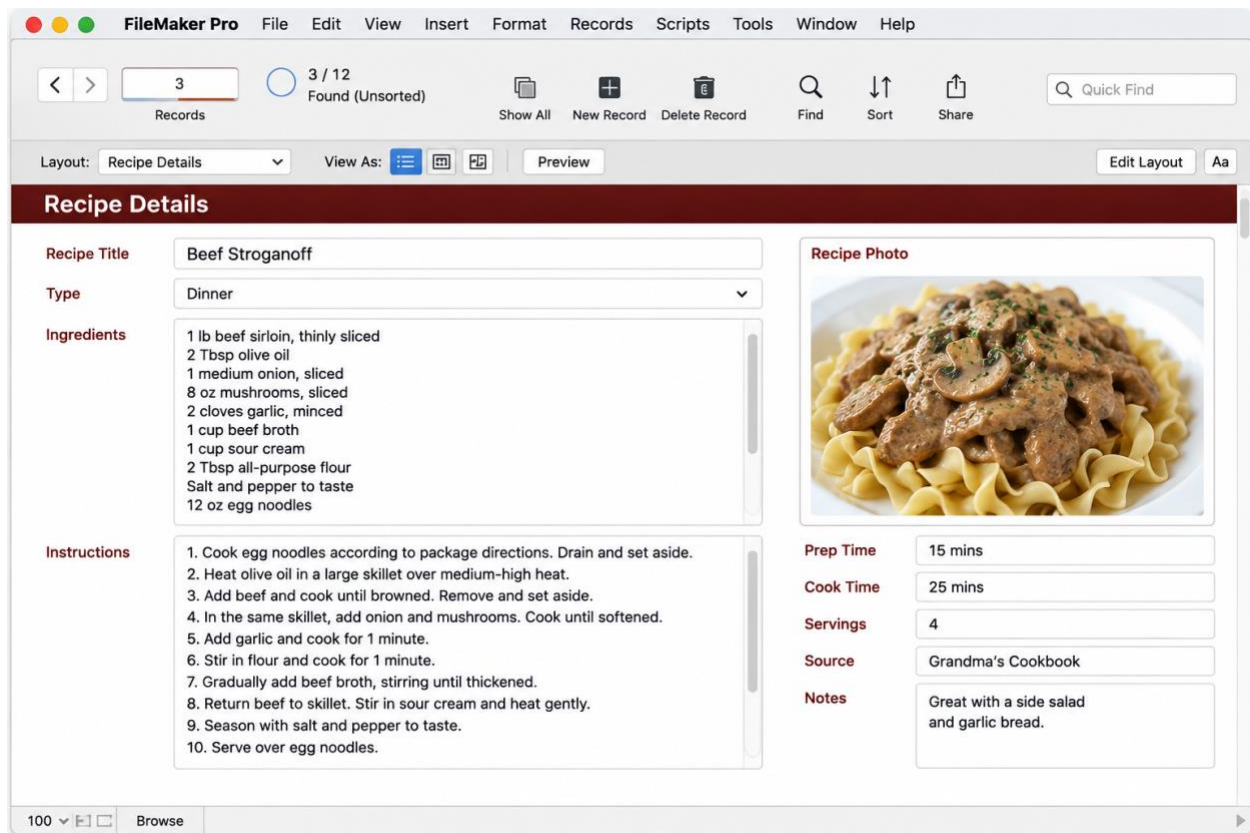




Starting From Scratch: Build a Simple FileMaker Recipe Database

We've already seen how FileMaker can turn an existing Excel spreadsheet into a database. Now let's back up and build a small database from scratch. Nothing fancy: no related tables, complicated calculations, scripts, or reports. We'll simply create a place to store some favorite recipes.

Our database will contain one table called **Recipes** and several fields describing each recipe. By the time we're finished, you'll understand the basic structure behind almost every FileMaker database.

First, Decide What We Want to Store

Before opening FileMaker, let's decide what one recipe record should contain. We'll use these fields:

- Recipe Title – Text--Example: Beef Stroganoff
- Type – Text--Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, or Snack
- Ingredients – Text--The ingredients and amounts needed for the recipe
- Instructions – Text--Directions for preparing the recipe
- Recipe Photo – Container--A photograph of the finished dish
- Prep Time – Text--Example: 20 minutes
- Cook Time – Text--Example: 35 minutes
- Servings – Number--Example: 4
- Source – Text--The cookbook, website, friend, relative, or other source of the recipe
- Notes – Text Anything else you want to remember about preparing or serving the dish

That's enough information to make our first database genuinely useful without making it complicated.

Create the File

Open FileMaker Pro and choose:

File > Create New

Choose Blank, give the file a name such as My Recipes, select where you want to save it, and create the file.

FileMaker now gives you the foundation for your new database. The next job is to tell it what information you want the database to contain.

Create the Recipes Table

Choose:

File > Manage > Database

Mac users can also press Command-Shift-D.

The Manage Database window contains three tabs: Tables, Fields, and Relationships. We'll mostly ignore Relationships for now because our simple database needs only one table.

Click the Tables tab. FileMaker may already have created a table bearing the name of your file. Rename it Recipes if necessary. That's our entire database structure for now: one table containing recipes.

Add the Fields

Click the Fields tab in the Manage Database window and make sure Recipes is selected as the table. This is where we tell FileMaker what information each recipe record will contain.

Create the following fields and select the indicated field type:

- Recipe Title - Text
- Type - Text
- Ingredients - Text
- Instructions - Text
- Recipe Photo - Container
- Prep Time - Text
- Cook Time - Text
- Servings - Number
- Source - Text
- Notes – Text

Notice that FileMaker asks you to specify a field type. Recipe Title, Type, Ingredients, Instructions, Prep Time, Cook Time, Source, and Notes all contain words, so Text is appropriate. Servings is a Number field. Recipe Photo is different. It's a Container field, which FileMaker can use to hold a photograph or another type of file.

When you've finished creating the fields, close Manage Database.

Take a Look at Your Layout

FileMaker provides a basic layout for working with the fields you've created. If you want to rearrange the fields and labels, choose: (You rearrange the fields by dragging them with your cursor and making fine adjustments with the arrow keys on your keyboard. It takes practice, which makes perfect.)

View > Layout Mode

Think of Layout Mode as the place where you design the screen, not the information itself. You might put Recipe Title prominently across the top with Type underneath it. Give Ingredients and Instructions larger areas because they'll contain more text, and place the Recipe Photo alongside them.

The smaller fields - Prep Time, Cook Time, Servings, and Source - can be grouped neatly beneath the photograph. Notes can have a wider area near the bottom of the layout.

When you're satisfied with the basic arrangement, choose:

View > Browse Mode

Now you're back in the part of FileMaker where you work with actual data.

Enter Your First Recipe

In Browse Mode, choose:

Records > New Record

Now fill in the blank fields. Our first record might look something like this:

Recipe Title: Beef Stroganoff

Type: Dinner

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Cook Time: 35 minutes

Servings: 4

Source: Family Recipe

Enter the ingredients in the Ingredients field and the preparation directions in Instructions. Use Notes for anything else worth remembering, such as a substitution you've tried or a change you want to make next time.

The Recipe Photo field demonstrates something different. Because it's a Container field, you can insert a photograph of your finished Beef Stroganoff rather than typing information into it.

Congratulations. You've created your first FileMaker record.

Create another record for pancakes, another for a sandwich, and perhaps another for your favorite snack. Before long, you have a small but genuine database.

What Have We Actually Built?

We've introduced four of FileMaker's most basic ideas without making things unnecessarily complicated. The File contains our entire database. The Table called Recipes contains one particular kind of information: recipes. The Fields define what we know about each recipe, and each Record contains all the information about one recipe.

That's the basic structure. A FileMaker database can eventually contain dozens of tables, hundreds of fields, complicated relationships, calculations, scripts, and thousands or even millions of records. But underneath all that sophistication are the same basic pieces we just used to create our recipe file.

Coming Next: Finding What You Need

Add enough recipes and eventually you'll have a new problem: Where's that Beef Stroganoff recipe? That's when FileMaker's Find capabilities become useful. Instead of scrolling through every recipe, you can ask FileMaker to find Beef

Stroganoff, show only your Dinner recipes, or locate records containing a particular ingredient.

In the next article, we'll learn how to do exactly that. After all, storing information is only half the job of a database. The other half is finding it when you need it.