

Recipe for integrity

Time to make: a lifetime

Serving size: everyone

Dry ingredients:

Two cups of honesty

One cup of strength

One teaspoon of conviction (potent)

1/2 cup wisdom

Wet ingredients:

A Drop of Adversity

A Sprinkle of indecision

A Splash of hardship

Mix all of the dry ingredients together with a strong moral backbone, keeping separate from the wet ingredients. If the wet ingredients are mixed prior to the complete integration of the dry, the consistency will become muddy leading to a lack of good judgment upon baking.

Integrity is an ancient recipe, typically passed down through families; if your family happens to lack this special recipe, find a friend, or even a stranger. People are often more than willing to teach you.

This recipe has been passed from generation to generation in my family, and although not everyone has been able to execute it correctly, everyone has tried. My mom has been teaching me about integrity ever since I was a child. Her secret ingredient is kindness. I can distinctly remember sitting on a stool in our kitchen and watching my mom as she baked. The sweet smell

of her kindness wafting from the oven and filling my mind with lovely thoughts of acceptance and gentle affirmation. She believes that kindness makes everything sweeter, and she and my father have raised my siblings as great examples of integrity. My sister Meghan uses extra strength and likes to add in courage, allowing her to stay true to her individual recipe. My brother Devin uses a full cup of wisdom and likes to add in a tablespoon of his own knowledge so that his integrity has a solid foundation. My sister Kate chooses to eyeball her ingredients as she pours as opposed to measuring, as she believes that integrity needs not the confinements of one particular recipe. My dad says that he likes his integrity like he likes his poetry, all of the ingredients must flow in perfect unison to create the broader picture making it more complete. I appreciate each and every one of my family member's different takes on this ancient tradition, and I see them use the integrity that they create to shape and affect all of those around them in a positive manner. My family has shown me that following the rules of what is expected is important, but listening to your inner voice and using your moral backbone well is the only way to produce the best dish for you.

Integrity takes a long time to create and it is tedious work, but what you put in is what you get out. The more time and effort you put into mixing your honesty and strength with conviction, the more cohesive your integrity will be. Integrity cannot be bought at a store, and it is not widespread amongst pop culture today. Many prominent figures in our society have skewed the recipe of integrity, changing it to fit their needs as opposed to the needs of all those being served. It is entirely acceptable, and even encouraged, to adapt the ancient recipe to be entirely unique to you. Even though little changes to the recipe are okay, it is important to stay close to its original intent. For example, I like to add a little more patience to help me understand other's recipes better. One should not be greedy with their integrity; by sharing we may ensure

that all can encounter this wonderful and integral recipe which has become a necessity in all of the best cooks' kitchens.

Once everyone learns the recipe for integrity, we will all be able to use it to help us make decisions about our future recipes, always keeping in mind that our own intuition is often the most useful tool in the kitchen.