

Helpful Hints for Doing a Food Preparation Demonstration

You've decided to do a food demonstration. Great! There are some techniques and guidelines which can help you make it through your demonstration as easily as possible.

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How to choose a Recipe

Choosing the right recipe is very important. Even if your techniques are perfect, you won't get too far if your recipe does not appeal to the audience. The recipe you select should:

- Be right for your ability level, challenging, but not too difficult.
- Be suitable for the facilities available and time allowed.
- Be reasonable in cost, you will be making it a lot.
- Fit into a healthful eating style.
- Have color, texture and taste appeal.

Where can you find the right recipe? Check with your family or friends to see if they have any good recipes. Check with your 4-H leader or Extension Agent. Also look in magazines and cookbooks. Both of these can be found at your library. Family recipes are always a good choice, because they have been tested for appeal and might be different from anyone else's recipe.

If this is your first contest, you will want a less complicated recipe than someone who is in their third year of giving a food preparation demonstration. After your first year, you will probably want to select a new recipe or alter the original recipe to add some originality. One great thing about changing a recipe is that nobody else will have the same recipe you do. For example:

- You might want to choose a healthful adaptation of a familiar recipe. This can be a learning experience for you and for the audience.
- You might add a healthful ingredient, like grated carrots or zucchini in a muffin recipe or purred fruit on an angel food cake. Be sure to taste test your new creations.

Read a copy of the rules and guidelines for the contest or event you plan to enter, each is a little different. Also, review the score card which will be used for your demonstration category. It will help you know what the judges will be focusing on during your demo.

Next, try out the recipe to see if you like it. If you don't, you will never be able to practice making it many times. Also, try it out on other people besides your family, they might have some good suggestions to help you improve it. Then practice, practice, practice, until you can almost do the demonstration in your sleep.

Organize your Presentation

A presentation will normally have three parts, Introduction – Body – Summary. Use the Introduction to catch the attention of the audience. It should make them want to listen and see the importance of what you are doing.

The Body is the “doing” part of the food preparation demonstration. It should logically follow the steps to prepare the recipe. Posters are a good visual to keep you on track and will help you not skip a step. The audience will also be able to follow more easily. When preparing posters, consider the distance to the audience and make the size of lettering appropriate for easy reading. Limit the amount of text on each poster so the viewer can easily read the information. Black or blue letters show up best on light backgrounds. Be sure to check your spelling or better yet have someone else check it for you. Posters can be your cue cards to remember the key points. You will want to script the body of your demonstration to include more information than just the food preparation. Consider including:

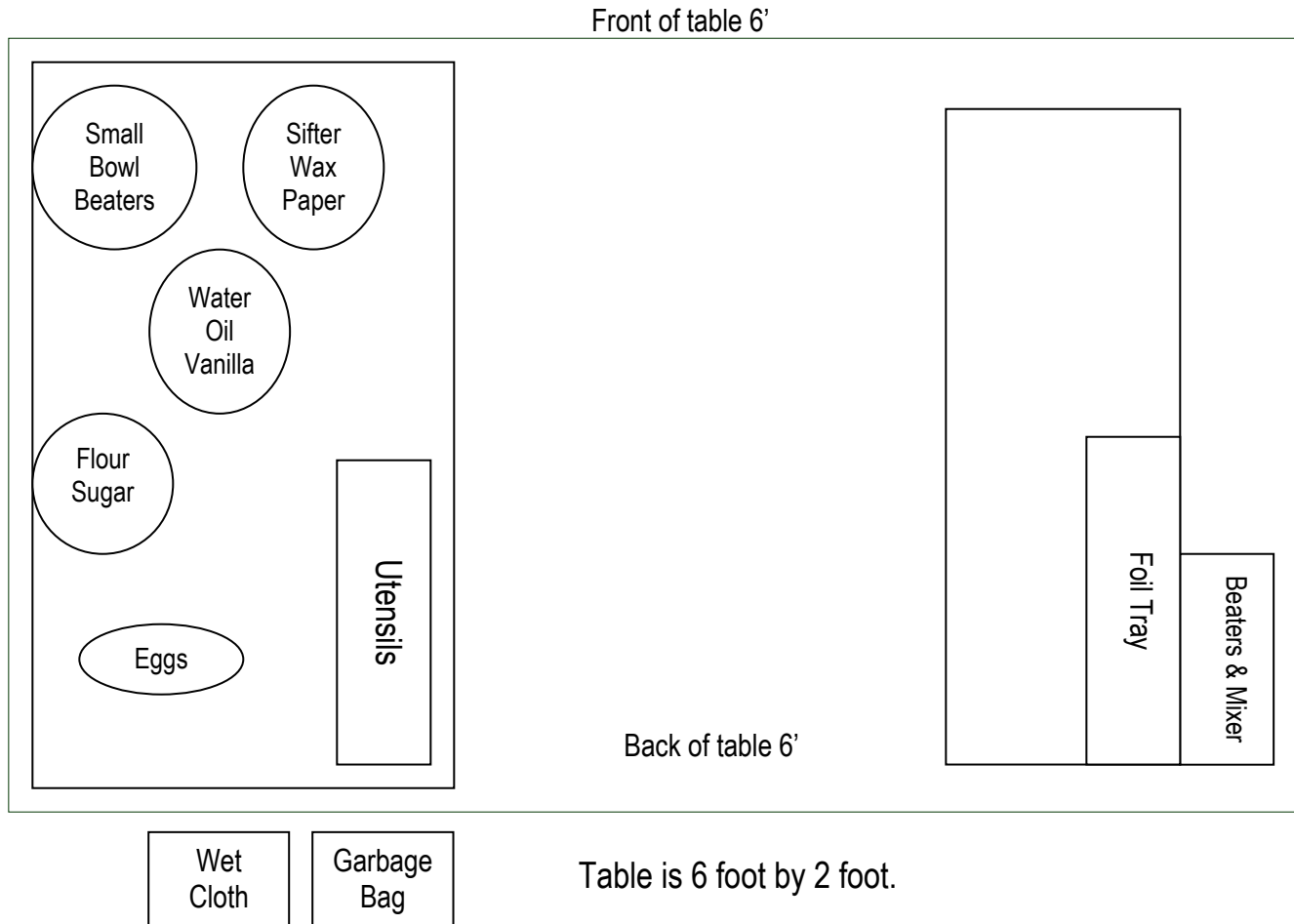
- Nutritional Value: Ex. carrots are very high in Vitamin A – important for good eyesight and healthy skin.
- Cost: Ex. it is estimated that these muffins cost approximately \$1.00 per dozen while baked muffins from the grocery store cost \$3.99, a savings of almost \$3.00
- Importance of each ingredient to the final product: Ex. yeast makes the bread rise or makes it light and fluffy. Spices add flavoring.
- Food Safety: Ex. cross contamination is a food safety concern so you will need to use different knives to cut raw vegetables and raw meat.
- Serving Idea: Ex. this meatloaf would be delicious for dinner served with green beans, tossed garden salad, and a glass of low fat milk.
- History of Recipe: Ex. this recipe was handed down in our family from my great grandmother who came from Italy. Italy is famous for their pastas.

The Summary includes the key points and encourages the use of the recipe. It should also tell the source(s) of your nutrition information.

Arrangement and use of Equipment

Let's begin preparing and practicing for the demonstration. One way to organize the equipment and ingredients is to use two trays that measure about 13" x 16". If you don't have trays at home you can use cookie sheets or jelly roll pans covered with foil. Place all of your ingredients and equipment on one tray and move them to the other tray when you are done using them. You can work from either left to right, or right to left. However, you may only have a six foot long table for your work area. Be prepared to work in this amount of space. Practice using only this much work area at home. The diagram on the next page shows you how your trays might look. The table space available may be less and you will need to be flexible.

Suggestions for Demonstration Set-Up



1. Use small containers for small amounts and large containers for large amounts. Plastic containers and storage bags work well. Try to coordinate all your containers.
2. Cover any commercial labels that are showing, such as on a bottle of vanilla. White paper or masking tape place over the brand name works well.
3. Label all ingredients. It helps to label both the front and back so both you and the audience can read them. Avoid labeling the container cover once this is removed, salt and sugar look much alike. Be sure lettering is large enough for you and your audience to read it easily. Neatness is very important, use a waterproof marker so that your labels wont' run.
4. Cover bottoms of trays for a neat look. Ex: foil, towels, white plastic. It's also a good idea to keep your work area clean and covered with a piece of wax paper or plastic. If you spill, you don't want to leave the area messy for the next person.
5. Arrange the ingredients on your tray in the order you will be using them. Try to keep the tallest items closest to you so the view from the audience will not be blocked.

6. After you've done your demonstration several times, make a diagram of your trays, like the one above. Then you will be able to set up your trays quickly each time.
7. List everything you will need to take to the contest. This will be very important the day of the event. Here is a sample list made for one contest.

Ingredients:

cake flour	oil	cream filling	sugar
lemon juice	salt	vanilla	finished product
baking powder	2 eggs	cherries	

Equipment:

Hair net/hat	mixer	1 cup measure
2 trays	sifter	1 set of measure spoons
2 towels	wax paper	1 spatula
apron	cake pan	2 knives
extension cord	cloth	wooden spoon
paper bag	2 rubber scrapers	tape

Techniques for Demonstration

1. Use a clear mixing bowl if available. This makes it easier for everyone to see what you are doing. Use a bowl large enough for what you are doing.
2. Use liquid measures to measure liquids and dry measures for dry ingredients. Measuring spoons can be used for either. Some ingredients can be pre-measured at home, if you'll be short of time. If appropriate for the recipe, show how to measure at least one dry and one liquid ingredient. *Juniors have 3-12 minutes. Seniors have 5-12 minutes.*
3. Level flour, sugar, etc, only with a flat spatula or knife. Liquid measures should be taken at eye level with the container resting on the table top.
4. Keep a damp sponge or cloth handy to wipe hands so you won't need to wipe them on your apron. Spills can be cleaned up easily.
5. Use equipment to fit the job you're doing. Ex: a large butcher knife isn't needed to peel an apple.
6. Try to work quietly so the judges can hear what you are saying. Consider using wooden spoons, and placing a dampened cloth under bowls while mixing. This will help keep the bowl in place, and also keeps noise down. Use rubber scrapers to clean bowls out completely, and try to hold the bowl facing the audience as you scrape it out.
7. When you clean batter from a spoon, tap it against your hand rather than against the side of the bowl. There are two reasons for this; you don't want to chip the bowl, plus it reduces the noise.

8. Work on waxed paper. Ex: if you are peeling an apple, the peels can be cleaned up quickly. Tape a small paper bag beside you on the table for peelings, egg shells etc. Cleaning up as you go is a good practice.
9. Crack eggs with a knife into a separate cup. Then, if shell gets in, or the egg is bad, you haven't ruined the whole batter. Always bring an extra egg or two.
10. use a cutting board for chopping, slicing, etc. You won't need to bring a big one, a small wooden or Lucite one works fine.
11. Pans can be greased ahead and brought in plastic bags. But, if you do grease the pans during your demonstration, use wax paper or a pastry brush, not your fingers. Or use a non stick vegetable spray. Be sure your pans and trays are clean. Baking soda can help shine up a dull aluminum pan.
12. If using an electric mixer, disconnect the mixer before you remove beaters. Scrape them with a rubber scraper and put into a utensil tray. A utensil tray can be made by shaping aluminum foil to the desired shape, and can be used for all your dirty utensils. Make it double thickness, wrap it up and after you get home throw it away.
13. Plan to wear clothes that are washable and comfortable. Solid colors that coordinate with your apron are a good choice. Short sleeves are easy to work in, all jewelry should be left at home. Nail polish should not be worn and long nails distract from your demonstration. Your hair should be pulled back or in a Chef's hat.
14. Talk while you are working, while dicing the vegetables tell about the nutritional content.
15. When you have finished your demonstration, display your finished product in a serving dish or the baking pan. Make it look attractive and inviting to eat. The judges are given a sample of your product to taste and score.

On the Day of the Contest

Nervous? This is where all your planning will pay off. Check your list to be sure all your equipment and ingredients are packed. Allow plenty of time to get to the event. Rushing at the last minute is a disaster.

In the set up area, you will want to arrange your trays using the diagram you made. In some cases you will prepare your finished product before doing your demonstration. Now you're ready to do your demo. When your turn comes, someone will assist you in moving to the demo area.



While you're waiting, here are a few things you could be checking:

1. Take off all rings, bracelets, necklaces, jewelry is distracting and can get in the way. Don't chew gum.
2. Make sure you have an apron on. It will help keep your clothes from getting messy.
3. No one likes hair in their food, be sure your hair is tied back or in a net, scarf, or Chef's hat. Check that no stray hairs sneak out.
4. Check your posters to be sure they are in the correct order.
5. Wash your hands.
6. Take a few slow deep breaths. Try to give the appearance of being calm, even if your stomach is doing flips.

Once you're told to begin, do your demonstration as planned. The judges will be watching your organization and technique and listening for accurate information. After your demo the judges might ask you questions like: "Where did you find your recipe?" "Why are you rolling your dough like that?" or "What nutritional value does your recipe have?" Look at the judges as you answer. If you do not know the answer say, "I do not know but I could research the answer". Never try to make up an answer. Smile as much as you can. It's hard to do, but it does make you look like you're enjoying yourself, even if you are petrified. Find a friendly face in the audience and look up and smile often. Eye contact works wonders.

When you're finished answering the judges' questions, give the judges a sample of your finished product for tasting and scoring. Pack up everything, wipe off your work area and return to the set up area. This area needs to be left as clean as you found it. You can learn some new techniques by sitting in the audience and watching the other demonstrators.

Feedback

When you receive your evaluation sheets, if you don't understand a statement, ask your Extension Agent or your club leader. Judges have valuable experience and their suggestions can help you improve your demonstration. Save your evaluation sheets and look at them before you do your next demo. The comments can help you improve each time. The way you feel about your accomplishment is the most important thing, and can be worth 10 blue ribbons. Remember, practice makes perfect, no matter how experienced you become.