



**Topic:** Cooking

**Badge:** Dinner Party

**Suggested Supplies:** Phone or computer with internet access, pen & paper, recipes

**Helpful websites:**

The Art of Food

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

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

Steps:

**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:

**Do a phone interview with a caterer, event planner, chef, or restaurant owner.** Ask how they plan an interesting, balanced, and nutritious menu. Utilize the internet to 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.

## **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 give 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 via telephone or e-mail.**

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, 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).

## **Step 3: Practice timing of 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.

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 below) to organize your ingredients for maximum efficiency?

### **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.

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.

### **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.

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.

### **Step 5: Host your party at home with your family**

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? Plan to succeed by creating a practice calendar. Look at a traditional freshman student course load at one of the colleges or universities you’re interested in.

OR

**Celebrate a special occasion.** Commemorate a birthday, holiday, or Girl Scout event.

OR

**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.

**\*Once completed, this badge can be purchased at the following direct link:**

<https://www.girlscoutshop.com/AMBASSADOR-DINNER-PARTY-BADGE>

**Please visit the following link to complete a quick survey on this virtual badge:**

<https://gswestok.wufoo.com/forms/virtual-badge-completion-survey/>