

RECENT GRAD



TIPS & TRICKS



Presented by Nick Peters, General Manager, Student Organized Services, Inc.
Casey Mills, Operations Manager, Student Organized Services, Inc.

TIPS FOR HOSTING



Plan Ahead – Always find out if anyone has a food allergy, special needs diet, etc. before planning a meal and plan accordingly.

Menu/Budget – It goes without saying your budget drives your menu. So does sourcing seasonal, local, sustainably grown foods effect budget, menu, and sometimes even your cooking technique. Read on.

Timing – For a dinner party, I like to announce appetizers and menu ahead of time to get people excited. I also often tell them the times, like “appetizers at 6, dinner at 7”. Even if able, I NEVER serve exactly on time. HINT – Serve your main meal 30 minutes late (if it’s a fairly regular dinner time) and your friends will be that much more ravenous and forgiving on your food! If you get home from work at 5:30 don’t have everyone over at 6, give them time to meander over and yourself time to get everything set. A rushed/stressed host is no fun.

Smells – even if the dishes you prepare don’t involve bread, butter or garlic, it is usually a great idea to put butter and garlic in a pan and simmer (or bake some bread) to fill your kitchen dining room with tantalizing aromas for when guests arrive. If serving cheese or wine, put it out early, flavors develop better with oxygen and room temperature for both.

HOSTING TIPS CONT.

Sounds – when clinking glasses hold your wine glass by the stem to produce a melodious tone. Buy a decent knife and steel, hone it by doing one side and then the other as follows at around 25 degrees of incline: 5x, 3x, 2x. Not only will your blade be safer to use, guests will be impressed by the sound and think you know what you're doing, even if you don't! There is a wonderful French tradition of making eye contact when making toasts, keep the tradition going!

Sights – these are called candlelit dinners for a reason, so use candles! Everything looks better in soft light. Don't be afraid of garnishes and color in your food (Italian parsley, red bell pepper mined or julienned). Have the place settings set before guests arrive so you can hang out more. Prep your food, prep the tea and coffee for later, make dessert the night before, have your apps out, etc. No one wants to come to a party (or host a party) where the host is too exhausted/busy to hang out! You'll impress more by making it look easy by preparing ahead of time.

Flavor – restaurant meals typically use more seasoning (salt and pepper, spices) and oil than home cooks. Be wary of too much salt, but be wary of too little flavor. The 5 flavors can be used in contrast or in compliments, such as sweet/salt, sweet/sour, bitter/sweet, unami and anything! This is why bars put out free peanuts for beer drinkers, the sweet/salt/sweet/salt/sweet palette cleansing keeps patrons going...

Theme – in your first efforts, keep it simple, but try to have a meal make sense. In other words, make sure the appetizers leave room both in the stomach and the flavor profile for dinner. For instance, a variety of cheese and crackers does not necessarily leave room for a big pasta, so maybe start a pasta night with an olive assortment. Brie followed by stir fry makes little sense. Fun ideas include, getting guests involved, making wontons, sushi, potstickers, tamales, tacos, etc as a great way to have an informal dinner party that people talk about for years. Local, sustainable foods always make a great talking point. With experience Farmer's Markets and foods that are fresh that day become the inspiration instead of a list from a recipe book...

YouTube/Internet – you can find any technique you want these days on the internet. However, note, most recipes and techniques are dumbed-down and end up low on flavor. As a general rule, when trying a new recipe, I am more generous (often up to 2-3x) on herbs and vegetables for any given recipe. There are some fine chefs out there who don't dumb it down though, Jaime Oliver, Julia Child, Martin Yan, being some of my favorites.



KITCHEN ESSENTIALS

- 8-10 inch chef knife straight
- serrated bread knife
- knife steel
- paring knife
- vegetable peeler
- can opener
- microwave
- cutting board
- blender
- Cuisinart chopper
- 1 soup pot (tall sides – all clad or tri-clad are great and hold heat) with lid
- 2 sauce pans (medium sides with handles – all clad or tri-clad) with lids
- 1 non stick skillet (all clad or tri clad, heavy, thick) with lids
- 1 frying pan (all clad or tri-clad) with lids
- 1 rondo or large pan (all clad or tri glad) with lids
- serving ware/utensils, etc
- tongs
- variety of steel and glass bowls
- variety of spices
- wooden spoons, spatulas, whisks, measuring cups and measuring spoons, grater
- baking sheets
- ceramic baking dishes with lids
- scrubbers
- thermometer

Add-ons over time: garlic peelers, lime and lemon squeezers, Dutch ovens, cast iron pans, rice cooker, wok, micro-plane, torch
Set budget & divide cost

KITCHEN 101



Knives 101 – Safe knives are sharp, clean and made of stainless steel. Cut with food-holding-hand's fingertips pointing back inward toward palm. Never raise your knife above your food/hand. Learn to roll and cut. Learn to hone or true the knife. Use a serrated knife for tomatoes and bell peppers and stuff that sometimes bounces the knife.

Cooking on gas vs. electric and at altitude – cooking on an electric stove, especially older ones can be tough for rapid temperature control. Use of heavier, higher quality cookware can help stabilize temperature swings. When buying a gas stove, make sure the simmer is low enough to not boil a sauce and the high is high enough to heat a full wok. Water boils at lower temps at altitude meaning recipes need to be adjusted for longer cooking times on things like pasta.

Garlic 101: Garlic burns easily and become bitter. Use a slotted spoon to pull it from oils when light brown, set aside, and add back to dishes (pasta, Asian, etc). Peeling garlic is made such easier with a static cling tube. Always use fresh peeled garlic, it has a dramatic effect on flavor.

Peeling ginger 101 – use a spoon, the skin rubs right off

Herbs/Spices 101 – learn to use fresh bay leaves and thyme as aromatics. Coriander can be amazing. Ground nutmeg or ground coriander can be used lightly to season a finished dish of steamed vegetables and add a nice twist.

Searing 101 – the Maillard reaction is the formation of caramelized sugars on foods (browning foods). This is the essence of umami, the fifth flavor that provides broad richness and flavor to food. Wet foods don't sear, they steam themselves. Bring meats to room temp, dry them, season them, then sear. Sear scallops dry in clarified butter. Get your oil/butter hot (near smoking, shimmery) on the pan. However, for vegetables such as kale, chard, etc. having them slightly wet helps. Let them sear initially, cover and let the steam cook them the rest of the way through.

Grains 101 – ¼ cup to ½ cup of dry grain per adult (rice, cous-cous, quinoa) depending on sizes. Match the grain to the dish. Pearled barley with salmon or mushrooms or more light proteins. Quinoa for the “less carb” option. Black and brown and red quinoa are fantastic too. Traditional cous-cous and large middle east or Israeli Cous-Cous goes great with kale, chard, chicken or tri-tip. Almost all grains are cooked using a 2-1 ratio of water to dry measured grain, bring to a boil and then turn to low for 10-20 minutes depending on the grain. When done, use a finishing oil to keep it from getting too sticky. Time your veggies and grain to the main entrée.

Vegetables 101 – most people agree that fresh colorful vegetables taste better. You can often lock in color by blanching for 1-3 minutes in a pot of boiling water (2-3 gallon) that has a cup of kosher salt in it. Do not rinse when you pull the vegetables by strained spoon, they are now perfectly seasoned and ready for baking, pan searing, etc.

Flavoring oils vs cooking oils 101 – olive oil imparts flavor when searing, sometimes desirable, sometimes not. Higher heat oils such as canola oil do not impart flavor and allow more caramelization without burning. Save the wonderful truffle oil or olive oil for “finishing” which means drizzling on a finished vegetable, soup, or grain dish. Be cautious with truffle oil, a little bit goes a long way!!!!

Mushrooms 101 – you can get incredible flavor out of mushrooms if handled right. Learn to sear, steam, and use garlic and thyme to pull out incredible flavors. See internet for tons of great ideas. Shitake mushrooms are becoming very common and are now making their way into continental and even Mexican cuisine, they are very forgiving when fresh on steaming/searing and develop a great flavor profile.

Tofu/Seitan 101 – processed soy and grain protein products can take on great flavor if handled right. Water content is the enemy here, so learn to press tofu, fry it, etc to get it some caramelization for enhanced flavor.

Salmon/fish 101 – salmon takes about 12 minutes at 450-500 to cook (without other things in the oven). It is typically done when the white fat starts to bubble out between flesh layers. White sweet fishes should be cooked until flaky. The Monterey Bay Aquarium publishes a list of best choices for a sustainability perspective.

Chicken/poultry 101 – roast chicken is typically done when the skin on the drumsticks starts to shrink and stick to the bone. Use a thermometer and cut into breasts if not sure. Brining can help lock in flavor. Chicken thighs are extremely forgiving on overcooking, breast is not.

Meat 101 – Grass-fed meats cook very differently and taste different than corn-fed. Grass-fed beef tends to be leaner and so must be cooked more carefully. Bring to room temperature, pat dry, and season before searing and finishing. Searing and brining can help lock in flavor. Cutting meat immediately after cooking will make it dry and tough. Let it rest 10 minutes after cooking and then cut, giving the protein time to reabsorb juices.

Cheese 101 – not only does cheese make a wonderful appetizer, but a cheese course can often be used a substitute or intermission for or before dessert. Try quince paste, marcona almonds, different toasts, honey, and other sides to liven up a cheese platter

Fruit 101 – Fruit (including avocados) often turn brown when oxidized. You can prevent this with a little lime juice, orange juice, or lemon juice

Gardening – Serving your home grown food can be immensely fun. Tomatoes are an easy way to start, I recommend finding Marvel Striped in March/April (or buy the seeds online in February). They are like the sweetest cherry tomato you ever had, except heirloom size. Using thermal water cozies you can reduce water use and get bigger plants.

EANAB/Wine/Beer Pairings 101: Drinks should match the meal in terms of flavor/forwardness. Be careful of things that are too sweet, while the drink might be great, it will overpower the meal.

DRINK IDEAS

EANAB – Sweet Ciders and Drinks (Martinelli's, etc) – be careful, too much sweetness ruins the palette and clears it. However sweetness goes GREAT with spicy food.

EANAB – Flavored Waters/Sparkling Waters – these are great alternatives to wine. Blueberry in particular tends to not be over sweet.

Red Wine – Zinfandel, Cabernet Savignon – strong, pair well with red meats, they really need to breathe, use a carafe!

Red Wine – Pinot Noir – goes with just about anything, but cheaper ones can be very thin, they can be sweet or dry, use a carafe!

Red Wine – Merlot, Syrahs, blends – Merlot got a bad wrap in the movie "Sideways", however, it is can be a great, affordable companion to any pasta dinner. Usually blends and "drinkable" vintages/blends are made to be fine without a carafe, but everything gets better with a little air.

White Wine– Savignon Blanc – typically dry this clears the palette for delicate dishes such as fried squash blossoms, scallops, and seafood

White Wine– Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio – fruity, sometimes dry, go well with spicy food.

Beer – like wine, there is no quick answer but beer's inherent sweetness goes well with salty foods. Bitter beers go great with sweet foods. Sour beers tend to cleanse the palette and so go well with about anything on the sweet end. Stouts and dark beers go great with sweet delicacies such as chocolate, oysters, and cheeses.



One of my favorite etiquette points hailing from France is the tradition to always make eye contact with anyone you are clinking glasses with. Knives are placed on the right, a historic vestige indicating trust for a guest. Drinking glasses go on the right above the knives. Forks on the left. Formal settings and order suggestions can be seen at [EmilyPost.com](https://emilypost.com).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Foodborne illness – when in doubt ,don't. If something seems funky, don't risk it. Wash your hands long enough to sing "Happy Birthday" under warm water. Beware of raw meats. Store food properly with high risk foods at the bottom of your fridge (chicken, shellfish). See below for cooking temperatures.

Adventures – The Bay Area is famous for its restaurants per capita, its fresh ingredients, its wine, its commitment to seasonal, local foods, combined with beautiful sites. Napa Valley is a must. Tamales Bay a bit further north is a great spot for BBQ'd oysters. There are some amazing oyster farms right on the water, make a reservation for a picnic table and bring butter, baguette, shallot, oyster knife, and charcoal. I like to BBQ smalls making a beurre blanc in the shell and then shuck and eat the extra smalls...

Techniques to research and practice.

Cooking is part art, part science, and like all art, practice only helps. Here are some techniques worth researching for any serious gourmand:

- Searing
- Roasting
- Poaching
- Sous-vide
- Frying
- Blanching
- Blending
- Baking/pastry
- Candy making
- Smoking

- Curing
- Pickling
- Spice layering/Spice blending/Use of aromatics
- Gardening
- Husbandry
- Deglazing
- Making stocks
- Making elements and staples
- Flavoring salt

COOKING RESOURCES

“Ad Hoc at Home” – Thomas Keller of French Laundry fame has developed what I consider to be the best tome on cooking technique ever assembled. Whereas I found his French Laundry cookbook to gloss over vital techniques too readily (resulting in poor results), the “Ad Hoc at Home” book is thorough and written from the standpoint of home gourmands in more casual circumstances. I have not tried a losing recipe or technique from this book yet.

“Cooks Illustrated Magazine” – this magazine treats recipes as a science and publishes the entire search for better technique/flavor/efficiency, etc. Some recipes and ideas are real clunkers, but because the magazine is issued in a seasonal fashion it stays true to seasonal flavors. The magazine seems to be aimed at a middle of the road flavor profile audience. Test the techniques and then take the recipes over the top by being more generous (often up to 2-3x) on herbs and vegetables for any given recipe.

“The Enchanted Brocoli Forest” & “Moosewood Cookbooks” – Vegetarian cookbooks are often a great resource for technique even for non vegetarians, because getting great flavor from vegetables takes more refined technique, quite often (ask any 5 year old). Learn to use spaghetti squash as spaghetti for no gluten. Learn to treat a mushroom right. Never make grey veggies.

“The Omnivores Dilemma”, “In Defense of Food” – Berkeley Prof Michael Pollon will change the way you think about energy, food, and the sustainability issues facing humanity.

Jaimie Oliver – British chef with great books, TV, and online videos

Yotam Ottolenghi -- Israeli-English chef well known for his simple, elegant, and beautiful food. Author of "Simple," "Plenty," and "Sweet."

Momofuku – Asian street food technique from a top restaurant

Julia Child – world famous for French technique, like Thomas Keller, full of technique

“The Joy of Cooking” – Classic in American cookbooks, gets you the basics as a handy reference

The Flavor Bible – used in culinary schools to help you discover new recipes on your own

Further reading: Anthony Bourdain, Martin Ruhlman, Alice Waters

Measurements

Food Measurement Chart					
1 gallon =	4 quarts =	16 cups =	8 pints		
1/4 gallon =	1 quart =	4 cups =	2 pints =	.94 liter	
1/8 gallon =	1/2 quart =	2 cups =	1 pint =	16 fl oz.	
		1 cup =	8 fl oz. =	16 Tbsp =	48 tsp
		3/4 cup =	6 fl oz. =	12 Tbsp =	36 tsp
		2/3 cup =	5 1/3 fl oz. =	10 2/3 Tbsp =	32 tsp
		1/2 cup =	4 fl oz. =	8 Tbsp =	24 tsp
		1/3 cup =	2 2/3 fl oz. =	5 1/3 Tbsp =	16 tsp
		1/4 cup =	2 fl oz. =	4 Tbsp =	12 tsp
		1/8 cup =	1 fl oz. =	2 Tbsp =	6 tsp
				1 Tbsp =	3 tsp

Cooking Temperatures

Meat	Internal Temp.	Centigrade
Fresh ground beef, veal, lamb, pork	160°F	71°C
Beef, veal, lamb roasts, steaks, chops: medium rare	145°F	63°C
Beef, veal, lamb roasts, steaks, chops: medium	160°F	71°C
Beef, veal, lamb roasts, steaks, chops: well done	170°F	77°C
Fresh pork roasts, steaks, chops: medium	160°F	71°C
Fresh pork roasts, steaks, chops: well done	170°F	77°C
Ham: cooked before eating	160°F	71°C
Ham: fully cooked, to reheat	140°F	60°C
Ground chicken/turkey	165° F	74°C
Whole chicken/turkey	180° F	82°C
Poultry breasts, roasts	170° F	77°C