**Teaching Food to students with Aspergers/Autism**

**Students on the Autistic Spectrum:-**

* might avoid messy activities so cooking could be a problem
* might dislike foodstuffs touching each other on the plate
* can be extremely sensitive to flavour, colour, smell and texture
* can have strong preferences for a narrow selection of food
* may be compelled to have certain foods in the same place on the plate or to use the same plate at each meal
* may have difficulty describing what they like or dislike about certain foods
* may have strong preferences for carbohydrates and processed food - rejecting fruit and vegetables
* can find recipes overwhelming
* may dislike bright lights and noise
* might have difficulties being close to people

**How to help:-**

* treat their difficulties as a real phobia
* respect the students need to limit unfamiliar or uncomfortable input
* accept that the student may have bad days when they are not able to tolerate change
* pay attention to variables in your control such as people, the time of day, the environment
* Allow the student to work in a small group of about 3 or 4 - with peers that are able/happy to work with him/her
* if food mixers (or other noisy equipment) are to be used, the students may need to wear ear protectors
* make sure lights are not too bright
* introduce the idea of cooking prior to the actual lessons and remind the student regularly that they will be cooking on a certain day/date/time
* if leaving the usual classroom for food technology, show the student where they will be going and how it is set out
* encourage tasting. If the student is adverse to the food being made, start by asking the student to touch it, smell it, bring it up to their mouth, lick it, chew and swallow. However this should only be done if they are comfortable and it is fun. Sometimes watching their peers enjoying food can be motivating.
* recipes should be simple with clear visuals
* complete a demonstration of the steps and the end product or pictures can be cut out and presented one at a time.
* Plan complementary lessons around the recipes - make a grocery list, learn about money, how to put away groceries, the names of items in the kitchen, safety.