Tips for Cooking Demonstrations

You can use a food demonstration to teach a simple straight-forward idea like how to prepare a certain food, but you can also use it to present new ideas. If you are demonstrating how to make a quick snack you can talk about how nutritious the snack is and compare it to food that is high in caloric but low in other nutrients. You can tell how to store the snack for later eating or even compare the cost of the "homemade" snack with a purchased snack. Once you've captured an audience's attention you can incorporate lots of information you want to share.

To make a demonstration effective you need to make some decisions first:

- What is the main idea I want to get across?
- What do I need to show or tell to get the ideas across?
- What recipe(s) can best be used? Will they appeal to the audience?
- Are the ingredients simple and easy to get?
- How long will the demonstration last?

Once you've answered these questions make an outline based on the decisions. Time yourself. You may find you can't measure the ingredients, mix them and cook within the amount of time allowed. To shorten the demonstration, you can premeasure ingredients, or combine ingredients. Then show how the finished product will look after cooking. Or show just the most important steps of preparation and leave out the less important aspects. It's up to you to decide the best way to present the particular demonstration.

Once you have a basic idea of what you will be doing, put it on paper. List the ingredients and type of equipment you will need. A good list will save you extra trips to the grocery store and can help keep you organized. Use these tips as you organize your demonstration:

- Remember to wash your hands.
- Always talk toward the audience and have enough information to talk through the entire demonstration.
- Let your audience see everything you do.
- Set up trays to hold ingredients and small utensils for each section of your demonstration.
- Working from one side to the other, as each ingredient is used, place the empty container on a tray on the other side.
- As you finish each step, clear away all unnecessary equipment before bringing on another tray so the clutter will not build up. Leave yourself space to work.
- Use clear bowls and liquid measuring cups if possible, so your audience can easily see what you are doing. If you have no see-through bowls, be sure to tilt the bowl so the audience can see how the contents look.

- Leave bowls on the table for beating, stirring and mixing.
- Use standard utensils and standard techniques for measuring ingredients.
- Don't measure ingredients over the mixing bowl or other ingredients. Measure over the tray or a separate container.
- Premeasure food ingredients ahead of time unless you are teaching measuring techniques.
- Use a knife or spatula to crack each egg, then open into a cup to check for quality before adding to the rest of the ingredients.
- Describe every move you make. Tell why it is being done.
- If something goes wrong explain what happened—don't cover up the problem.
- Keep a damp cloth or paper towel handy for spills.
- Tape a small bag to the side of the table for scraps and trash
- If using an electric mixer or blender, place several thicknesses of towel beneath the appliance to deaden noise.
- Wooden spoons are not as noisy as metal spoons, so they are a good choice for mixing and stirring.
- Use a rubber spatula to remove all of the food from a container.
- Place a damp cloth or towel under cutting boards, bread boards or bowls to keep
  - them from slipping
- Do not use your fingers for handling food. Use a spoon or tongs to transfer food from one container to another.
- Show the audience the product after completion. Bring precooked samples for the audience.
- Take a few extra ingredients and equipment in case you break an egg or misplace a spoon.
- Bring copies of the recipes for the judges
- Avoid using personal pronouns. Don't say "my flour" or "your liver" say "some flour" or a person's liver."

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