



## Teaching & Techniques

The kitchen is your playground. You are an expert. In this section we want to provide another possible revenue stream, where your culinary talents can be shared for the benefit of all.

Before we even begin with "how to teach" – a couple of matter-of-fact issues.

First: you **MUST** know your subject matter. No "winging it" allowed. You are a subject matter expert. You may be challenged. Know your material and be ready, if challenged, to support your facts and reasoning (rarely will a student actually challenge you, but some people have it in their head that  $1 + 2 = 4$ ).

Second: if you would rather hide in the closet instead of talk comfortably to 5-10 people about a subject you know and are passionate about, you may need to do a lot of practicing and read this section multiple times, or forget about this.

◆ This means especially geared toward a dinner party environment where teaching is just part of the dinner party.

📖 This means geared toward an instructional situation, where food is not being prepared, except for demonstration.

You've set up your business – you've created classes and/or curriculum – you've marketed your services – and now the time has finally arrived – it's time to step in front of your class.

Being a good instructor, you've arrived in ample time to set-up and are ready to receive. Meeting each guest prior to starting is important – you need to know a little about their background and what their expectations are.

Expect to be nervous at first. As an instructor, you have entered the world of professional speaking. Most professional speakers get some form of stage fright: stomach butterflies, feeling chilled, sweaty hands, dry mouth, etc. Don't worry you're not alone.

Of the top 10 fears people have, anxiety about speaking in front of a group of people tops the list. This fear, often called stage fright, tends to lessen once you have started your presentation. The good news is that all you need to do is deliver most of your demonstration well. The audience will concentrate on the good parts and forget any nervousness you may have had at the start.

### A Successful Event

Your students are looking to you to give them culinary skills and confidence. It is through your enthusiasm and motivation that they will be successful and inspired to learn and perhaps try new cooking techniques and recipes.

### Capitalize on the experience of the party guests

The party guests will come from a variety of culinary experiences and abilities. Once you've identified the different skill levels within the group and the overall mood of the group, you can adjust your presentation, if needed. For example, you may find everyone has a very good culinary foundation and knowledge base – so skip the simplest of issues. Try not to leave anyone behind, unless that person is hopelessly lost or so far removed that everyone else suffers.



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### ◆ Structure your presentation logically

Just as a recipe has a logical order, your presentation should also be logical. This will not be difficult because you are the one who has created or outlined the class and content. This is not 20 questions – you are in the driver's seat.

Involving party guests in the presentation

The guests will learn and retain more from the event experience when they do more than just sit and watch. Interest is stimulated when you encourage hands-on activities and the opportunity to ask questions.

There is a saying that reminds us:

***What people hear, they forget - What people see, they remember - What people do, they learn.***

### Have definite goals

In any type of training, there is an overall goal involving what is being taught. This is sometimes referred to as "the big picture." For an in-home cooking class it would be what you want the students to get out of the experience.

Without a sense of the goal of your presentation, guests may have problems focusing on the really important portions of the curriculum.

### Tell participants what is expected of them

- ❖ Let them know if there will be active participation during the session.
- ❖ Let them know that they can ask questions at any time.
- ❖ Encourage note taking.

### Involve the senses

Your presentation – and therefore the guests' experience – is enhanced when all the senses come into play. The sense of sight is most important so take care that each guest can see clearly.

Senses that are most critical in our learning process:

**Sight 33%**  
**Sound 29%**  
**Touch 21%**  
**Taste 9%**  
**Smell 8%**

The numbers are most interesting when you consider how much time is often spent trying to get the words of a presentation together. This is not to discount the influence words have on what is being learned. If you want people to remember your message, you need to be visual and provide opportunities for the guests to reinforce what they have seen and heard by allowing them to touch, taste and smell.

### Use activity to promote involvement

There are three basic reasons to get participants involved in activities when you are conducting training. The first is to make the event fun. Everybody learns more effectively in an enjoyable environment.



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The second reason for wanting to involve adults in activities is to stimulate interest. What are some of the most memorable and interesting courses you've attended? What made them special or unique?

The third benefit of involving participants in activities is to increase retention. Think back on some of the lessons you learned and still remember from your best learning experience.

Activity to promote involvement within the curriculum is a technique used by many top curriculum writers and presenters. Performing a task, rather than being told about the task, benefits the trainee's attitude, interest, and ability to retain the information taught.

### Teaching Different Types Of People

As an instructor, you will encounter many types of personalities and behavior. Part of being an effective instructor is learning how to respond to various types of personalities.

#### **The Loner**

You may have a student that is a "loner." This person prefers to be pretty much left alone. Even if they pay attention and participate, they prefer to have as little involvement as possible with the other students. They may appear somewhat aloof.

#### **The Quiet Trainee**

You'll encounter quiet students. The mistake some presenters make is demanding equal participation from the quiet ones.

#### **The Amiable Trainee**

They are obedient and ready to carry out your wishes. Pairing someone who is quiet or aloof with someone who is amiable for an assigned task can sometimes be good.

#### **The Snippety Snit**

What should you do when you encounter the negative gloominess of a snippety snit? Spotting this type is usually easy. No matter what question you ask them, their responses always seem to have a depressed sound to them. This student is really asking for someone to listen to them.

#### **The Enlightener Trainee**

Often a class will have someone who seems to know it all; to be an "enlightener." Assigning that person to a task or multiple tasks can help keep their mouth quiet.

#### **The Joker Trainee**

You might have a class clown who wants to be the focus of attention. This person is quick-witted and potentially aggressive. Assigning that person a task or multiple tasks can help keep their mouth quiet.

#### **The Reliant Trainee**

The reliant trainee is often outwardly confident in many areas but when it comes to other tasks, they won't willingly participate and will rely heavily on others. They often use well-polished phrases such as, "If you could just do this for me one time, I know I will be able to do it on my own in the future."



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### What's An Instructor To Do?

Don't overreact to any of the personality traits listed above. If you'll have just a little patience, the other students will often take care of the deviant behavior for you.

### Techniques of Delivery

When a person is doing a demonstration or presentation the audience watches and makes judgments about the speaker even before the speaker addresses the audience. The presenter is "on display", the center of attention.

### Charisma

Charisma is the manner in which speakers carry themselves; how their audience perceives them. Charisma helps the speaker set the tone of the demonstration using body language and attitude.

### Tips for developing charisma

- ❖ Have a sense of purpose. No action is tentative. Walk briskly. Use hand gestures only to make a point (no fidgeting w/rings, equipment, apparel, etc.). Be capable and confident when answering questions.
- ❖ Be open to your audience. Have an open, outward attitude. Be aware of and interested in the audience. Listen to participants' comments and questions as though they were the only person in the room with you. Be interested in what the audience has to say.
- ❖ Project a positive attitude. Good presenters are excited about what they have to say and the people to whom they will say it.
- ❖ Look your best. Appropriate, neat dress and appearance shows the audience that the presenter cares enough about the members of the audience to make himself/herself look nice.
- ❖ Appear comfortable and "polished" when speaking. Relax!

### Eye contact

Eye contact is crucial for a presenter. It has been said, "vocal cords may carry your message, but the eyes hold your audience." Effective eye contact with an audience can establish a relationship between the presenter and the audience and show the audience that the presenter is truly interested in their responses and feedback.



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### Tips for increasing eye contact:

- ❖ Don't read from a script. Your presentation should be well rehearsed. Use index cards if necessary to note highlights of the presentation and keep your thoughts on track.
- ❖ Make eye contact with all members of the audience. There is a tendency to give more attention to the audience members in the front and center sections of the audience. Practice going around the room and making eye contact with each individual in the room.
- ❖ If you find it daunting to look at your audience and all the faces, try looking just above their heads and be sure to move your eyes around the room, so that everyone feels like you are talking to them.

### Your voice – How does it sound?

The voice can be separated into several components, all of which need to be addressed when speaking to an audience. Remember, it's not necessarily what you say, but how you say it.

- ❖ Volume – make sure you can be heard easily throughout the entire room.
- ❖ Rate – the speed at which a speaker delivers the message should not be too fast or too slow. If the delivery is too fast, the audience may not be able to follow or understand the speaker. If the delivery is too slow, the minds of the audience may wander from the demonstration.

Many times presenters will speak too quickly as a result of nervousness. It may be appropriate to plan pauses during the demonstration to remind you to slow down periodically.

- ❖ Vocal Inflection – the amount of variance in pitch, which is defined as the relative highness or lowness of the voice. It is preferable to have a good amount of vocal variance, rather than a monotone pitch. It adds interest to the presentation and helps emphasize important points.
- ❖ Articulation and Pronunciation – articulation is the way a speaker physically forms a word, while pronunciation refers to how closely a word is stated in accordance with some accepted standard, such as a dictionary. It is vital to articulate words clearly and pronounce them correctly. It is better to look up unfamiliar words for correct pronunciation than to mispronounce a word during a presentation.

### Tips to improve articulation:

- ❖ Open your mouth and move your lips purposefully when speaking.
- ❖ Read out loud and try to make your voice come alive (inflection).
- ❖ Record voice while speaking on the telephone to hear how you sound to others.
- ❖ Practice speaking in front of a mirror.
- ❖ Expression – present material with emotion. Be passionate about the subject matter. The audience will pick up on the speaker's enthusiasm and join in on the fun!



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▢ Pauses – frequently ask if there are any questions about the material just presented. These pauses will allow the participants a minute to mentally review what was just demonstrated and give the speaker the opportunity to emphasize important points before transitioning onto a different topic as well as allowing the speaker to “catch their breath”.

### Demonstration Tips

#### “Ice-breakers”

Icebreakers are activities or modes of discussion used to help individuals ease into a group setting. These are helpful tools to use during the introductions at the beginning of a class. Icebreakers can be used to:

- ❖ Facilitate introductions - When groups first come together, interactions can be hindered by tepidness or simple unfamiliarity among others in the group. Icebreakers can be used to create familiarity within the group and ease everyone into the group environment so the group can cooperate and learn.
- ❖ Assess prior knowledge - One advantage of using icebreakers is that they provide the instructor an opportunity to assess guests' prior knowledge. They can then lead to the identification of individual needs within the group while also introducing everyone and helping to create a healthy group environment as with facilitating introductions.
- ❖ Environment creation / Fostering group unity - A primary purpose of icebreakers can be to help create an open environment in which all participants are willing to open up and participate. Participants need to be encouraged to open up to one another and relax.
- ❖ Topic Segues - When starting a new topic, icebreakers can be created to introduce the topic. Often, some form of prior knowledge activity can be used to this end. These are also particularly useful when the members of the group already know each other by one means or another. Use this type of an icebreaker when starting a new recipe or demonstrating a new technique.

The first consideration when choosing an icebreaker is the purpose of that icebreaker. Determine what your goals are, and then you can connect the activity to the goal.

Next, look at your audience. If you were working with a group in which everyone already knows one another, then a “get to know you” exercise wouldn't serve much purpose other than to take up time. An alternative activity should then be considered. Likewise, if you are working with an audience that could potentially have a good level of prior knowledge, the ice breaking activity might be designed to probe this knowledge so that the instruction could be modified to best serve the guests.

#### Examples of icebreakers include:

- ❖ Ask the guests to introduce themselves and tell a little about their culinary experiences.
- ❖ Ask a curriculum trivia question? See who can answer. If no one can answer, tell them you will ask the same question at the end of the event and there will be a prize for the “winner.”
- ❖ Ask the guests if you were marooned on an island, what five culinary items would you have brought with you if you knew there was a chance that you might be stranded?
- ❖ Ask the guests who is their culinary hero/heroine? Why?





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### Know the material

The most important rule of public speaking is to know what you are talking about.

As the expert instructor you need to share your knowledge with the guests in a polished, professional manner. Nothing will be more effective in achieving this goal than practice, practice, practice.

The underlying cause of most demonstration/presentation anxiety is a lack of confidence, either in the audience's reception to the materials presented or in the speaker's delivery. Confidence can be gained through rehearsal. Keep rehearsing until you are comfortable and can provide the majority of your session from memory or with the help of a few bullet points on an index card.

### Tips for presenting educational material

- ❖ Don't overestimate or underestimate what your audience knows. Each guest will have a different knowledge level about the information you provide. Be careful not to use terminology or discuss concepts that some guests may not know. It is up to the instructor to determine the average amount of background information that is held by the audience (an appropriate ice-breaker can be useful for this purpose). If as the instructor you are unsure that all participants are familiar with a term or concept, play it safe and provide an explanation.
- ❖ Get active participation. The more active the audience is, the more likely they are to enjoy the experience and to remember the facts being presented. If a student has been to a previous class, have them get up and explain how to do a technique they learned at the previous class. This engages the class, boosts participant's confidence and increases the other student's expectations that they too will learn from your classes or events.
- ❖ Organize the demonstration so it flows logically. Try not to bounce between recipes or topics too often so the students don't get confused as to what you are working on, or for that matter, become overwhelmed by the curriculum being taught. The experience is to be educational and enjoyable.
- ❖ Make the information being presented interesting. People love trivia so make use of subject related trivia. This will help make the demonstration more entertaining.
- ❖ Add your own culinary experiences and knowledge to the curriculum material, if appropriate. You are the expert in the room and the guests want to know what you know.

### ◆ Tips for presenting entertaining material

Involve the audience! People are entertained if they are personally involved and like the subject. When the instructor knows the material, is passionate about the recipes and has the guests participating, the event is a success!

Humor can be a means to entertain an audience. In most demonstration and presentation settings humor is used not as an end in itself, but to support another purpose. In our case this means educating the guests about the recipes, the ingredients and culinary techniques.



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### **Humor can be used to:**

- ❖ Relax the audience and break the ice between the speaker and the audience.
- ❖ Make the content of a presentation more interesting and keep the audience more actively involved.

Relate personal anecdotes about your own culinary adventures if you think they relate to the curriculum being presented and if doing so works for your presentation style. Original anecdotes are funny because they are best suited to the speaker and are delivered in a relaxed style. Don't TRY to be funny. Be light, original and appropriate, and let the fun take care of itself. Humor can be a slippery slope. A joke that doesn't go well leaves an uncomfortable silence. A joke that needs to be explained is a disaster. And just because the comment or joke is funny to you, you have zero idea about the others and their background. One poor joke can ruin an otherwise good event. The bottom line – use humor with caution, and direct the funny, silly or stupid occurrence back at you.

### **Methods to control the class**

If the class or a particular guest starts to dominate the conversation or learning experience, the instructor needs to regain control of the class. Some proven methods to regain class control:

- ❖ Be silent until you regain attention of class.
- ❖ Remind everyone that we need to stay focused on the subject so everyone can enjoy the experience.

### **General demonstration tips**

- ❖ Be prepared – know exactly what needs to be taught – what are the learning objectives for the curriculum?
- ❖ Talk to your audience to meet their needs.
- ❖ Make people in the audience think you are talking just to them.
- ❖ Tell only appropriate jokes or stories.
- ❖ Praise participants for their knowledge or techniques.
- ❖ Finish on time.
- ❖ Enjoy what you do or no one else will – let your passion for food shine.

### **Close Your Demonstration**

Recap what was taught. Involve as many guests as possible. Ask the guests some questions pertaining to the material. Ask for any final questions and encourage the guests to try the recipes with their variations at home. Explain how guests can host their own cooking class/interactive dinner party.





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Hand out business cards and inquire if anyone would like to host a class of their own – briefly outline some of the possibilities. Perhaps offer an incentive like 10% off if they book within 30 days. If someone wants to host an event take their contact info, tell them you will contact them in a few days and then follow through.

### Remember:

Teaching requires a command of the subject matter, confidence and effective delivery. Identifying that all participants are engaged is important, plus knowing how to correct a problem situation. Your goal is for a group of people to walk away excited about what you were able to help them with. That excitement and positive feeling is what will produce repeat or offshoot business.

Practice makes perfect – for instructors who are comfortable in a group setting and being the center of attention, you need only refine delivery. If the audience is a hurdle for you, don't panic – you just need to work past this by rehearsing in front of a mirror to start with, then family, then friends.

Always remember – you are the subject matter expert. People are gathered because of you and your abilities. Let your passion for food guide you. Enthusiasm is contagious. Enjoy what you are doing, and make it very clear that you're happy to be able to share this information. You may even "whisper" a secret ingredient or method – let them all in on the secret that nobody else will tell them. Everyone likes a secret, and in this case it leads directly to the "ah ha" moment when the light clicks on and they understand the element that has puzzled them up until now.

Finally – smile and be yourself. You've got enough to do already . . . don't try to become someone else at the same time. Now take a deep breath and put your knowledge into action.