

How To Do A Food Demonstration



Ideas For 4-H Projects



This project was developed by the Monroe County 4-H Home Economics Program Development Committee in 1980-1981.

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Cooperative Extension in New York State, The New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and the New York State College of Human Ecology provide Equal Program and Employment Opportunities.

HOW TO DO A FOODS DEMONSTRATION

You've decided to do a food demonstration. Great! I have done over 20 silent demonstrations, and I would like to help you make it through your demonstration as easily as possible. Now, let's get started!

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;
- suitable for the facilities available and time allowed;
- appealing.

Where can you find the right recipe? Check with your family or friends to see if they have any good recipes. 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 demonstrating. After your first year, you will probably want to alter the recipe to add some originality. For example, one year I was looking through a magazine and I saw a giant cream puff that had chocolate filling. I liked the idea of the cream puff, so I changed the filling to a vanilla pudding mixture, and topped it with cherries for my demonstration. Another good thing about changing a recipe is that nobody else will have the same recipe you do. One year I remember four demonstrators who all made the same recipe.

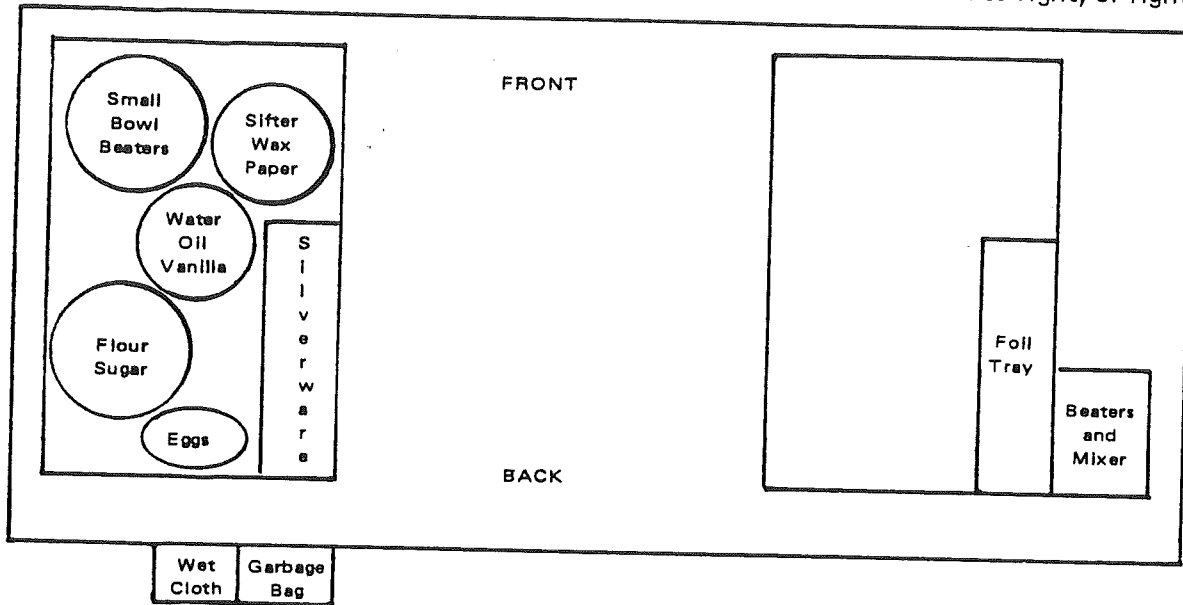
Be sure to read a copy of the rules and guidelines for the contest or event you plan to enter, since each is a little different.



Next, try out the recipe to see if you like it. If you don't, you will never be able to stand 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 and practice, until you can almost do the demonstration in your sleep.

PREPARATION FOR DEMONSTRATION

Let's begin preparing and practicing for the demonstration. First, you will need two trays that measure about 13" x 16". If you don't have trays at home, you can borrow some from the 4-H Office, or 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 when you are done using them. (You can work from either left to right, or right to left).



At the contest, you will have a work area of about 3-4 feet on the table. Be prepared to work in this amount of space. Practice using only this much work area at home. Here is a diagram of how your trays might look.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DEMONSTRATION SET-UP

1. Use small containers for small amounts and large containers for large amounts. Pill bottles and plastic containers 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 placed over it 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 cover since once this is removed, salt and sugar look very much alike! Be sure lettering is large enough for you and your audience to read it easily. Neatness is very important here, and use a waterproof marker so your labels won't run.
4. Cover bottoms of trays for a neat look (examples: 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 shown 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 program. Following is a sample list I made for one contest:

INGREDIENTS

cake flour
sugar
salt
baking powder

oil
lemon juice
2 eggs
cherries

cream filling
finished product
vanilla

EQUIPMENT

hair net
2 trays
2 towels
apron
extension cord
wooden spoon

mixer
sifter
wax paper
cake pan
cloth
paper bag - tape

1 cup measure
½t. measure
1 spatula
2 knives
2 rubber scrapers

TECHNIQUES FOR DEMONSTRATION

1. Use a clear mixing bowl if it's 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 to measure dry ingredients. Measuring spoons can be used for either. Some ingredients can be pre-measured at home, especially if you'll be short on time. Juniors usually have a maximum of 30 minutes, and seniors have 45 minutes. But be sure to show how to measure at least one dry and one liquid ingredient.
3. Level flour, sugar, etc., only with a flat spatula or knife.
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. For example, a large butcher knife isn't needed to peel an apple.
6. Try to work quietly. Use wooden spoons, and place a dampened cloth under bowls while mixing. This helps keep the bowl in place, and also deadens sound. Use rubber scrapers to clean bowls out completely, and try to hold the bowl facing the audience as you scrape it out.

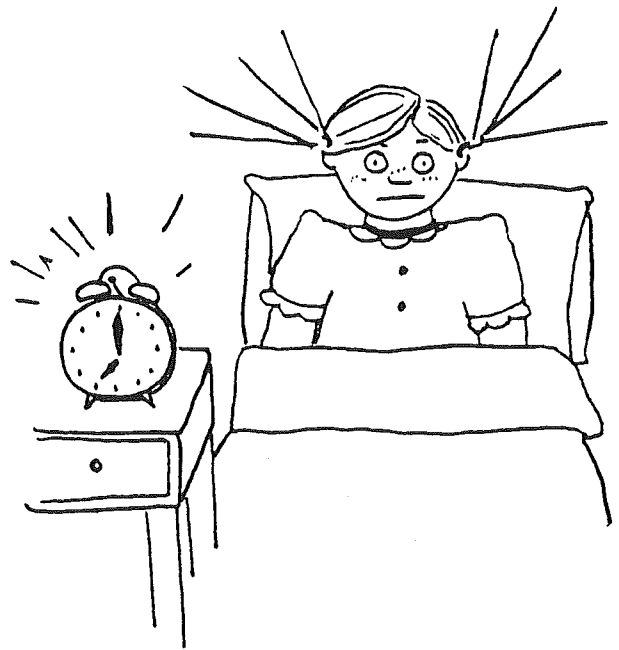
7. When you clean batter from a spoon, tap it against your hand rather than against the side of the bowl. There are two reasons for this; you wouldn't want to chip the bowl, plus it makes too much noise.
8. Work on waxed paper. For example, if you are peeling an apple, the peels can be cleaned up quickly. Tape a small paper bag beside you on the table for peelings, egg shells, etc. Clean up as you go.
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 mother's big one to the program, but a small wooden or lucite one works fine.
11. Pans can be greased ahead and brought in plastic bags. But, if you do it during your demonstration, use wax paper or a pastry brush, not your fingers; or use one of the non-stick vegetable sprays. Be sure your pans are clean, as is everything on your tray. Baking soda can help shine up a dull aluminum pan.
12. If using an electric mixer, don't leave beaters in to drip batter. Always disconnect the mixer, then remove beaters and clean them with a rubber scraper and remove to silverware tray. This can be made by shaping aluminum foil to the desired shape, and can be used for all your dirty utensils. I made it double thickness, and after finishing my demonstration, wrapped it up neatly to take home. It sure made clean-up easier!
13. Plan to wear clothes that are easily washable and that you feel comfortable in. Solid colors that coordinate with your apron. Short sleeves are easy to work in, and all jewelry should be left at home.
14. Before you display your finished product, clean up everything. Cover your trays with matching towels, and then display proudly what you've made. In a public presentation, this would be the finished product, ready to be tasted. In a cooking contest (like fruit or vegetable), one serving is displayed throughout the entire demonstration, while the remaining product goes to the tasting judges.

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 is packed. Allow plenty of time to get to the program. Rushing at the last minute is a disaster.

There will be a registration table for you to check in, and they will tell you where to put the finished product you brought with you. Use eye appeal to display your finished product in it's serving dish or baking pan.

Next, go to the demonstrating area and arrange your trays using the diagram you made. Now you're ready to begin demonstrating, and as soon as the judge says to begin, you can start.





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.
2. Make sure you have an apron on. Why not color coordinate it to your towels or outfit. All good cooks wear an apron while they're working.
3. Be sure your hair is back in a hair net, scarf, or chef's hat, and that no stray hairs are sneaking out. No one likes hair nets, except judges (check with your local bakery, ice cream shop or grocery to see if hats are available).
4. Lastly, take a few real deep breaths and try to give the appearance of being calm, even if your stomach is doing flips.



Once you're told to begin, do your demonstration quickly, but neatly. The judges will be watching your organization and technique. They 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 judge as you answer. Turn off your mixer - don't try to talk over it. Smile as much as you can. I think I received this comment on every evaluation sheet for three years. 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 demonstrating, stand quietly until everyone else is done. Parents and friends may be taking pictures now. After you've packed up everything, sit in the audience and watch the older demonstrators. I learned many of my techniques this way.

At the completion of the program, certificates and ribbons are passed out. Ribbons are given in three colors:

- A blue ribbon means excellent. This indicates an extremely well-done demonstration - the very best. It is a goal to work towards, since not everyone receives a blue.
- A red ribbon means good. This indicates a good job has been done, and there's room to grow and improve.
- A green ribbon means fair. This means that the demonstration and product were OK, but with more practice, they can be improved.

When you receive your evaluation sheets, if you don't understand a statement, ask the judges. Judges are always willing to explain because they want to help you. Often they're rushed as they write their comments during the judging. And, remember that judges are human too. They might not see every single thing you did. Or you might not agree with all their comments. But judges have valuable experience, and their suggestions can help you to improve.

Save your evaluation sheets and look at them before you do your next demonstration. 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. And remember, practice makes perfect, no matter how experienced you become.

