digital platforms for learning. It also provided an opportunity for the participants to share their personal stories, which helped to provide a deeper understanding of the research topic.

### 2.1 Selection of Participants

The research team identified households and study participants using the following selection criteria:

- Participants were selected from urban and peri-urban of Kampala and Wakiso which areas have a diverse range of ethnicity and as such consideration was made to select participants from different ethnicities/regions with different cooking cultures. Taking into account this preference for people with disabilities and a balance of women and men. Kampala is also home to urban refugees from the neighbouring countries of South Sudan, and DRC; these were also included in the study population.
- Participants were of legal age i.e., at least 18 years
- Participants who regularly cooked within their households
- Participants who were willing to participate in the survey

Participants confirmed interest in undertaking the study by signing a consent form and were provided with a participant information sheet detailing the study objectives. The study team explained the contents of the information sheet and allowed time for any questions before the participant can consent to participation.

### 2.2 Study Approach

To achieve the study objective, the study team used a mixture of methods and participatory approaches as detailed below;

- *Technical briefings:* An inception meeting was held with the MECS team to better understand the ToRs and expectations of the client. The proposed approach and work plan with timeframe were discussed to ensure that all parties were in agreement. A review meeting at week 08 of the project was also held to assess project progress and to ensure smooth project implementation of the exercise.



- *Key Informant Interviews:* Key informant interviews with open-ended questions to allow for conversation were conducted with selected households. The interviews took place at their house/kitchens and took approximately 90-120 minutes.
  - *Kitchen Observation;* Kitchen observations were conducted immediately after the interviews to better understand the layout and organization of the kitchen/cooking space. This includes how people arrange their kitchens, as well as the assortment of kitchen utensils, tools, appliances, fuels, and technologies. The Kitchen observation also enabled the research team to look for additional information and gaps, as well as cross-check data.
  - *Group Interviews:* These were in form of focus group discussions and were conducted with groups of people who shared similar characteristics, such as age, gender, or occupation. Four different categories of respondents were engaged as detailed in the table below. The different group discussions took place in a span of three days. During the discussions, the participants were required to summarize their responses to the questions asked on sticky notes which were later referred to during the writing of this report.
- **Young women**

This FGD contained 12 young women. The young women's ages ranged from 19 to 35 years. It also had a mixture of regional communities that originated in the country's capital and those that came from other parts of Uganda. The discussions started with introductions of the team, registration of participants, a project brief to better inform the participants of the reasons for the gathering and signing of consent forms. The group was then divided into two smaller groups of 6 and the discussions commenced led by a team member.
  - **Men**

This group contained 12 men with ages ranging from 20 to 35 years. It also had a mixture of regional communities that originated in the country's capital and those that came from other parts of Uganda. The group was then divided into two smaller groups of 6 and the discussions commenced led by a team member. Sticky notes and recorders were used to record responses and were later consulted while writing this report.
  - **Older Women**

This group contained 15 women with ages ranging from 40 to 67 years. It also had a mixture of regional communities that originated in the country's capital and those that came from other parts of Uganda. The group was then divided into two smaller groups of 7 and 8 and the discussions commenced led by a team member.

- **Food Enthusiasts**

In this case, the focus was on professional chefs, bloggers, food writers and vloggers - individuals who were passionate about food and have dedicated their careers or personal efforts to sharing their knowledge and love for food with others. A team leader then led the group with the discussion. Replies were summarized onto sticky notes which were later referred to during the creation of this report.

- o *Photographic and videography* during data collection.

Table 1 below details the different approaches that were followed to achieve each activity:

Activity	Approach	Target group	Expected outputs
<b>Open-ended interviews</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 10 households comprising of a diversity of cultures were selected as per the selection criteria.</li> <li>2. A registration survey was conducted to understand demography and basic information.</li> <li>3. Key informant interviews were administered.</li> <li>4. The cooking space composition and organization, technologies and techniques used, how used, behaviors and more were observed; it was thus ideal to visit during cooking hours.</li> </ol>	10 households	Detailed understanding of how people learn to cook and cooking space characteristics, cooking behaviors
<b>Focus group discussions</b>	<p>The selection of 10 households comprising of a diversity of cultures was conducted as per the selection criteria. A registration survey was completed to understand demography and basic information. Key informant interviews were conducted. The cooking space composition and organization, technologies and techniques used, how used, behaviors and more were examined, it was deemed ideal to visit during cooking hours.</p>	2 focus groups of 12 women each who cook; thus, a total of 24 women	Data/information determining whether learning to cook has changed across generations, and how
	<p>Participant selection was conducted with a focus on men who are migrants to urban areas, who were suddenly living alone or</p>	1 focus group of 12 men who cook	An understanding of what they cook; how they have learnt to cook; if they live in a shared space, how is

Activity	Approach	Target group	Expected outputs
	in shared spaces where there were no women to do the cooking. A focus group discussion was conducted.		the cooking divided; what cooking practices do they rely on outside of the family home
	Participant selection was conducted with a focus on local food bloggers/vloggers (both men and women). A focus group discussion was held.	1 focus group of 10-12 local food bloggers/vloggers (both men and women)	An understanding of the contents, reach and methods that cooking blogs/vlogs have and the audiences that they attract
<b>Development of vignettes</b>	Vignettes were developed during the data collection phase. Images and video were collected during the interview processes to be used in the development of the vignettes.	Willing research participants	8 vignettes developed

### 2.3 Data collection tools

The following tools were be used:

- A short registration survey was administered to collect basic demographic information and relevant cooking information to aid the selection process of participating households.
- A key informant interview guide was developed with open-ended questions to be administered to the households.
- An observation guide was developed for capturing observations in the cooking environment.
- Focus discussion guides were developed for each category of respondents.
- Recorders were used to capture the qualitative discussions to enable transcription after the data collection process. Participant consent was sought prior to recording
- Photographs and videos of consenting participants were taken and these were used in the development of vignettes.

### 2.4 Data Management and Quality Assurance

To ensure quality control of the study process, the team lead:

- Ensured that the interviewing team was well-trained in collecting qualitative data and conducting group discussions.
- Ensured proper and efficient data capture during the interview process using recorders.
- Was responsible for the review and verification of the transcribed data.

### 3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section provides details of the findings from the interviewed respondents detailed per category of participants.

#### 3.1 PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

The participants that were interviewed are categorized in the table below. It consists of a mix of younger and older generations, divided by gender and socioeconomic status.

*Table 2 Containing focus group discussion participant demographics*

Category	Age range	Region of origin	Occupation	Total number
<b>Young Women</b>	20 - 39	Buganda, Mufumbira, Gishu, Busoga, Ankole	Shop attendants, administrators, businesswomen, students	14
<b>Men</b>	23 - 26	Buganda, Itesot, Ankole, Tooro, Kikuyu, Munyoro	Students, accountants, businessmen, administrators, videographers	12
<b>Older women</b>	45 - 65	Buganda, Busoga, Ankole, Tooro	Retired, housewife, restaurant owner, businesswoman	15
<b>Food enthusiasts</b>	20 - 40	Buganda, Ankole, Busoga	Chefs, writers, content creators, bakers	10
<b>In-depth interviews</b>	22 - 67	Buganda, Bafumbira, Tooro, Busoga	Shop attendants, administrators, business owners, students	10
<b>PWD</b>	24, 31	Buganda, Busoga	Business owner, builder	2

#### 3.2 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

In this section, the study is examined by group or profile, such as young women, elderly women, migrant males, and food enthusiasts. Major themes and sub-themes for each group were determined, and these themes were used to categorize the results. All these conclusions are based on submissions and focus group discussions with the research participants. Selected responses from participants are highlighted in blue italics for emphasis.

### 3.2.1 CURRENT COOKING PRACTICES

The main goal in this segment was to comprehend the cooking methods of participants. Including the kind of fuels utilized, how meals are prepared, whether local or unusual foods are used, and how the participants felt about contemporary cooking techniques.

#### 1. Fuels

**Young women** - Due to its great availability, cleanliness, and time savings, LPG was mentioned by the majority of participants as a preferred fuel. In addition, depending on the meal being prepared, they alternately use charcoal. Few of them use electric cookers, and the majority claim that this is because there are misconceptions about using electricity for cooking, such as high electricity expenses.

*"I use electricity when my gas is done. I use firewood to cook my matooke. Some people say if they cook matooke on gas, it does not taste nice so for me I use firewood."*

*"In most cases when I want to prepare dry beans and I have to decide whether to use firewood, charcoal, gas or pressure cooker, I find it easy to use a pressure cooker because it is faster and you do not need to keep checking the progress or have to add charcoal, firewood. It saves time, it is also convenient."*

**Older women** - The participants in this group predominantly use firewood and charcoal stoves to cook. They admitted that firewood is not easy to get. One participant with an energy-saving charcoal stove shared how it works, it uses peelings instead of charcoal and produces a lot of heat. They also use gas and electricity but for specific meals.

*"I use gas, and electricity (EPC) I attended a CREEC study and now I use the EPC most. In absence of electricity, I use gas. In very rare cases I use charcoal or when I have events, I use all, or when the new help doesn't know how to use the modern appliances, they use charcoal. I find gas dangerous."*

*The EPC works, I realized my electricity bill did not change when I started using it. The bill only changes when someone else, not me uses the EPC. I only refill gas when I have money or when I am home alone because it is dangerous to the kids. I also use briquettes. Briquettes stay for a long time, and they don't produce smoke."*

**Food enthusiasts** - Charcoal and firewood are used by people in this group to prepare food that needs to be cooked for longer periods of time. They shared that these methods are perfect for dishes that require low and slow

cooking such as roasts, stews, and briskets. Most of the participants also shared their enthusiasm for modern fuels and the advantages encountered while using them.

## 2. Meals

**Young women** - The young women engage in cooking different meals depending on the day, time and mood. They prepare breakfast, lunch, and supper. The local meals prepared include matooke, rice, malakwanga, okra sauce, ground nuts, Irish potatoes, meat, chicken, milk, and egg sauce. The exotic meals involve pizza, githeri, and cakes.

**Men** – Cooking rice in a percolator, instant porridge, cabbage stew mixed with greens, mild in a percolator, smashed Irish with milk, Kenyan Ugali on gas, Grilled chicken, posho in a microwave.

**Older women** – matooke, Irish potatoes, rice, beans, ground nuts, meat, posho, porridge, and tea are the local foods prepared by the people in this category. One participant who owns a restaurant said she prepares fries and pizza using electricity.

**Food enthusiasts** – Steamed matooke and luwombo (traditional Buganda sauce usually prepared in withered fresh banana leaves), hung meat using skewers, smoke meat using modern smokers,

## 3. How do you feel about modern alternatives to cooking/eating? (e.g., consider the emotive elements of cooking - how cooking and meal choices feed into perceptions of cultural identity, relationships, etc.)

[modern alternatives are those more efficient types that save time, an upgrade of what most people are currently using]

### **Young women**

Some of the participants expressed their worries about losing the traditional ways of cooking to the new alternatives and the difference in tastes that come with it.

*"I have no problem with it except for my kids, I would love for them to still know about the local alternatives of cooking."*

A lot of positive responses were received from this group in regard to modern alternatives. They said modern alternatives are clean, save time, are easy to deal with, and occupy limited space, helping you utilize your space better.

*"Ladies do not want to get their nails dirty or keep checking on the fire from the firewood."*

### Men

Participants had both positive and negative feelings about the use of modern techniques of cooking.

*"I embrace new technologies because I am a scientist"*

#### ▪ Positive emotive elements

- **Time-saving.** (a participant said lack of time due to his busy work schedule is a major barrier to cooking and modern alternatives eliminate this issue)
- **Clean** (the room won't remain dirty after cooking)
- **Space-saving** (The appliances take up less space)
- Bring about a **traditional/ cultural paradigm shift**

#### ▪ Negative emotive elements

- **Low accessibility** to modern cooking appliances and to knowledge of their usability.
- **Risks** – they bring about new risks like electric shocks, gas explosions, health risks, and issues regarding the electromagnetic radiation from these appliances.
- **The old (traditional) cooking ways are being forgotten** due to these modern alternatives plus as the generations change. Participants shared that when they visit their village homes for holidays, they cannot participate in the cooking because the methods used in the village are not familiar to them.

### Older women

#### ▪ Positive emotive elements

- **Cook from anywhere** – With modern cooking techniques, one does not have to keep in the kitchen at all times as the appliance has a timer.
- **Quick** – Modern techniques prepare food faster and in the shortest time possible.
- **Easy to use** – A participant said that initially, they found a hard time using their EPCs but once they got a hang of it, it was very easy to use.
- **Clean** – the room remains clean after use and they do not produce smoke.

#### ▪ Negative emotive elements

- **Food taste** – They think the matooke prepared with electricity won't taste the same as that prepared with firewood or charcoal.
- **Cost of electricity** – The participants still hold the belief that using electricity to cook would increase their electric bills.

- **Cost of appliance** – Electrical appliances are expensive compared to other cooking appliances.

*"We grew up thinking that local foods should not be cooked on electricity, and we think that matooke won't taste good when cooked on electricity. We will need a lot of convincing to have a mindset change to electricity."*

### **Food enthusiasts**

- **New recipes** – Modern alternatives have brought about the creation of new recipes as a result of infusing local and modern ways of cooking to enhance the existing recipes.
- **Multitasking** – the modern alternatives are teaching chefs to multitask for example being able to cook over four pots at the same time. This saves time and makes the cooking process faster
- **Boosting culture** – through modern equipment, the Ugandan culture will be spread and uplifted

*"Accessibility is not just about physical access; it also encompasses the perception of the modern alternatives. By taking a proactive approach to accessibility and considering the future, we can work towards creating a more sustainable society for all"*

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**INSIGHTS:** *The main goal of this segment was to understand the cooking methods used by different groups of people, including the types of fuels utilized, the meals prepared, and the participants' feelings about contemporary cooking techniques. Overall, it was found that LPG was the most preferred fuel among young women due to its availability, cleanliness, and time-saving properties. Older women primarily used firewood and charcoal, while food enthusiasts used charcoal and firewood for dishes that required low and slow cooking.*

*The participants had mixed feelings about modern alternatives to cooking and eating, with some expressing concerns about losing traditional ways of cooking and differences in taste. However, many also recognized the benefits of modern alternatives, such as being clean, time-saving, and easy to use. Overall, there is a need to consider accessibility, both physical and perception-wise, in promoting modern alternatives to cooking.*

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### 3.2.2 LEARNING HOW TO COOK

Cooking techniques have developed along with the rest of the world, and this has had a big impact on how people learn to cook in general.

- **When they started to cook** - Most of them learned to cook at a young age, with the majority starting between the ages of 8, 10, 14, and 15. This trend implies that many families involve their children in the kitchen and cooking process from a young age. Cooking is a valuable life skill and teaching children how to cook at a young age can instil a love for food and cooking, as well as develop their independence and self-sufficiency.
- **How they learnt (from whom or what)** - The following are some specific ways that young women learn to cook:

#### a. Young women

**i. Learning from the main cook at home** – the mothers /stepmothers/aunties encouraged them to learn to cook starting at very young ages so as to be in a position to cook for their spouses in the future, and some of their mothers believed that as girls, it's their gender role to cook and hence they must know how to.

*"I learnt from my mum. She believed that men do not do any housework, hence us the girls did all the housework and served the boys. I still believe this too."*

**ii. Learn to cook through the internet (specifically YouTube)** – This is considered the best teacher among the group because it shows you each step to follow and one can pause the video and refer to it later. They also follow people who cook on different social media like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram

**iii. Cookbooks** – One of the participants said they have always used cookbooks at their home and that these are a preferable option to them since they can be used and referred to even in the absence of an internet connection.

**iv. From television shows** – These were popular among the group. The participants said they watch cooking shows and then note down and practice what has been taught.

*"My family and I used to sit down and watch the cooking show on Spark TV during the COVID lockdown. This was a mandatory activity. We would then note down what has been taught in the family cookbook and practice it as a family the following day."*

- v. **Workplace** - One is sometimes required to learn new cooking techniques before taking up a job position in some workplaces like hotels, and restaurants,

*"I learned to cook exotic dishes (junk food) when I joined café Javas as a waiter. To become a waiter, you had to must first train to cook the different dishes served and taste them."*

- vi. **Observing the cooks** – Some from their love of cooking learn by observing how different people cooked from older siblings, neighbours' parents, and relatives.

- vii. **Learn to cook by practising** – The participants said they honed and perfected some of the cooking techniques through practising and modern technologies have encouraged them to keep learning and practising.

#### b. Men

*"Male participant; I started learning to cook back in 2010, mum had a restaurant, learned through helping out at the restaurant. I also used to hear the customers praise my mum for cooking very good food and hence learned to get this praise too."*

- **Cooking schedules** – Young men are sometimes required to cook along with everyone else according to a set schedule for all family members. This enables the, to learn to cook as they have no other choice but to learn.
- **From girlfriends** – The young men are taught how to cook by their girlfriends especially if they like what the girlfriend cooks and wish to cook it for themselves in her absence.

#### c. Older women

Most started learning at a very young age.

- One **shared** that she had to learn because she lived with her stepmother.

*"My learning process was not easy, I grew up with my stepmother, and I had to do all chores whether I wanted to or not. I used to cook for a lot of people at the age of 7."*

- **Childhood games** - Through childhood games of mother and child with friends
- Through sharing cooking ideas with friends

*"I met a certain man who liked to cook. We shared cooking ideas and his cooking was very classic, I learnt to cook a lot of different styles from him."*

- **Google search** – some older women prefer following food receipts from the internet instead of watching cooking tutorials on YouTube.
- **Home economics classes** – By taking a subject in secondary school that teaches cooking.

*"I did home economics in secondary school in Namagunga at secondary school level; I learnt a lot for example making cakes."*

#### **d. Food enthusiasts**

- **Ekisaakaate** – an annual camp organized by the Buganda Kingdom to nurture young girls and boys into becoming 'holistic' persons who appreciate both traditional and modern values. Young people enrolled on this program are taught how to prepare traditional food.
- **School** – A participant learnt through a government-sponsored culinary course. This is a recommended way to learn for aspiring professional chefs.
- **Online media** – With the rise of social media, people are able to learn a wide range of skills and information, including cooking, through various influencer channels such as Instagram reels, Pinterest, YouTube, and Facebook.
- **On job** – Some young people who work as waiters in restaurants may learn how to cook as a result of the practical knowledge they obtain on the job.

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**INSIGHTS:** *These submissions show that young women learn to cook through a variety of means, including learning from their mothers or stepmothers, learning through the internet (specifically YouTube), using cookbooks, watching television shows, learning in the workplace, observing cooks, and practising. Similarly, young men learn to cook through a variety of means, including cooking schedules, learning from girlfriends, and observation.*

*Older women learn to cook through different methods such as childhood games, sharing cooking ideas with friends, Google*

*searches and home economics classes. Food enthusiasts learn through Ekisaakaate, school, online media and on the job. Food enthusiasts learn through Ekisaakaate, school, online media and on the job.*

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- **Recommended ways to learn**

The following are the recommended ways of learning to cook by the participants

- Cookbooks, in case you do not have internet, just use this. It gives you the details
- YouTube, this is the best teacher. Facebook (follow pages of people who post about cooking such as Chef Michael Uganda and Godwin Ug). From these people you will be able to find out about the recommended type of saucepans to use and for which dishes, the best type of gas to use
- Watch cooking programs on TV e.g. Spark TV has a program on Sunday which is watched by the participant and her family and the skills and recipes learned are written down in a book. They then try them out the next day, this is a practice they started during the COVID lockdown period.
- Love to cook.

*"The first step one must love to cook. It is easy for someone who loves to cook, it would be easy to learn."*

- Observation of parents and guardians
- On the job, this is because you don't invest anything (you do not have to buy any of the requirements).

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***INSIGHTS:** Overall, the recommended ways to learn to cook according to the participants are cookbooks, YouTube, watching cooking programs on TV, loving to cook, observing parents and guardians, and on the job.*

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#### **4. Why online media is preferred**

The participants gave the following reasons as to why they prefer learning using online media and why they would encourage others to do the same;

- Paying chefs is very expensive
- It is Easily Accessible
- Saves time

- You can learn as you practice
- One can save online media and revisit it later
- No need to leave home

*"I have done online research on cooking and it is really effective because if you stick to traditional ways of cooking or how you were taught, you do not discover different ways of cooking, mixing spices"*

## **5. Are there different ways of cooking and learning to cook depending on generation?**

### **Young women**

- All the participants agreed that ways of cooking and learning how to cook have changed through the generations. They said that even the taste of the food has changed as a result of the ways of cooking changing.

*"They have for example we used to put a metallic spoon in the ground nuts while cooking them to prevent them from overflowing but these days people say it is not healthy"*

### **Men**

*The men suggested the following as the ways in which cooking has changed over generations;*

- There has been a change in the energy fuels used.
- People now use polythene bags to prepare matooke (because it is hard to access banana leaves)
- The older generation does not like food cooked with oil yet one participant said he prefers food cooked with a lot of oil. He said that a lot of oil is healthy if it is well cooked i.e., to a certain temperature degree.
- The mothers of some of the men do not want them to cook. They attribute this to traditional African gender roles.

### **Older women**

*The older women suggested the following as the ways in which cooking has changed over generations;*

- Cooking has changed a lot, techniques like cooking with electricity are new and they bring about a lot of changes in cooking like time-saving.
- A participant agreed that it has changed but emphasized that she tries to maintain the old cooking traditions.

*"I have kept the old cooking traditions, though when we see new techniques, we teach the children but try to maintain the old ways."*

- The old ways maintain the nutrients of the food though young people have abandoned them

- The new foods and cooking techniques are clean and young people like to keep their nails clean.
- The older generations used to put their food back to cook.

*"The older generations had more time, they used to put the food back to cook. The major issue now is time, therefore cooking ways have had to change. The new generation is also always in a rush to keep up."*

- Ways of preparing meat have changed. In such a way that a lot of cooking oil is used in the preparation process.

*"Cooking oil is used a lot these days. The elders believed that using cooking oil spoils nutrients. And I would recommend not using cooking oil."*

*This highlights the importance of passing on cooking skills and knowledge to the younger generation in order to preserve the culture and tradition of cooking.*

## **6. Which dishes are taught and mastered? What techniques, tricks, or shortcuts in cooking, do you use?**

- To better understand which meals are often cooked, the participants were asked what dishes they have mastered and the shortcuts learned.
- They emphasized that through practice one knows what to do better, what to change, how to work faster and what works for them. The meals were mentioned to be ground nuts, different ways of preparing meat, etc.

*"I mastered cooking ground nuts; they need a lot of time to get ready and produce cream. It should be thick. I also mastered different ways of cooking meat."*

### **Older women**

- Adding banana fibres to beans so that they can get ready faster.
- Adding Panadol to the beans to get ready faster
- Adding boiled water to rice to save time
- Adding salt to the water first before adding meat, the meat becomes soft faster.

### **Food Enthusiasts**

- Fruit carving, do anything with fruits
- Luwombo shortcuts; prepare the ingredients the day before, put them in containers, and label them, knowing the standard measurements of food needed by each person (Plan beforehand)
- Also depends on the kind of equipment you use e.g., pressure cookers save time
- Preparing food, the previous day depends on the food, like matooke, and Molokini (cow's foot)

- The trick in baking; is butter and sugar cake gel to give it some volume; the shortcut is; Get butter only and beat it, it raises on its own. Put sugar for a little while then add other ingredients
- Chop onions, and precook for a minute
- Check food shelf life, and apply. Don't serve after shelf life.

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**INSIGHTS:** *As observed from the responses above, cooking and learning to cook have undergone significant changes over the generations because of advancements in technology and changes in lifestyle. The use of different energy fuels, the availability of new cooking equipment, and the increasing pressure of time have all contributed to the evolution of cooking techniques.*

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### 3.2.3 INFLUENCES

The need to learn to cook arises when people's circumstances change over time, especially with regard to young women. It can simultaneously be a source of pressure and inspiration based on each unique circumstance. Circumstances that motivate young women to pick up new cooking techniques include:

#### **Young women**

- **Need to change diet**

- This could be due to illness. Young women are often advised by their doctors to either change their diet or pick up new dishes to aid the healing process or prevent an illness from rising.
- The young women testified that eating the same meals too often gets boring and therefore they learn new skills for a change. For example, rice is cooked in 5 different ways, one could learn another way to prepare rice for the change.

*"I like to prepare myself special meals on the weekend so I had to learn to cook these new skills."*

- **Competition**

- The young women sometimes learn techniques so as to out-compete their siblings or co-wives.

*"I am a Muslim; I am the second wife so I sometimes learn new techniques to outshine my co-wives."*

#### **Men**

- **Limits by the landlord** – The landlords in some apartments dictate what cooking methods or appliances their tenants should use. This forces men to learn and adopt to these new cooking techniques.
- **To impress** - One participant admitted that they learnt to cook to impress a girl and that it helped them to. Another said that they learnt to use their cooking skills to get visits from girls in whom they have an interest.
- **Peer pressure** – When young men visit friends and they like what is served, they are pressured into learning to cook those meals.
- **Passion** – The love of cooking influences them to learn new cooking techniques.
- **COVID pandemic** – During the COVID pandemic, the country underwent a country-wide lockdown, the young men could not access any cooking establishments and this influenced them to learn to cook.
- **Lifestyle and health** – The participants said that some of the cooked food selling places have poor hygiene and therefore this influenced them to learn and cook for themselves.
- **Culture**- Young men who travel away from their home regions to the city have to learn to cook the staple foods of their home areas since the people in the cities usually prepare them differently from how they like them.

*"I like 'Kalo', that's our staple food, but the hotels in Kampala don't make it like it so I learned to make it myself."*

- **Winning a prize** – A participant who took part in the 2021 Africa Day won a food challenge when he prepared "luwombo", this encouraged him to learn more cooking techniques.
- **Modern cooking appliances** – Modern cooking appliances ease the cooking process and hence encourage young men to learn new cooking techniques.

*"I have an advanced self-cleaning microwave. [I just boil water in the microwave and the steam cleans the microwave]. I can also cook posho in the microwave though I must admit it tastes different from charcoal-made posho."*

### Older women

- **To keep a man** – Some older women believe that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach and therefore they endeavour to always improve their cooking styles so as to strengthen their marriages.
- **Meet their children's wants** – The mothers shared that when their children want something, they learn to make it so as to keep them from wanting or admiring.
- **Love for cooking** – this is a big influence for most older women.



### 3.2.4 LIFE EVENTS

Some of these influences could be due to life events and some of these life experiences that motivate someone to take up cooking include:

- **Travelling and meeting new people** – Young women have to travel to different regions or countries for work, holidays, and refuge. In these areas, they encounter people of diverse backgrounds who inspire them to learn new techniques of cooking.

*"I went to an Arab country two years ago. It was hard for me at first since I didn't eat what they served but I was able to learn new ways to cook to adopt"*

*"When you visit a friend and like what they have cooked, you ask them and they teach you."*

- **Intermarriages** – The married young women said this was a major factor during their cooking journey. Getting married to someone from a different tribe/culture exposes you to new ways of cooking and new food types.
- **Birthing children** – A pregnant woman may occasionally have cravings for different foods, which inspires her to learn how to prepare new recipes. The young women's doctors also advise them to add new items to their diets while they were expecting. They added that they had to learn because their kids occasionally needed different kid food.
- **Responsibility** - Because they were the first children or girls, the women had to learn to cook in order to care for their younger/male siblings.

*"Male participant: I was also the firstborn and naturally had to learn some of the home chores to help mum"*

- **Weight change** – Young women are inspired to learn new skills by the need to either gain weight or reduce weight, which necessitates specialized cuisines.
- **Losing a relative** – Most people who lose a close relative—especially the family's primary provider—are compelled to live with other family members who insist on them cooking if they want to continue "living under their roof."

*"I was in primary one when I lost my dad. That is the time I learnt how to cook. I went to stay with my uncle where we were studying and stayed with my wife and she told me if I want to stay with them, I will have to cook and if not, I will have to leave."*

*I learnt how to peel matooke, pound ground nuts, and cook matooke, and if I dare burn the food, I would be in trouble. So, we had to learn. So it was that circumstance that made me learn how to cook which made me hate it. Though after I loved it when I started doing it with my mum."*

#### Older women

- **Sickness** – It is sometimes necessary to alter one's diet when they have certain illnesses in order to facilitate a quick recovery or medicine.
- **Old age** - older people need to maintain their health, so they give up their traditional methods of cooking and switch to more modern, healthier ones.
- **To teach their children** – The elder women said that because their kids liked new, contemporary culinary techniques, they had to learn them too in order to pass them on to their kids.

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***INSIGHTS:** From analysis of the submissions provided, the need to learn to cook arises from a variety of factors, including changes in lifestyle, health, culture, and competition. Young women and men alike have cited different reasons for picking up new cooking techniques, from wanting to change their diet and impress others, to being influenced by modern cooking appliances and the COVID pandemic. The older women also express the desire to keep a man, meet their children's wants, and love for cooking as a big influence. It is clear that cooking is an essential skill that has the potential to bring people together and strengthen relationships, while also promoting health and well-being.*

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### 3.2.5 BARRIERS

As expected of any learning curve, young women face a number of setbacks when trying to learn new techniques of cooking. The following are the conclusions that were deduced on what discourages young women from learning to cook or from actually cooking:

#### **Young women**

- **Expensive ingredients and appliances** – Young ladies lack the funds to purchase the ingredients needed to prepare the exotic dishes they watch on YouTube. They find the equipment they require to produce certain meals, such as ovens, electric pressure cookers, air fryers, and so on, to be pricey.
- **A busy lifestyle** – Lack of time is a huge barrier for young women. They hardly ever have spare time because they are always working hard to get money and make it through life in a capitalist society.
- **Tedious cooking process** – Young women are frequently deterred from cooking due to the labour-intensive nature of the activity. Major obstacles were noted as tasks like washing utensils, peeling, and chopping items.
- **Availability of the main cook** - Most people do not feel the need to learn to cook if they live with someone who does the cooking for the most part

of the household. (For instance, a nanny or aunt who cooks for a family with teens while staying at home.)

### Men

- **Toxic societal constructs** – Women frequently fear rivalry and criticism from their spouses, therefore guys who can cook run the risk of never finding a spouse, it is said to men.

*"I am often told that knowing how to cook makes me too feminine and that I will stay single forever."*

- **Family culture** – Some households have a custom that men do not prepare meals; as a result, the men never have the opportunity to learn how to cook.

### Older women

- **Cost of appliances** – This was mentioned as the greatest barrier. These costs in comparison with the initial costs of traditional cooking equipment are considered high by most people.
- **Mentality** – The belief that cooking with electricity is costly is also a barrier faced by older women.
- **Unreliable electricity supply** - Due to the country's chronic load shedding, there are times when the electricity cuts out mid-preparation, leaving meals partially cooked. Using charcoal or other fuels does not provide this problem.
- **Low usability awareness** - older women frequently struggle with teaching new employees how to operate the appliances, therefore they urged manufacturers to raise equipment usage knowledge.

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***INSIGHTS:** As observed from the participants' declarations, the barriers to learning to cook vary across different groups of people. Young women face obstacles such as expensive ingredients and appliances, a busy lifestyle, and tedious cooking processes. Men may be deterred by toxic societal constructs and family culture. Older women also face financial barriers and may be hesitant to use modern cooking appliances due to a lack of awareness or unreliable electricity supply.*

*In order to overcome these barriers, individuals may need to find ways to reduce costs, such as looking for affordable equipment or searching for recipes that use inexpensive ingredients. Additionally, manufacturers can play a role in addressing the barriers by making appliances more affordable and user-friendly. Lastly, it is important to break the societal constructs that discourage men to learn how to cook and to make cooking more accessible to everyone.*

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### 3.2.6 ASPIRATIONS

The discussions also included learning about the participants' goals for learning to cook, ideal kitchen settings, and the motivations behind these goals.

#### 1. Learning how to cook

##### **Young men**

- Through home visits, involves community initiative to learn from each other.
- Employ a chef to teach your children from home
- Watch cooking TV shows on DStv

##### **Men**

- Research
- From someone around them who knows how to cook
- Through practice

#### 2. Future of cooking

##### **Young women**

- a. The participants agreed that the future of cooking is indeed promising especially for exotic dishes as cooking practices continue to be influenced by different cultures.
- b. There is a threat to the future of local foods.

*"The originality and taste of local food is being lost and a lot of processed foods are being taken "*

##### **Men**

- a. Men should learn and advance (or new appliances)
- b. Modern cooking technologies are going to encourage men to cook
- c. Men will cook in turn with their wives

##### **Food Enthusiasts**

- a. Tourism combined with the food industry. This will allow for the possibility of showcasing traditional and local cuisine to a wider audience, promoting cultural exchange and understanding through food.
- b. Vloggers want their content to reach different kinds of people
- c. It will involve a lot of innovativeness, in terms of time-saving, what equipment are people developing today to save time
- d. Health-related lifestyle, the future of food should consider calorie intake
- e. The power of social media is going to influence the future of cooking
- f. It will require more research to accommodate for allergies.
- g. More technology is coming up, people need to be more creative, and the public will need to keep up
- h. Prepare food using wine

### 3. Dream cooking space

The participants listed the following as their aspirations of what their cooking space should look like.

#### **Young women**

- Marble tables, so that they can cut ingredients from the table
- Wooden floors for the aesthetic
- The utensils she uses to cook must also be able to work for dining use (the saucepans that can be used as serving dishes)
- She wishes to have the specific cutlery for specific roles e.g., a fish knife, butter knife, steak knife, coffee spoon, a tablespoon
- Saucepans with a timer, so that food doesn't burn, and no need to keep checking
- Better hygiene; So that the smell of the kitchen does not stick
- Two in one equipment
- Proper cooking ethics
- Non-congested kitchen, so she wants a few multipurpose things

#### **Men**

- Should have a great chef in my kitchen
- An open kitchen, natural lighting
- Modern appliances - they save time
- All kinds of cutlery – specific to different uses
- Spacious kitchen (multipurpose, can work from there)
- Custom-made marble table from Mongolia and wooden floors (to prevent staining and electric shocks)
- Sponsor the wife to learn so that they can cook for them
- Smart fridges
- More electronic appliances
- Rough floors to avoid slipping or falling

- No smoke
- Chopsticks to practice

#### 4. How to adapt to modern energy

- One should aim to be financially stable to afford them
- Educate men (Men need a mindset change so that they know cooking is not a gendered role)
- The men of this generation should remove biases about men cooking so that the future generation can embrace cooking. By starting with their children.
- The manufacturers of modern appliances should make sure they are affordable for the layman.

#### Food Enthusiasts

- People will have to conform just like they did for COVID19 by getting vaccinated

### 3.2.7 AWARENESS

This section was designed specifically for food enthusiasts. It focuses on their methods of promoting themselves and their work, with the goal of gaining a deeper understanding of how knowledge about cooking with modern technologies can be disseminated.

#### 1. How do you promote what you do?

- Brand yourself; This includes creating a consistent image and message across all of your social media platforms and marketing materials.
- Post your work on your social media e.g., Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp, Instagram, groups,
- Start up a website (make sure to share links to the website on social media)
- Through friends (they can share your work on their socials or refer you.)
- Promotions in popular magazines for example bride and groom
- Partner with service providers
- Come up with things/ projects/ exhibitions. Call the public e.g., a run of cooking things directly from the farm. Do something extraordinary

#### 2. How do you find the Ugandan Vlogging/blogging market space or atmosphere? Any challenges, barriers?

- Vlogging takes confidence, you are going to receive all kinds of feedback. Make sure your information is authentic
- The blogging market space in Uganda is still nascent and is yet to grow

**3. What are your key performance indicators (How do you know that your video/ blog was a success)?**

- When you get an invitation to cook at a wedding.
- Number of views, reposts and likes on your post

**4. How do you get feedback? if any**

- Direct from friends
- Feedback on the website

**5. What motivated you to keep making content before your channel picked up traction?**

- Hope

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***INSIGHTS:** The discussions about cooking and the future of cooking revealed a range of goals and motivations for learning to cook, including learning from home visits, chefs, TV shows, research and practice, with a focus on modern cooking technologies and the preservation of local foods, and aspirations for dream cooking spaces with modern appliances and proper hygiene, with food enthusiasts promoting their work through social media and facing challenges in the Ugandan vlogging and blogging market.*

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### 3.3 KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Interviews were conducted with 10 people (9 households were visited) who cook often in their places of residence, this included 8 women and 2 men. The interviewers aimed to observe cooking space composition and organization, technologies and techniques used, how they used, behaviours and more; they, therefore, carried out these visits during cooking hours. This was to further understand how people learn to cook and cooking space characteristics, and cooking behaviours. To capture in-depth, the cooking practices of different types of people, the categories were divided to include men, women, and people with disabilities.

Table 3 Showing Categorization of interviewees

	<b>HH1</b>	<b>HH2</b>	<b>HH3</b>	<b>HH4</b>	<b>HH5</b>	<b>HH6</b>	<b>HH7 &amp; HH8</b>		<b>HH9</b>	<b>HH10</b>
<b>Participant</b>	Male	Female	Female (PWD)	Female	Female	Female	Female (daughter)	Female (Mum)	Female	Male (PWD)
<b>Age</b>	23	25	24	28	31	22	34	67	32	31
<b>HH Composition</b>	5	2	4	10	5	1	10		5	1
<b>Occupation</b>	Student (finalist)	mid wife, Entrepreneur	Small business owner	Administrator	Administrator	Shop attendant	Accountant	Retired	Factory worker	Builder
<b>Income status</b>	Low	Middle	Low	Low	Middle	Low	Middle	Middle	Middle	Low



### 3.3.1 CURRENT COOKING PRACTICES

#### How many times do you cook on average?

If they have the time, participants typically cook at least once a day, with weekends being the most often mentioned option.

*"I usually cook on the weekends, which are Saturday and Sunday, and the maid cooks from Monday to Friday. If I come back early, I'll give her a hand." – 31-year-old mother and administrator.*

#### 1. Fuels

The participants in this study reported using a variety of fuels for their cooking needs. The most commonly used fuels were charcoal, LPG (Liquid Petroleum Gas), and electricity. These fuels were used in combination with one another, depending on the convenience or the need to speed up the cooking process. Some participants preferred using charcoal for outdoor cooking and grilling, while others found LPG to be more efficient for indoor cooking. Electricity was used mostly for baking and roasting. The participants' preference for these fuels varied depending on the availability, cost, and the type of cooking they were doing. Overall, the combination of fuels provided the participants with flexibility and options in their cooking routine.

#### 2. Meals

The majority of the respondents in this study reported that they prepare three meals a day, including breakfast, lunch, and supper. However, some participants reported missing either lunch or supper, but never breakfast. This suggests that breakfast is considered an important meal of the day and is rarely skipped. The meals prepared vary depending on the availability of ingredients, time, and personal preference.

#### 3. Cooking devices used

Cooking devices used in the kitchen by the respondents include a charcoal stove, a salad master, an EPC (Electric Pressure Cooker), an LPG (Liquid Petroleum Gas) stove, a percolator, an electric oven, a pressure pot, a rice cooker, an LPG burner, and a kerosene stove. These devices are used for a variety of cooking methods, such as grilling, boiling, baking, and roasting.

#### 4. Local foods known

The participants in this study reported knowing how to prepare a variety of local foods. The most common foods they are able to prepare include matooke, sweet potatoes, posho, pilau rice, roasted meat, malewa, yams, and cassava. In addition, they are also able to prepare a variety of sauces, such as meat sauce, bean sauce, pea sauce, ground nut sauce, fish sauce, fish with mushroom sauce, and mukene in beans or pounded. From the analysis, it was evident that matooke preparation was a skill known by all interviewees. Therefore, it would be advisable

for this market to train people on how to use EPCs to prepare matooke in order to increase the value of the EPCs in their eyes and improve their usability. This would be a good way to introduce a new method of cooking to the market and improve the participants' cooking skills.

### 5. Exotic foods known

The participants also reported being familiar with a variety of exotic foods. Some of the known exotic foods include vegetable rice, deep-fried Irish potatoes, local pizza, Rolex (a chapatti with eggs and spices), baked cakes and pizzas, mandazis (a type of deep-fried doughnut), Irish potatoes, spaghetti, chicken, goat meat, eggs, and deep-fried chicken with spices. These exotic foods reflect the diverse cultural backgrounds of the participants and the influence of different cuisines on their traditional cooking methods. The participant's knowledge and skills in preparing these exotic foods suggest that they are open to experimenting and trying new flavours and cooking techniques.

## 3.3.2 LEARNING HOW TO COOK

*"Cooking is an essential skill that is passed down from generation to generation. It is a reflection of culture, tradition and personal experiences. In this section, the ways how the participants learned to cook were delved into."*

### 1. When did you start cooking?

Most of the interviewees reported starting to cook at a young age, with the majority starting at around 11, 10, and 9 years old. Some even went as far as to say that they have been cooking for their entire lives. This suggests that cooking is an important and valued skill in their culture and that it is passed down from generation to generation. They also have a lot of experience in cooking and have mastered many recipes and cooking techniques.

### 2. How did you learn to cook?

During the interviews, the participants shared their personal and intriguing stories about how and from whom they learned to cook. The following are some of the stories they shared.

- **Elders/main cook** – These elders varied from mothers, grandmothers, elder sisters, stepmothers, aunts
- **Self-taught** – Without any guidance from anyone, some of the people teach themselves starting with the easy meals like spaghetti and eggs.

*"I taught myself how to cook, starting with spaghetti. I learned to prepare matooke, spaghetti, and rice on my own. However, when I was younger, I used to watch my mother cook and that helped me to acquire some basic cooking skills" - 31 year old builder.*

- **Friends** – Learning how to cook from friends can be an enjoyable way for people to acquire cooking skills. It allows individuals to learn about different cultural cuisines and cooking styles, which can be a great way to expand their culinary knowledge. Cooking with friends can also be a bonding experience and can strengthen relationships.
- **Online platforms** – Online platforms have become a popular way for people to learn how to cook. With the availability of the internet, individuals can access a vast array of resources that teach them how to cook. From recipe websites, cooking blogs, cooking videos on YouTube, to online cooking classes and tutorials, the options are endless. These online platforms provide a wide range of recipes, cooking techniques, and tips that cater to different levels of experience, dietary restrictions and tastes.
- **Challenge** – The participants learned to prepare certain meals by being challenged by their elders to cook them. Through this process of being challenged and overcoming those challenges, they were able to acquire the skills needed to cook these meals successfully in the long run.
- **Training at school** – Many schools, both primary and secondary, offer cooking classes as part of their curriculum. These classes provide students with hands-on experience in the kitchen and teach them the basics of cooking, such as kitchen safety, meal planning, and food preparation. The classes also provide students with an opportunity to learn about different types of cuisine, ingredients and cooking methods.
- **Observation** – By watching others cook, individuals can observe the steps and techniques used in preparing a meal. This enables them to understand the process and know what steps to take and which to avoid. It also allows them to learn by example and see how different ingredients interact with each other, how to measure and handle them, and how to achieve the desired texture and flavour.

### 3. Recommended ways to learn to cook

Here are a few recommendations for learning how to cook that participants shared based on their own learning experiences:

**Online;** Watch cooking videos or take online cooking classes to learn new techniques and recipes.

**People;** Gain insight and knowledge from loved ones by cooking with them and asking them for guidance on specific recipes or techniques.

**Observation;** Watching others cook is an excellent way to learn new techniques, recipes and methods of cooking. By observing how others approach cooking, you

can pick up on their skills and tricks and apply them to your own cooking. This can be done by watching cooking shows, videos, or observing family members or friends cook.

**Catering schools;** these are institutions that provide professional training in cooking through a combination of practical and theoretical lessons. They offer a wide range of techniques and recipes from various cultures, which provides learners with a diverse skill set. This enables them to cook a wide range of dishes, from traditional meals to modern fusion cuisine.

#### **4. Is online media an effective way to learn to cook?**

The participants concurred that learning through online platforms is an efficient method and identified YouTube as the most useful website for this purpose. Other sites that were mentioned include Facebook, Instagram, and google. Some of the reasons cited for this include;

**Regular cooking updates;** with the constant evolution of food trends and the introduction of new ingredients, it can be challenging to keep up with the latest developments in the culinary world. However, by using online resources such as cooking blogs, websites and social media platforms, you can access the latest information and stay up-to-date with the latest culinary trends.

**Room to explore;** online media provides a wide range of options to explore. With the vast amount of information available online, you can find countless recipes, cooking tutorials, and videos on a wide variety of cuisines and techniques. This allows you to experiment with different flavours, ingredients and styles of cooking, and find new recipes that suit your taste and dietary restrictions.

**Easy to find what you are looking for;** many online resources are user-friendly and organized in a way that makes it simple to find what you're looking for. This makes it easy to find the information you need quickly, so you can spend more time cooking and less time searching.

**Information availability;** With the internet, you have access to a wide variety of sources of information including recipe websites, cooking blogs, online cooking classes, and instructional videos. These resources provide a wealth of information on different cuisines, ingredients, cooking techniques, and recipes.

**Step-by-step, clear and accurate instructions;** Online media provides clear and accurate step-by-step instructions. Whether you're a beginner or a seasoned pro, having detailed instructions to follow can make the cooking process much easier and more enjoyable.

**Online sites can be saved and followed later;** many online sites and platforms allow users to save recipes, tutorials and other materials for future reference. Additionally, some online sites allow users to organize their saved content into categories or playlists, which can make it even easier to find and follow specific resources later. With this feature, you can easily build a library of resources that

you can refer to whenever you want to learn something new or improve your cooking skills.

**Conducive;** Online media allows you to learn at your own pace and in the comfort of your own home.

While many people find online media to be an effective tool for learning to cook, some respondents did not share this view;

- One of the reasons cited for this was difficulty in using similar measurements. Some people have noted that online resources often use measurements that are not common in their country or region, or that are difficult to convert to the measurements they are used to. This can make it difficult to accurately follow a recipe or replicate the results of a tutorial.
- Many online resources, such as videos and tutorials, use specific appliances that may not be available to all users. Without knowing what appliances were used, it can be difficult to replicate the results shown in the video. Additionally, some of the appliances used in these resources may not be commonly found in the average kitchen, which can make it difficult to follow the instructions and achieve similar results.

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***INSIGHTS:** The availability of online resources that teach how to cook a variety of dishes can be beneficial in helping people make the transition to using electricity to cook. Cooking with electricity, such as using electric stoves or ovens, can be more efficient and convenient than traditional methods, such as cooking with firewood or charcoal. However, some people may be hesitant to make the switch if they are not familiar with how to cook using electricity.*

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## **5. Dishes taught and mastered**

The dishes that have been taught and mastered include:

- Chicken, grilled fish, grilled chicken in an oven and stuff it with all ingredients
- Pilau, matooke, boiled rice, ground nuts with fish, fish, boiled meat and fried
- Peas, vegetable rice, mukene, pork, beans
- Bake cakes, chicken from luwombo, how to mingle posho, steamed bananas.

## 6. Techniques, tricks or shortcuts

These cooking shortcuts can save time and effort in the kitchen. With meat, spicing it and leaving it in the fridge overnight with the spices allows the flavours to marinate and penetrate the meat, making it more tender and flavourful when cooked the following day. For matooke, precooking it in an electric pressure cooker before mashing and steaming in banana leaves can speed up the process. Soaking beans overnight in water before cooking can also make them softer and easier to prepare. By mastering these shortcuts, you can achieve delicious and tender dishes with less time and effort.

In the past, using rock salt to soften beans quickly was a common practice, but now with the use of an electric pressure cooker (EPC), the beans can be cooked for 30 minutes, achieving the same result without the need of rock salt. Additionally, when preparing dishes like katogo, all the ingredients can be put together in the EPC and cooked for 20 minutes without removing the pressure. This method not only saves time, but also allows all the ingredients to cook evenly and quickly, resulting in a tasty and well-prepared dish. With these cooking shortcuts, you can enjoy your favourite dishes with less time and effort.

*"To make the perfect chips, I first partially boil them and then deep fry them. Although it's a longer process, it results in a nice texture. However, if I'm short on time, I simply fry the chips directly in cooking oil."*

*"For matooke, I only boil it and mix it with other ingredients. When preparing meat, I add ginger to soften it and enhance the flavour. Additionally, using beef masala, rosemary and coriander gives it a great aroma." – 31 year old mother and administrator*

When preparing rice, put water, onions, rice, and salt in a pot and boil it all together. The same method is used when preparing matooke. Additionally, when cooking meat, one can boil it with onions, salt, and tomatoes altogether."

### 3.3.3 INFLUENCES

*Various factors influence how one learns to cook, such as their financial situation, life experiences, and cultural customs.*

#### 1. What influences you to learn new skills, techniques or tricks in cooking?

- Curiosity; The desire to explore new flavours and methods of preparation drives people to constantly expand their culinary knowledge.

*"I enjoy experimenting with new ingredients and techniques and am always looking for ways to improve my skills in the kitchen." – 28 year old mother and administrator.*

- Preparing food for friends; Cooking for others always presents an opportunity to showcase one's culinary abilities and to impress friends

with delicious meals This need to impress pushes people to learn new cooking techniques.

- Desire to avoid purchasing food from restaurants; cooking one's own meals not only saves money but also allows one to have more control over the ingredients and the nutritional value of their food. People who have stomach issues from consuming restaurant food are also often compelled to learn how to cook and prepare their own meals.
- Passion to learn new techniques; A respondent shared that they are driven by the joy of experimentation and the thrill of discovering new flavours and textures.
- Intermarrying different tribes; the desire to connect with their partner's culture and heritage through food is a strong motivator for people to learn new skills, techniques, and recipes.
- Cultures; the desire to explore new cultures and learn about their food is a powerful force that drives many people to expand their culinary skills and knowledge.
- New appliances; Acquiring new cooking appliances often leads to the need to learn how to properly use them, which in turn results in the discovery of new cooking techniques.

### 3.3.4 LIFE EVENTS

*In this discussion, the various life events that have motivated individuals to learn how to cook and how these experiences have shaped their culinary journey were explored.*

- For some participants, joining university and having to cook for themselves prompted them to learn traditional dishes from their friends they studied with. They learned how to prepare dishes such as Okra with fish and posho when they visited their friends from the northern parts of Uganda.
- Being in an environment where different types of food were prepared motivates people to learn how to cook those dishes.
- Getting married to someone from a different tribe exposes people to new cuisines.
- Being a girl; Growing up, girls are taught that cooking is an important skill for a girl to have and that it is a way to take care of herself and those around her.

*"I believe that every girl should learn how to cook. It is an obligation. As every girl is expected to get married, it is important to have the ability to cook. Knowing how to cook can be a way to win a man's heart. It is a valuable skill to have in any relationship." – 24-year small business owner in Makerere University.*

- Receiving praise for their cooking from their partner is a life event that has prompted many people to learn how to cook. When their partner expresses enjoyment and appreciation for their meals, it can be a powerful motivator for people to improve their cooking skills.
- Being the oldest child in a family where the parents are frequently occupied with work is a life event that prompts many individuals to learn how to cook in order to take care of their younger siblings.
- Dream to become a chef; For some people, learning how to cook is the first step in fulfilling their dream of becoming a chef and making a career in the culinary industry.
- Bad experience from eating other people's food.

*"I requested my neighbour to cook for me, and a chick fell in my beans and died in the sauce. She never informed me and I ate. This prompted me never to ask any person to cook for me." – 32-year-old worker in a construction company*

### 3.3.5 BARRIERS

*Through interviews with individuals, information was gathered about the various obstacles that they have encountered while learning to cook and while cooking in general.*

- Lack of funds; Financial constraints (this can include the cost of appliances and equipment, such as a stove or oven, as well as the cost of ingredients and fuels) can make it difficult for individuals to purchase the necessary items to cook a variety of meals, which can limit their ability to learn and experiment with different recipes and cooking techniques.
- Culture
- Dirty fuels; traditional fuels such as wood, charcoal, and animal dung are still widely used for cooking. These fuels are dirty to the touch and can stay in your nails even after washing your hands. They also produce harmful smoke and pollutants which are dangerous to users' health.
- Time-consuming, lack of time; Unlike modern fuels such as gas and electricity, traditional fuels like charcoal require constant monitoring and adjusting of the fire to maintain a consistent heat. This can be time-



consuming and can take away from the time that could be spent on cooking and learning.

- Burns; Charcoal can create sparks that can jump out of the grill or stove, which can cause burns or fires. This frequently discourages people from continuing to cook in order to ensure their own safety.
- Power instability; In Uganda, electricity is not always reliable, and power outages are common. This can make it difficult for individuals to use electric appliances such as stoves, ovens, and microwave ovens to cook their meals.
- Gas explosions; the fear of LPG explosions and fires from leakages, improper storage and handling which can cause serious injuries or death. This fear of gas explosions can lead to anxiety and stress which bars individuals from cooking if it's the only fuel available for use.
- Rare spices; some recipes require specific spices that may be difficult to find or not available in certain regions. Additionally, some spices can be expensive, which can be a financial burden for low-income families. This can make it difficult for individuals to prepare traditional dishes or experiment with new recipes.

*"I merely go with my money and point to the food/spices I want to buy because of my nature of being mute. I only shop at one store. I am unable to inquire about the availability of exotic spices." – 31-year-old builder.*

- Physical limitations; for some individuals, certain physical conditions may make cooking more difficult or even impossible. For example, if someone has a lame hand, it can be challenging to wash food, chop vegetables or hold cooking utensils. This can lead to delays in food preparation and can limit their ability to learn and experiment with different recipes and cooking techniques. Additionally, some physical conditions may also make it difficult to withstand heat or handle hot surfaces, which can make cooking with certain appliances or methods dangerous.

*"Food is delayed since I have a lame hand. Washing food becomes a serious challenge and too much heat as well affects my scars on the affected hand while cooking" – 24 small business owner*

### 3.3.6 ASPIRATIONS

*In order to gain a deeper understanding of the respondents' cooking habits, additional interviews were conducted with them to learn about their ideal cooking environments, how they would like to learn to cook in the future, what the future of cooking looks like to them, and how they intend to adapt to the energy transition. Below are some of their responses;*

### 1. What does your dream kitchen look like?

- Large and spacious
- Well-equipped kitchen (all appliances to use for cooking like EPC, microwaves, standard oven, air fryers etc.)
- Dull coloured interior
- Only electric appliances
- Only clean cooking appliances (modern appliances)
- Automation to ease work

### 2. How would you want to learn how to cook?

- Taught by someone
- Online
- Practical lessons (observation, books, hands-on, YouTube)
- Culinary school
- Taught by a professional chef

### 3. What does the future of cooking look like to you?

- Smart
- Easy, tireless
- Online ordering of food
- Modern technology i.e., no more firewood and charcoal use, only electricity
- Bright i.e., new recipes, new ways of cooking from different cultures
- Time saving

### 4. What does modern energy look like to you?

- Energy-saving appliances with efficiency above 70%
- Green/ clean energy
- Using modern appliances like percolators, EPCs, LPG, ovens
- Improved cooking like using biogas, briquettes, solar i.e., it is improved fuels and appliances.
- Cheap
- Safe from burns, fires and explosions
- Smokeless
- All waste turned into energy

#### ***Food Enthusiasts***

- The new/modern ways are a replica of the old ways
- The food prepared with modern energy tastes different. Participants said they prefer firewood-cooked meals because that taste is getting lost.
- Maintain the tradition and modify it

## 5. How will you adapt to this transition?

- Through embracing the transition like digital migration
- Sensitization to spread awareness on how to use energy in a way that preserves and saves it and more knowledge about these technologies.
- Research
- Market price reductions of modern appliances
- Advertisements
- Transition will be very easy because of its benefits.
- Trainings
- Demonstrations
- Door-to-door sensitization
- Reference that is the ones who have shall tell the rest or call them to watch while cooking.

## 6. Ambitions

- Teaching other people to cook
- Knowing master key recipes off the head
- Open a restaurant with good appliances

*"To improve my cooking, I'll take cooking classes. Additionally, I would like to run a restaurant serving both regional and exotic (international) cuisine. Since I love cakes, I would also like to have a bakery."*

- Learning new methods of cooking
- Only use clean energies for cooking

## 7. What has informed these aspirations?

- Need to ease life
- To cook better than friends
- Passion for cooking and curiosity
- The goal to own a restaurant
- To spread awareness of modern technologies to others
- Need to earn from baking
- To learn new methods of cooking
- To become a popular chef
- Ambition to leave a mark.

### 3.3.7 KITCHEN OBSERVATIONS

Following or concurrent with the in-depth interviews, kitchen observations were undertaken to examine the setup and organization of the participants' cooking environments. It also enabled the team to ask additional inquiries in order to get

greater insights. Observed conventional cooking equipment, gadgets and organizations included the following:

**Kitchen setup;** It was observed that most people that use electricity to cook have their kitchens inside the house. The respondents, especially the older ones, who use charcoal have their kitchens outside the house. The indoor kitchens were observed to be mostly just cemented with a few tiled.

**Cooking space size, arrangement and organization;** most kitchens were no bigger than 3-meter square rooms with wooden drawers for storage

**Kitchen utensils;** some of the standard utensils found in these kitchens included; saucepans, cups, forks, plates, kettles, spoons, flasks, cooking pots, blenders, plastic dishes

**Tools used;** The common tools found were; jerricans, stools, charcoal stoves, EPCs, gas cookers, rice cooker, buckets for storing food, tables, racks,

**Fuels used;** LPG, electricity, charcoal (rarely used), wood (used in only one household)

**Appliances;** Some of the appliances found in the kitchens visited included; a charcoal stove, kettle, electric cooker, gas cylinder, microwaves, sandwich maker, wood stove, kerosene stove, salad master (only one household)

**Behaviours;** the majority of the interviewees were excited about the study and cooking in general, and this was evident in both their comments and the anecdotes they provided.

**Spices or seasoning displayed;** Salt, cooking oil, tomatoes and royco were some of the most common spices found. Some of the rare ones displayed were; carrots, tropical heats, Simba mbili, blue band, sugar, tea leaves, pilau masala, soy sauce, chilli, Carrefour curry, ginger, tea masala, barbecue sauces, and so on.

**Ease of access to cooking accessories;** People living in the visited households can usually access the kitchens without much difficulty because most are located within the home and the outside ones are only a few meters away.

### 3.4 VIGNETTES

During the data collection phase, a combination of images and video footage captured during the interview process were utilized to develop vignettes. Below is a breakdown of the vignette that were developed and the relevant questions for each interviewed category;

#### **Sample questions**

- 1) Mother Daughter Video Vignette: Are there different ways of cooking and learning to cook depending on generations? *Capturing 3 generations*
- 2) Video Vignette – Young Man: How do they feel (e.g., consider the emotive elements of cooking - how cooking and meal choices feed into perceptions of cultural identity, relationships, etc.) about modern alternatives of cooking/eating?
- 3) Video Vignette – Young Lady: What ambitions do they have for their cooking ability? And how are their aspirations formed/influenced? Shares how she learnt cooking when she was young and how this has changed over the times.
- 4) Video Vignette - Different faces talking about learning to cook, the future of cooking and what modern energy looks like to them.
- 5) PWD Written Vignette: How he communicates as he cooks and how he learned how to cook.
- 6) FGDs Written Vignette – Older Women:  
What dishes are taught and mastered? What techniques, tricks, or shortcuts in cooking, do individuals adopt? And are these dishes/techniques mastered at different life stages and why?
- 7) FGD Written Vignette - Young Men: (Same question as above so more like compare and contrast)
- 8) FGD Written Vignette – Food Enthusiasts: Diversity in the group- chefs, writers, influencers; their cooking practices and how they reach their target audiences

**Link to the Vignettes** – *shared as a separate link*

## 4 CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

### 4.1 CONCLUSION

Focus group discussions and one on one interviews were conducted in order to explore how people living in urban areas of Uganda learn how to cook and the factors that are driving the shift away from traditional family/household kitchen spaces to digital platforms. It was found that, despite being preferred for the flavours of the food they produce, traditional cooking techniques are quickly being replaced by more contemporary ones. This is due to the fact that contemporary cooking alternatives are quicker, more efficient, cleaner, and require less supervision. The main obstacle was discovered to be mental prejudice to using electric cooking, particularly when it comes to the cost of electricity. The majority of the participants acknowledged that they still find it challenging to prepare traditional foods using modern techniques and that they would require additional persuasion to make the switch.

The findings revealed a shift in how people are learning to cook, driven by variables like accessibility and ease, towards digital platforms like YouTube and social media. However, traditional methods of learning were also found to be effective, with participants reporting that they retained skills better when learning from family members or in-person classes. The study also found that the shift towards digital platforms had an impact on the traditional ways of passing down cooking skills within families and households, and highlighted the need for culturally sensitive interventions to promote the transition to clean cooking in urban areas of Uganda. Overall, the study provided valuable insights into the perceptions and attitudes of urban Ugandans towards the acquisition of cooking skills and the use of digital platforms for learning.

### 4.2 LIMITATIONS

Not many bloggers in Uganda focus exclusively on creating food-related articles. The ones that were found covered a variety of subjects, including food and as such the composition that was interviewed comprised of a variety of food enthusiasts that included chefs, social media influencers and writers.

### 4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are suggested additional research topics that can be done on similar issues to acquire a deeper grasp of the topic.

- In order to increase awareness of e-cooking, it is necessary to enhance the online presence of research teams. To achieve this, there must be a strengthening of the relationships between researchers and individuals such as authors, bloggers, vloggers, and influencers.
- Conduct pilot projects with members of the community so that they can promote clean energy appliances to others.
- The systems should be made available for use by people off-grid because battery-using appliances are unreliable.
- Engage community-based programs: Community-based programs can provide modern appliances to people at a low cost or even free. These programs can also spread awareness of the advantages of using such appliances, and provide training on how to use and maintain them.
- Use the observation learning approach, in which people pick up culinary skills by watching a skilled cook, to aid in the shift to contemporary, clean cooking fuels.
- Since online media as a learning tool is preferred, conduct an inventory of the numerous digital resources and popular social media platforms utilized by Ugandans, or conduct a communications audit. Content, tone, presentation, food categories, and preparation methods are all potential audit components.

## APPENDIX

### SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. When did you start to cook?
2. How often do you cook in a week?
3. How many people do you normally are being cook for
4. What meals do you like to cook is cooked and how
5. Which cooking fuel do you use and why,
6. How did you learn to cook? From whom/ what?
7. Would you recommend this learning and why?
8. If the method used was effective, why does it hold such appeal?
9. Are there different ways of cooking and learning to cook depending on generations?
10. What dishes are taught and mastered?
11. What techniques, tricks or shortcuts in cooking, do you use?
12. Are these dishes/techniques mastered at different life stages and why?
13. How have your cooking techniques changed over time when younger and now?
14. What barriers do you encounter when cooking?
15. What influences you to cook?
16. How do you feel (e.g., consider the emotive elements of cooking - how cooking and meal choices feed into perceptions of cultural identity, relationships, etc) about modern alternatives of cooking/eating?
17. What ambitions do you have for your cooking ability?
18. What would you say the future of cooking look like?
19. What does modern energy look like to you?
20. Are you willing to adopt new techniques and how will you adapt to this transition?
21. What attracts you to be in your kitchen to cook?
22. Is your kitchen located inside main house or out, shared with neighbours or individual?



**OBSERVATION CHECKLIST – HOUSEHOLD KIIs**

**Household ID:**

**Date:**

No	Item:	Observation	Remarks
1.	Describe kitchen setup		
2.	Kitchen Location		
3.	Cooking space size, arrangement, organization		
4.	Kitchen Utensils		
5.	Tools used		
6.	Fuel used		
7.	Appliances		
8.	Behaviors		
9.	Other Accessories		
10.	Cookbooks or recipes		
11.	Spices or seasonings displayed		
12.	Ease of access to cooking accessories		