

## Dinner Party

Chefs are on the cutting edge of entertainment and are masters at building community around a table. They also have the thrill of defining and redefining what is 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:

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.

### 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?

### Choices- do 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.
  - **Tip:** You can do this by researching a professional and then conducting the interview via phone or video!
- **Collect recipes from cooking shows, website, 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.
  - **Check out websites like Food network, <https://www.foodnetwork.com/> or Tasty, <https://tasty.co/topic/easy-dinner> to complete this choice.**
- **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.
  - **For inspiration watch this video to see how to turn three ingredients into nine different meals: <https://youtu.be/l4K27X3wR3Q>**

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### 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! When shopping, don't forget to consider any allergies or dietary restrictions your guests might have.

#### Choices- do one:

- **Comparison shop.** Take your list of recipe ingredients and research online which stores carry your ingredients, pay attention to things like price. 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 businesses you're supporting.
  - **To get you started watch this quick video about shopping tips:**  
<https://youtu.be/8-ZE87Uai8U>
- **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. You can do this virtually too! Just research a professional online and then interview via phone or video.
  - **Check out this short video of what its like being a food buyer:**  
<https://youtu.be/75nVEOtuHOQ>
- **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).
  - **Check out this quick video on how a wholesale warehouse like Costco is changing its membership policies:**  
<https://youtu.be/RZZOmWljnAc>

### 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.

#### Choices- do 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. This can be done virtually too! Just research a professional online then interview them via phone or video.
  - **For added fun watch this video of serving tips for each course:**  
[https://youtu.be/dQxRV8D\\_01I](https://youtu.be/dQxRV8D_01I)

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- **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?
  - **Check out this video of a Mise En Place challenge from MasterChef Canada:** <https://youtu.be/XkiMoUH3cBQ>
- **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.
  - **Watch this video from Bon Appetit to learn some kitchen tips:** <https://youtu.be/A8g-bt9GbRk>

### 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 each other and with the dishes they'll be served on?).

### Choices- do 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.
  - **Watch this awesome 5-Minute craft video on how to garnish like a pro:** <https://youtu.be/kcbRpLX-mqs>
- **Present food in interesting shapes.** Carrots can be julienned (cut into strips) or served brunoised style (diced into fine cubes). You can shape a scoop of mash 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 above the dish of ice cream, then lightly pour cocoa powder through it to create an elegant design.
- **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.
  - **For inspiration check out this Tasty video on fun ways to serve fruit:** <https://youtu.be/Y-P00YKtgVs>

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### 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 guest enjoy the stylish food and dining experience you've crafted, ask them for constructive feedback.

#### Choices- do one:

- **Decorate according to your menu theme.** Does your menu have a cultural or personal theme you could expand into music, decorations, and mood?
  - **For more fun:** Follow the Tik Tok trend and have all your guests dress up to the theme.
- **Celebrate a special occasion.** Commemorate a birthday, holiday, or Girl Scout event- you could even host your dinner party over video chat!
  - **What is a special occasion without a toast?** Watch this video on how to give a toast and then give one at your dinner party.  
<https://youtu.be/CARfWj-kfzY>
- **Use food and fun to strengthen relationships.** Use this time to connect with your guests. Ask questions and get to know them on a deeper level. You can even write down questions and put them in a bowl for everyone to choose and answer.
  - **Here is an example of this fun dinner party icebreaker:**  
<https://youtu.be/WwJg5Xnfabw>

#### 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

#### More to Explore:

- Snap reference 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.
  - We would love to see your creations! Send pictures of your meals to Girl Scouts of Central Indiana. Email Jory Sejdiu at [jsejdiu@girlscoutsindiana.org](mailto:jsejdiu@girlscoutsindiana.org)
- Try out molecular gastronomy. This food science is gaining 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 to as much to the eye as it does to the mouth.

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

### Partying Green:

Make your party ecofriendly!

- Send paperless invitations
- Mind your “food print”
- Avoid using disposable plates, cups, or utensils
- Use cloth napkins
- Serve locally grown, sustainably raised food
- Display fresh flowers grown or picked

### Careers to Explore:

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

**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.

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### Quotes:

- “Before starting to prepare a meal the Girl Scout should not only have her menu in mind, but should have an idea how long it will take to prepare each dish so that everything will be ready to serve at the same time, with all the hot dishes very hot and all the cold dishes very cold.” – Girl Scout Handbook, 1920
- “Good and imaginative cooks move in a very special glow of popularity. Work out 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 store to compare costs and qualities. Then actually invite a group of boys to such a meal. Buy, prepare, and serve it yourselves.” – meal Planning and buying Project, Senior girl Scout Handbook, 1963
- “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

### 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 the oven
- State approximate cost of each dish
- Cook two kinds of meat
- Boil or roast two kinds of vegetables, rice, potatoes, and another vegetable
- Make two salads
- Make a preserve of berries or fruit to to can them