



The final step: How to elegantly plate your meals

When you're hosting a dinner party, impressing your guests with your culinary prowess requires more than just amazing flavour combinations.

All of our senses come into play when we're enjoying a delicious meal. Our anticipation increases as we smell what's to come, or hear the crackle, pop and sizzle of fresh food on its way. We delight in crunch and texture in every mouthful, and of course we hunt for ways to tease the tastebuds with new flavours. But before that all important first bite, we first devour our meal with our eyes.

Whether your guests are assessing where they're going to start, or finding the best angle for their Instagram story, the moment your meal is placed in front of them is your biggest opportunity to impress.

If you're wondering how your food preparation can be taken from amateur to professional without years of culinary classes, these dinner party tips will help you to elegantly plate your meals to make a great first impression.

Celebrate contrasting colours

We all enjoy the taste of a slow cooked stew or curry that simmers the ingredients into a visually indistinguishable blend of flavours, but a dinner party calls for something a bit more elegant. Our eyes and our health both appreciate a variety of ingredients in a rainbow of colours.

This could involve mixing varieties of the same vegetable, such as purple carrots as well as the traditional orange, or preparing your elements separately so that they retain their strong colouring throughout the cooking process. Colourful fruits added to savoury salads or a scattering of sliced chilli atop a curry will add both flavour and interest to your meals.

Use fresh elements

There's a reason garnishes run rampant in the restaurant business. A simple placement of fresh, green herbs immediately makes your meal look more complete and appetising. Whether you pick a single sprig or finely chop them, fresh elements add an interesting counterpoint for your meal and elevate the flavours in a way that will make your guests linger over their plate hoping for seconds.

Don't overload your plates

While the small portions in fancy restaurants are often derided, when it comes to a dinner party with multiple courses, less is definitely more. Not only will portion control ensure your guests finish everything on their plates and you'll have less waste at the end of the night, but it's actually a top tip for presenting your food in a way that is visually appealing.

Plate up away from prying eyes

Banquet and sharing style dinners, where everyone can load up their plates and come back for seconds (and thirds) make your meals feel homely. If you want to take a step back from family-style dinners, try plating up in the kitchen and serving the finished dish ready to eat. Assembling your food before serving to your guests allows you to have total control over how it looks on the plate and how the different elements of your dish interact with each other.

For more tips ahead of your next dinner party, check out more of our food inspiration articles [here](#).