



The Aesthetics of Plate Presentation

Dietary Employee Training Program

Objective: The participant will be able to:

- ◆ Discuss why plate presentation is important
- ◆ Describe the characteristics involved in attractive plate presentation

Course Outline:

- I. Introduction: The Importance of Aesthetics in Plate Presentation
- II. Menu Planning and Serving Considerations
- III. Conclusion / Discussion
- IV. Test

Course Information:

I. Introduction: The Importance of Aesthetics in Plate Presentation

Aesthetics is the concept of what is attractive and pleasing to the senses. Presenting attractive, delicious tasting foods is the best marketing tool a foodservice facility can utilize. Often, the quality of food being served is judged based on the way it looks. Poorly presented foods tell customers that their enjoyment is not the main priority of the foodservice establishment. Offering attractive meals not only shows creativity and skill in the kitchen, but also makes customers feel good about their meal. The way a meal looks will influence customer satisfaction and can also have an impact on the nutritional status of a patient when serving foods in a healthcare setting as they are more inclined to consume if the meal looks appetizing. Presenting an attractive meal does not necessarily have to be a labor-intensive and costly project. Creative menu planning and ambition are the key ingredients to attractive plate presentation.

II. Menu Planning and Serving Considerations

1. Color:

Scientific studies have shown that the color of food plays an important role in customer food preferences and their ability to identify flavors. When preparing a menu or plate, consider the colors of all the foods being served. A plate containing fish, cauliflower, dinner roll, mashed potatoes and a chocolate chip cookie is not aesthetically pleasing because these food items are all white and brown colors. Instead, serve a meal with fish, broccoli, mashed sweet potatoes, a dinner roll, and fresh strawberries with whipped cream. The more variety in the color of foods being served, the more attractive the meal.

2. Texture / Consistency:

Texture refers to the way food feels in the mouth – crunchy, smooth, soft, hard, grainy, coarse, chewy, etc. Consistency refers to the way food stays together – runny, firm, gelatinous, etc. Serving foods of similar textures or consistencies can become very boring to the customer. Instead of serving mashed potatoes and pudding with a meal, serve the mashed potatoes but offer fresh fruit instead of the pudding for a more crisp texture. Variations in both of these areas are necessary for greater menu appeal.

3. Shape:

The shape of food plays a large part in the aesthetic appeal of the menu. It is very monotonous to always have all the food on a plate be shaped the same. Be mindful when cutting foods into different shapes that the food must look edible and be easy to eat. If food becomes intimidating, the consumer will be unwilling to eat the food that is served. Use shapes such as carrot triangles and cucumber juliennes for contrast. Today's food processing equipment and availability of ready-to-use convenience foods make it simple to offer attractive variations.

4. Arrangement:

Proper placement of food on a plate is important to how the customer will feel about the meal placed in front of them. When plating food, be sure not to leave too much space between food items. Additional space will make the portions appear small and cause customer dissatisfaction. Also, be careful not to overcrowd the



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plate because the appearance can get messy and intimidating. For example, if too much gravy is used or foods are too close together, the gravy can spread to all the other items on the plate. Do not place everything in the middle of the plate; rather, select a focal point and build from that part of the presentation.

5. Garnish:

Some plates do not need an added garnish if the foods being provided already contain enough color. However, in some cases, a contrast in color is needed. Garnishes must be edible, simple, and appropriate for the food being served on the plate. They must also be planned into the plate arrangement. Garnishes can be as simple as adding parsley flakes around the rim of the plate or as exquisite as creating a design across the plate with sauce from a squirt bottle. When adding flair to the meal, be sure that the flavor of the garnish will compliment the meal rather than detract from the meal.

6. Dinnerware:

When consumers look at the meal being presented, they will notice not only the food being served but also the dinnerware that the food is being served on. Even the perfect combination of food will fall short of appeal if it is served on poor dinnerware. The color and condition of plates, bowls, and serving platters has an impact upon the acceptance of food. The typical menu and type of service should dictate the color and style of the dinnerware, which should always be in good condition, without chips, cracks, or marks. When choosing plates and bowls to serve foods in, choose appropriate colors and sizes. Consider the amount of food that will be served to determine the appropriate size plate to use. Foods should be held comfortably in the dinnerware. Placing a food item in an over-sized bowl can make the portion size look skimpy and may disappoint the customer. Over-serving foods can also be unappealing. When serving food, be sure that the food remains inside the rim. If the food does not fit on the dinnerware, consider serving the food on a larger plate or reduce the portion sizes.

III. Conclusion/ Discussion

Although there are several factors to keep in mind when serving food, consideration of the aesthetic appeal of the meal is very important to customer satisfaction. Creating meals that are both aesthetically pleasing and flavorful leaves the customer with not only a nutritious meal, but a good feeling about the foodservice establishment; encouraging the customer to return to enjoy the food again.

For more information regarding Reinhart FoodService's Dietary Employee Training Program or other nutrition services, please refer to our website at <http://www.rfsdelivers.com> or contact NSDept@RFSDelivers.com. 1. T, 2. F, 3. T, 4. T, 5. F

Pre-Test / Post-Test (Circle One)

Name: _____

- T F 1. Often, the quality of food is judged by the way it looks.
- T F 2. A meal should include items of similar colors to be appealing.
- T F 3. Oversized plates and bowls can make the serving size appear small.
- T F 4. Herbs used for garnishing should always compliment the food being served.
- T F 5. Creating sufficient space between food items on a plate creates an attractive look plate and encourages the customer to want to eat.