



Garnishing And Presentation

One of the keys to providing a successful service is to present food that is visually stimulating. Even though taste and smell are the senses that ultimately tell us if a food is good, sight provides us with our initial evaluation and judgment. If your eyes tell you that the food is appetizing then it will taste good too. A pleasing food presentation will set the stage with anticipation of a delicious epicurean event.

Presenting food attractively and how the food is arranged on the plate can turn the mundane into the exceptional. Therefore, it is worth spending some time learning some food garnishing skills as well as some ways to position food appealingly. Remember that guests eat with their eyes first!

Here are some tips to get you started:

- ❖ Use an appropriately sized plate so that the food is not too crowded on the plate.
- ❖ Make sure that each food group is not touching the one next to it.
- ❖ Make sure the color scheme on the plate is visually attractive by using several different vibrant colors.
- ❖ Use odd numbers of pieces or items on a plate. Odd numbers tend to be more pleasing to the eye.
- ❖ Make individual portions of the main entrée if possible. For example, don't make one large Beef Wellington, make individual ones. They not only look better, but they are usually easier to serve.
- ❖ When making desserts make individual desserts in ramekins, such as Crème Brûlée. Add a touch of style by serving individual mousses in champagne or martini glasses with a delicate garnish.
- ❖ Attractive garnishes and decorative cuts of vegetables give a plate eye appeal. There are some great ideas discussed and shown later on in this section.
- ❖ Be creative! It's OK to have chopped parsley on an everyday meal but how about hollowing out a tomato and filling it with a salad "bouquet" or making a lemon basket and filling it with carrot flowers and parsley sprigs? These can be made well ahead of time and kept chilled in the refrigerator.
- ❖ Stacking food upwards on a plate, giving it height, is still in vogue and surprisingly easy to achieve.
- ❖ Putting sauces under rather than over the food can look less homey and more sophisticated.
- ❖ Put fruit or chocolate sauces in a squeeze bottle and make patterns on the dessert plate.



Garnishing And Presentation

Garnishing

Garnishes are quick additions to a plate that give a plate greater appeal. Garnishes should offer complimentary colors, products and flavors. A garnish provides a positive, visual element that gives food a special finishing touch. It adds harmony to the organization of food on a serving dish. A well-designed garnish can provide a focal point to direct the diner's gaze.

Garnishing the plate is one of the most important parts of cooking. Our appetite for a great meal is enhanced by its appearance. Garnish should be, in most cases, something that is edible and blends with dish enhancing the flavor of the food and not detract from it in any way.

Don't repeat garnishes on different plates within the same meal.

Complex dishes require simple garnishes; simple dishes can handle more complex garnishes. Simple chopped parsley on a beef stew makes sense, just as a combination of finely chopped tomatoes, carrots and spring onions would top a plain chicken breast more effectively than just one of those elements.

Tools

When garnishing, be familiar with some of the tools available. Much of the garnishing is done with basic tools such as a peeler and a knife. There are some tools that are specially designed for garnishing and presentation.



The items shown above are the tools that were used to create the garnishes and decorative cuts in this section. Starting top to bottom, left to right are:

Melon Baller; Boning Knife; Paring Knife; Fine Grater; Pasta Cutter; Crinkle cutter; Zester (with Channel Knife); Spiral cutter (with Skewer); Piping Bag; Vegetable Peeler; "V" Knife.

There are many other specialized tools on the market that can make garnishing even easier and more creative. Always look for garnishing tools that will make your food and plates stand out. Make your dinner parties memorable.



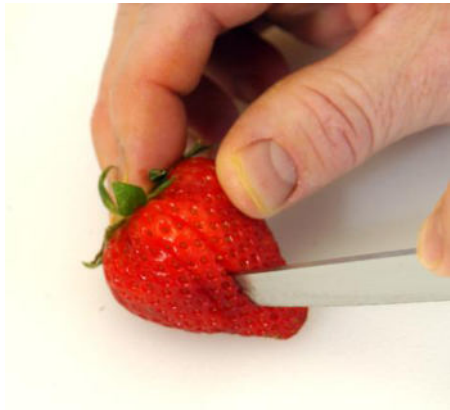
Garnishing And Presentation

Creating a strawberry fan

Follow these instructions to create a strawberry fan. (This method can be used on a variety of fruits and vegetables.) Use a small, sharp knife. You will make approximately 5 or 6 lengthwise slices keeping the stalk end intact. The number of slices needed will be determined by the thickness of your cut and the size of the berry.



Make the first lengthwise cut along the side of the strawberry starting your cut just below the top. Make sure that you cut straight down through the backside of the strawberry. The thickness of this slice will determine the final look of your fan.



Make a second cut parallel to the first cut maintaining the same thickness.



Continue to make even parallel cuts.



Garnishing And Presentation



Be carefully making the final slice.
There is a tendency to cut it off.



After completing the slices, turn the strawberry about 45-60 degrees and press gently at the top causing the slices to fan out.

Adjust the slices by hand as necessary. If you did not cut the slices close enough to the top of the strawberry it may not fan correctly.



Garnishing And Presentation

Ribbons, Curls, Spirals and Twists

Ribbons, curls, spirals and twists made from vegetables can make colorful additions to hot and cold foods. They can be used to create borders for dinner or party platters. They can also be arranged in clusters to form colorful garnishes. Fruit twists are also used to add that splash of color need on bland plates.

Ribbons and curls can be easily made using a peeler. Common items are carrots, cucumbers and zucchini. Blanching ribbons will make them tender. To make curls just roll a ribbon up, secure it with a toothpick and place in ice water for an hour or so.



Vegetable spirals can be made by using a special spiral cutting tool. You can also achieve the spiral effect by sticking a skewer lengthwise through the center of the desired vegetable. Then cut a $\frac{1}{4}$ " slice crosswise through to the skewer. Then rotate and cut the vegetable, maintaining the $\frac{1}{4}$ " cut working your way down the length of the vegetable and skewer. Remove the skewer and you will have created a spiral. Common vegetables used are zucchini, carrots, and cucumbers.

Twists are simple garnishes that can be made from slices of fruit or vegetables. Lemons, limes and oranges are the most common types of fruit twists. Cucumbers, radishes and pickles are vegetables that can be used as a twist.



Garnishing And Presentation

Crowns and Flowers

Crowns and flowers are nice looking garnishes that add interest and drama to the plate. Used in conjunction with herbs and other garnishes, the results can be outstanding.

Fruits and vegetables can be used to create crowns and flowers. Lemons and limes make good crowns and can be used for seafood or citrus dishes or as accents to platters and trays. Tomatoes, olives and radishes go good with main dishes. They are great for salads also. Anything you cut into a crown will work. Ends of vegetables (such as a cucumber) can be cut at the end to form a unique crown.



Crowns can be decorated and placed on plates to resemble flowers. Herbs can be added to give the appearance of leaves. Green onion ends can be cut lengthwise into long strands and placed in ice water to form flowerlike tops. Tomatoes can be peeled and then the peel can be rolled to form tomato roses. Edible flowers can be purchased to add vibrant colors and an exotic touch to a dinner plate.



Garnishing And Presentation

Creating a Lemon Crown

(This method can be used for all sorts of similarly shaped fruits and vegetables.) Hold the lemon, holding the stem and end as top and bottom. You will normally only use the middle 1/2 to 2/3 of the fruit. The angle you choose will determine the number of points that will be created. The length of your cut will determine the height of your points.

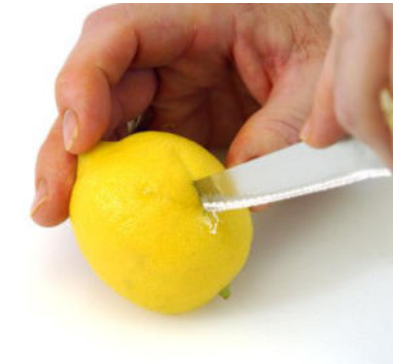


For this example, we will be making 1" cuts and creating an angle of about 50 degrees.

Make your first angled cut in the middle of the lemon as shown.

(This would be approximately 25 degrees off of vertical and cut in to the center of the lemon.)

Your middle of your cuts should cross at the "equator" of the lemon.



Make your second cut meet the bottom of the first cut. This should create your first "V" cut at a 50-degree angle.



Continue to make 1" cuts, working the angle back and forth.



Garnishing And Presentation



Work your way around the lemon creating the “V” pattern. Try to keep the cuts centered along the middle of the lemon.

It is important to watch for the first cut coming back around the lemon. When you spot it, work your angled cuts so the “V’s” meet when you get there.

The idea is to make it each point the same height and width.



When you have made your cuts completely around the lemon and have met up with your first cut, gently pull the two halves of the lemon apart. If you meet with resistance, use your knife to gently re-cut along the “V’s” until the halves release.

Once you have the crown you can spice it up in a variety of ways. Sprinkle it with parsley, dip the tips in paprika or even add a decorative piece of orange peel or colored bell pepper to the center.

Garnishing And Presentation

Slices and Wheels

Slices can be made out of all sorts of foods and can be used on all types of plates. If you can slice it and it looks good you probably can use it as a garnish. Slices like lemons and oranges are called wheels because of their spoke-like appearance. Slices are often scored, grooved, peeled or zested to create different looks.



Common vegetables that are sliced for garnish are cucumbers, tomatoes, carrots, red onions, and radishes. They are good on cold plates and salads. They work well to create borders and garnish platters.

Common fruits that are sliced are lemons, oranges, kiwi, star fruit, and many others. Fruit slices make great garnishes for desserts. They also go good with breakfast and brunch plates. Many seafood and fruit sauced dishes are right at home with a fruit wheel.

Creating a decorative cucumber slice

(This method can be used on a variety of fruits and vegetables.)



Starting at one end of a cucumber, use a channel knife to cut a single strip lengthwise to the end of the cucumber.

Channel knives are often included on the blade of a zester.



Garnishing And Presentation



Starting at the same end as the first cucumber strip cut a second strip parallel to the first. The distance between the strips will result in different looks. For this example you will want to keep that distance to be just slightly larger than the width of strip removed with the channel knife.



Continue cutting strips until you have made "stripes" completely around the cucumber. The number of strips that will be needed will depend on the size of the cucumber and the thickness of the strips and spaces between.

It is important to watch for your first strip while working your way around the cucumber. You will want to make your strips and spaces so that all of the areas are equal and uniform. This will result in the nicest looking slices.



Once you have completed the striping of the cucumber you can cut the slices to your desired thickness. You can even cut slices on the bias for a slightly different look.



Garnishing And Presentation

Decorative Cuts

There is variety of things that you can do to the food you prepare to make the plate more eye appealing. Garnishing is one way. Making the food you prepare using different sized cuts and unique shapes is another. You can drastically improve the look of a dish or plate just taking a little time to give it unique and professional look.

There are many different shapes and cuts you can use. There are special tools and equipment that can help you. The following section is just a general selection of some of the cuts you can use. The sizes will vary and the names will change based on the size. The important thing here is to see that there are many shapes you can use. Different foods will take on new looks just because you changed their shape or size. As you can see, a carrot can take on many different looks.



Batons, batonnettes, & julienne vegetables are long slender strips. They vary in size from matchstick to French fry.

Commonly used vegetables are carrots, zucchini, celery and bell peppers.

Crinkle cuts are created using a special knife or garnishing tool. Items can be cut as slices or cubes or strips. Common items used are potatoes, carrots and zucchini.

A bias cut is made by slicing food at an angle instead of the usual perpendicular cut. This changes the look and shape of the food along with creating more surface area. Carrots and celery are often cut that way. Some cuts of meat and poultry such as flank steak and chicken breast are cut that way before plating to give them an elegant presentation.

Vegetables can be cut into cubes or balls, circles or squares. They can be shredded or diced fine.

Just be creative. It is important that you use a cut that will give your plates more interest to your clients and their guests.





Garnishing And Presentation

Toppings

Toppings cover a variety of items. Some toppings are used to add color and interest to an item. Others actually go with the dish as a sauce or an accompaniment. It is just the way the topping is put on the item that generates the appeal.

Chopped parsley or herbs is a common topping that is used for food. Parsley can be mixed with other items to make it more exciting. You could add lemon zest or grated Parmesan cheese for a different look. Finely diced red or yellow bell pepper will give parsley a fresh appeal.

Other vegetables can be used for toppings. Sliced scallions or chives make a nice topping. Mixes of diced colored bell peppers make a festive topping. Different colored caviars are often an elegant addition to a dish. Even sliced mushrooms and olives can be used as a topping. Capers and diced tomatoes can add something too.



Shredded cheeses are often used for dishes. Shredded lettuce can be used as a bed to place food on or to hold other garnishes. Sour cream and whipped cream are toppings that can be piped on the appropriate dishes for added height and a professional look.



Garnishing And Presentation



A squirt bottle containing a sauce can be used to create great toppings. This technique can also be used to create unique and/or dramatic patterns for food to be placed on. This technique is used frequently for dessert plates.

Zests of fruits and vegetables can be used to create lively toppings. They can be used in long strands or chopped for sprinkling. Fruit zests are great for dessert plates.



If you think of a topping and it is appropriate for your dish, use it. There is no real limit on what foods you can use creatively on food. One of the keys to a successful dinner party is the presentation of the food. Spend the time to create plates that not only look and taste good but that are truly memorable. And always remember, if it looks good, it tastes good.