

Ambassador *Dinner Party*

Cook

Chefs are on the cutting edge of entertainment, and are masters of building community at the table. They, also, have the thrill of defining and redefining delicious in their kitchens every day. For this badge, try on a chef's apron as you throw a great dinner party, bring people together, and practice creating course after course with finesse and flair.

HINT: Copy all recipes onto index cards or a notebook to keep forever.

Steps

1. Create your menu
2. Make a budget and shopping list
3. Practice timing your courses
4. Explore imaginative ways to present food
5. Host your party

Purpose

When I've earned this badge, I'll know how to make and serve a fabulous three-course meal.

“A good dinner is of great importance to good talk. One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well.”

-Virginia Woolf, English author

Every step has three choices. Do ONE choice to complete each step. Inspired? Do more

Step 1 Create your menu

A cook becomes a chef by truly thinking about how every part of a meal works together. Good chefs balance heavy stews with simple salads, choose spices that taste great together, and even consider temperature – would guests like a cold dish between two hot ones?

CHOOSE ONE:

Interview a caterer, event planner, chef, or restaurant owner. Ask how they plan an interesting, balanced, and nutritious menu. Collect at least three dinner menus from a variety of seasons or events, then, study them to help you create an inspired menu of your own.

OR

Collect recipes from cooking shows, websites, books, or magazines. Find five recipes each for appetizers, main courses, and desserts. Write them on index or recipe cards, then, play around with different combinations, until you find your favorite nutritious, flavorful menu.

OR

Build a menu around your favorite ingredient. Could you include maple in every dish – mixed greens with bacon-maple dressing, maple-glazed turkey with maple-nut-sprinkled mashed potatoes, and a salted maple apple pie for dessert? Look for a variety of recipes starring your ingredient, considering both sweet and savory possibilities.

More to EXPLORE

Re-create a famous menu. What about a White House dinner gala or a typical 17th-century Thanksgiving?

Tip

Ask your guests ahead of time if they have food allergies or strong dislikes, and plan your menu with their answers in mind. A party is about the guests!

THREE COURSES FROM EVERY SEASON

>>> Seasonal Menu Ideas

SPRING

1

Carrot Soup with Cilantro Cream
Spring Quiche with Onions & Herbs
Strawberry Rhubarb Crisp

2

Fennel, Asparagus, Snap, Snow Pea Salad with Mint & Lemon
Arugula Salad
Strawberry Lemon Granita

SUMMER

1

Summer Garden Grilled Pizza with Zucchini, Goat Cheese & Tomatoes
Arugula Salad
Grilled Peaches with Sweet Cream

2

Beef, Chicken, Shrimp or Vegetarian Fajitas with Cilantro Lime Pesto Sauce
Grilled Corn with Cumin Butter
Avocado Ice Cream with Strawberry Sauce

FALL

1

Roasted Brussel Sprouts with Apples & Mint
Mustard-Glazed Pork Chops
Baked Plums with Rosemary Meringue

2

Cheddar Corn Bread
Three-Bean Vegetarian or Pork Chili
Pear Pie Pockets with Cranberry Lime Sauce

WINTER

1

Herb Potato Rolls
Beef Barley Stew
Nutty Brownies

2

Pumpkin Ravioli with Sage Butter
Orange Walnut Salad with Pomegranates
Orange Pine Nut Butter Cookies

Today's MENU

You could visit a farmers' market and plan your menu using only ingredients that are in season

Step 2 Make a budget and shopping list

Figure out how much you can spend, then, do one choice below to help you shop accordingly. It's important to consider how many guests you'll be inviting!

CHOOSE ONE:

Comparison shop. Take your list of recipe ingredients to different stores, such as a regular supermarket, a specialty grocery, or a farmers' market. Record what each item costs, and compare your totals to find which place gives you the most overall value. Value can mean many things, including cost, taste, healthfulness, and the farmers or businesses you're supporting.

OR

Consult with a professional chef or restaurant food buyer. Find out how they portion out servings, source their food, and put together budgets. Share your menu, and ask for recommendations on sourcing your ingredients. If possible, attend a meeting (or review an order) between your consultant and a supplier and see what insider knowledge you pick up.

OR

Learn about alternative ways to shop. Compare prices for your ingredients online and at wholesale warehouses, then, factor in extra costs (such as warehouse membership dues or shipping charges).

Pages from the Past

First Girl Scout

Cook Badge

Girls were required to know how to:

- Wash up
- Wait on table
- Light a fire
- Lay a table for four
- Hand dishes correctly at table
- Clean and dress a fowl
- Clean a fish
- Make a cook-place in the open
- Make tea, coffee, or cocoa
- Mix dough and bake bread in oven
- State approximate cost of each dish
- Cook two kinds of meat
- Boil or roast two kinds of vegetables, potatoes, rice and another vegetable
- Make two salads
- Make a preserve of berries or fruit, or to can them

A dinner party idea

Good and imaginative cooks move in a very special glow of popularity. Work out a nutritionally sound menu, lunch or supper, and estimate the quantities of everything that would be required to serve it to a group of boys your age. Make an observation trip to various stores to compare costs and qualities. Then, actually invite a group of boys to such a meal. Buy, prepare, and serve it yourselves.

-from Meal Planning and buying Project,
Senior Girl Scout Handbook, 1963

Step 3 Practice timing your courses

A key element of a successful dinner party is when each dish comes out of the kitchen. Your goal is to keep from either rushing your guests or making them wait too long between courses. The timing can be tricky, because you don't want your food to get cold (or warm, if you're serving ice cream!), either.

CHOOSE ONE:

Get tips from food professionals. Ask how they organize their kitchens and supplies. Make a Top Tips list, and refer to it as you look over your recipes.

FOR MORE FUN: Visit a testing kitchen of a university, food manufacturer, or magazine publisher to get your tips.

OR

Make a menu timeline. Check out the prep and cook times on your recipes, then, create a timeline. Can you prep some dishes or parts of dishes before the party? Can you use the *mise en place* system (see green box) to organize your ingredients for maximum efficiency?

OR

Prepare a test meal for family or friends. Time how long each dish took you to cook and take notes on any unexpected problems that cropped up. Then, revise your plans for your party accordingly.

Mise en Place

Mise en place is a French culinary term that literally means "put in place." In professional kitchens, *mise en place* involves gathering, measuring, and preparing ingredients before cooking starts so that everything needed to make a dish is at the ready.

Careers to EXPLORE

Farmer	Event planner	Cooking show host	Ice-cream flavor creator
Caterer	Recipe tester	Cheesemaker	Hotel general manager
Line cook	Food chemist	Health inspector	Agricultural scientist
Food writer	Food stylist	Nutritionist	Vegetarian cooking teacher
Pastry chef	Government policy maker or lobbyist		Cruise ship director

Step 4 Explore imaginative ways to present food

The pleasure of a meal goes beyond taste – it includes how food is displayed. The two key parts of styling are arrangement (where will each part of your dish sit on a plate?) and color (how do the colors of your ingredients look with other and with the dishes on which they will be served?).

CHOOSE ONE:

Experiment with garnishes. Go beyond a parsley sprig – are there decorative (and flavorful) sauces or oils you could brush or drizzle across your dish? Could you decorate your servings with edible flowers or dollops of apple jam? Think of each plate as a canvas, and find two food-based “paints” to make your presentation a masterpiece.

OR

Present food in interesting shapes. Carrots can be julienned (cut into strips) or served brunoise style (diced into fine cubes). You can shape a scoop of mashed potatoes with a cookie cutter. Find three fun shapes to use when you style your meal.

FOR MORE FUN: Use a stencil to decorate a dessert. Hold it just above a dish of ice cream, then, lightly pour cocoa powder through it to create an elegant design.

OR

Use serving ware in unusual ways. Serve soup in a mug instead of a bowl, or chicken breast over couscous in a bowl instead of on a plate. Would it be fun to eat a dish with chopsticks or “drink” a dessert? Use dishware and/or cutlery in innovative ways for each of your courses.

MORE TO EXPLORE: Try out molecular gastronomy. This food science is gaining in popularity among high-end chefs. Molecular gastronomists experiment with the flavor, texture, and presentation of familiar ingredients.

The Art of Food

Many Japanese chefs believe that food must appeal as much to the eye as it does the mouth. Check out the pictures at this website:

http://www.bing.com/images/search?q=japanese+food+pictures&id=1DDB05239E4E58C1463BE69B92BB87CA0C23D4C2&FORM=I_QFRBA

Step 5 Host your dinner party

Time to make your meal, enjoy your accomplishment, and have some fun! Use one of the choices below to enhance your dinner party. Then, as your guests enjoy the stylish food and dining experience you've crafted, ask them for constructive feedback.

CHOOSE ONE:

Decorate according to your menu theme. Does your menu have a cultural or personal theme you could expand into music, decorations, and/or mood?

OR

Celebrate a special occasion. Commemorate a birthday, holiday, or Girl Scout event – you could even throw your dinner party at camp!

OR

Use food and fun to forge new friendships. Are there girls you'd like to get to know better or new students you could invite to dinner so they could make new friends? Could you invite friends from different parts of your life so they can get to know one another?

More to Explore

Snap references photos for your next party!

Photograph each dish as it comes out of the kitchen. Later, attach the photo to the recipe, along with notes about what worked and what you could improve.

>>> Partying Green

Make your party eco-friendly!

- Send paperless invitations
- Mind your "food print"
- Avoid using disposable plates, glasses, or cutlery
- Use cloth napkins
- Serve locally grown, sustainably raised food
- Display fresh flowers grown locally or picked from your garden
- Ask your friends to walk, bike, or carpool to

More Than Food! What cookware, serving pieces, cutlery, tables and chairs, plates, and napkins will you need? If you're missing anything (or want some fun additions, such as mood candles, red-checked napkins, or French music to go with your French onion soup), see if friends or neighbors will let you borrow them or help you make decorations.

Add the Badge to Your Journey

National Leadership Journeys encourage you to build your network as you organize others for action. Try hosting a dinner party for some of your new contacts or even to bring people on different sides of an issue together. After all, sharing a great meal is a time-honored way to build alliances.

Now that I've earned this badge, I can give service by:

- Helping younger Girl Scouts earn their Cook badges
- Volunteering to help a caterer serve a meal for a charity event
- Suggesting healthful additions to my school's cafeteria menu

I'm inspired to: