

If research papers were quesadillas...

This analogy may stretch your imagination and simultaneously make you hungry! Who doesn't love quesadillas, those crispy tortillas stuffed with the ingredients of your choice including cheese, meat, and/or veggies? Research papers share a similar prep. Consider the steps needed to create both:

The foundation: Great tortilla/topic

The quality of the tortilla makes or breaks a quesadilla. The same applies to a good topic. Is your research topic too broad, too focused, underdeveloped, or overdone? Is it so old it's moldy? Choose a fresh, carefully considered topic that will support the ingredients you want to tuck inside.



Image: ilyke.com



Image: makegoodfood.ca

Dig in the refrigerator/Do the research

What ingredients do you need? Is a trip to the store required? Make a list of what you need to gather for your research paper. Do you need definitions, statistics, database articles, books, and/or quotes from experts? Document the sources for ideas and quotes to avoid plagiarism and start compiling your list of Works Cited.

Select a recipe/Write a thesis & outline

Now that you've scoped out the available ingredients for your quesadilla, what variety will you cook? Formulate your thesis to include the focus and scope of your paper and serve up your position. Draft a tentative outline with an intro, body, and conclusion. Include supporting arguments that will back up your thesis statement.

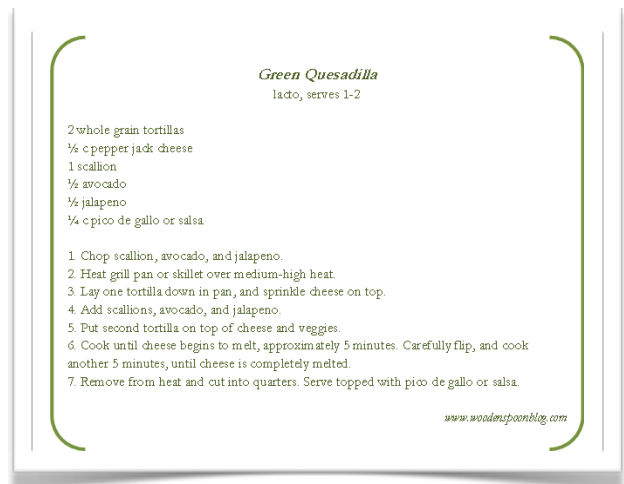


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Organize the ingredients & your notes

Chefs call this “mise en place” -- a French expression for “everything in its place.” Is the skillet warming on the stove? Are your ingredients measured and in the order you will add them? Using your outline, organize, analyze, synthesize, sort, and digest the information you gathered. Time for one last check: Have you gathered top-quality sources? Are they factual and current?

Start cooking/writing

Heat the cast-iron skillet, add the base tortilla and, checking your recipe, start adding ingredients. Consult your outline and write your first draft. Summarize, paraphrase, or directly quote every idea used in your paper. It’s a good idea to let the paper “simmer” for a while after you finish the first draft. Set it aside to gain some perspective for the next step.



Top, cut, serve/Revise, finalize, turn in

Once your quesadilla is perfectly cooked, add toppings such as sour cream and salsa, cut into wedges, and serve. Read your paper with fresh eyes and make revisions. Double check facts and statistics. Compile and check your Works Cited page, print a final copy with your corrections, and turn it in. Savor the delicious taste of accomplishment!

Top-chef librarians are standing by to help with your research quesadilla!

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