

THE COOKBOOK FOR THE SOUL

**A HIGHLY
RECOMMENDED
DOWNLOAD**



Cook Live Learn

**Cooking Tips and
Techniques Packed
with Wisdom, Humor
...and Good Eating!**



**Written by:
Dennis Killebrew**

How to Use This Book

Please take a moment to look over the features of this book, which have been designed to provide you with the best possible experience.

This book is not meant to be the “bible” of cooking. It does not attempt to exhaust the chemistry of cooking or to teach you everything about anything. Its goal is to build a solid foundation by helping you cook great recipes that you and yours will enjoy time and time again. My focus has been on building blocks and good eating!

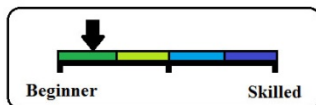
To that end, the ideas that shaped this book are simple: provide amazing recipes with complete instructions and share what I have learned over my 60+ year life so far. Putting it all in an intuitive format has been quite the challenge, however. On the one hand, perhaps it would have been best for newcomers to the kitchen to arrange the contents in lessons of progressing difficulty. In the alternative, folks simply seeking recipes might possibly find that approach tedious.

As usual, the middle ground seemed to offer the best mix with just a couple of tweaks. Here is how the book is arranged to provide you with what you want without having to put up with much of what you do not.

Good and Fast

There are a lot of occasions when you need something quick to prepare. That does not mean it has to forsake flavor for ease! Recipes marked with the Cook Live Learn logo are both fast to make and great tasting.

Difficulty Scale



Each recipe includes a Difficulty Scale grade for your consideration. There are four levels of complexity displayed, from Beginner to Skilled. As you can see in the example graphic, an arrow is used to point to the skill level required by the recipe. A word about how the difficulty was determined. You see, cooking is seldom difficult ... sure, it may be time consuming as it is basically manufacturing, it might require something new to you, and rarely, something may need to be done “just so”. Accordingly, the grade given will not be determined by the time element or the number of ingredients. Rather, it is a subjective measure of the likelihood that the average cook has used the required techniques previously. To that end, the Difficulty Scale might be better called the Familiarity Scale. After all, possessing skill at a given task is the result of familiarity.

As a new student to cooking, try a few “Beginner” recipes first. Then, move on to the next level as your confidence improves. Once you work your way to the “Perfect 10s” in Chapter 17, you will be prepared to tackle them and succeed!

If you are an accomplished cook and are here just for fantastic, unique and remarkable recipes, welcome! Of course, you will be drawn to make dishes that appeal to your senses and taste. For you, the Difficulty Scale is merely a grade you are free to ignore.

Glossary

In an effort to provide additional detail not usually given in a cookbook, while keeping recipes as clean and concise as possible, a Glossary is included. It provides not only definitions, but expanded instructions and other important information on included topics.

Throughout the pages of this book, words or phrases in the Glossary are type set in **bold underlined italics**. Please check it out to become familiar with the kind of detail and information available there.

Index

At the end of the book, an Index is provided for your convenience. Please note that it contains normal Index functions, plus listings of “Fast and Good” recipes, as well as an inventory of dishes by Difficulty Scale grade.

CookLiveLearn.com

This book is supported by its companion resource online; www.CookLiveLearn.com. There, you will find additional recipes, my random thoughts generated by daily life and special content available to book owners from time-to-time.

Life Lessons

It takes a pile of confidence to lecture anyone on “life”. During the process of writing this book, mine has waivered often. After all, I am not smarter or more observant than most folks. Even so, I have made a lot of dumb mistakes that taught me wise lessons. Moreover, I do not practice what I preach especially well. In spite of that, I have seen much and hope you will learn from my failures and inattention instead of having to endure your own. Finally, you must understand that this is “Do as I say, not as I do”!

The Life Lessons are located at the end of each chapter. They are not provided in any particular order, as I have been known to make any mistake possible at every opportunity!

Conventions

All temperatures in this book are expressed as Fahrenheit.

Chapter 3: Unbreakable Rules

Over the years, I have discovered a few kitchen and cooking rules that should never be broken. OK, maybe a few have been trampled, but I am old and cannot remember doing that! And, there is a little leeway in a couple of them as you will note. Regardless, you will be well-served by giving these directions their due!

These rules are along the lines of “Don’t pay with a check when your checking account is empty” or “Stop at all red lights”. Simply put, these are things that need to be done for success and safety. They are being provided in no particular order.

If You are Going to Cook, Do the Dishes, Pots and Pans. When I first began cooking in earnest in 1983, I made huge messes. It meant nothing to me to dirty every pan in the house and leave it in the sink. Crumbs and spills all over the countertops? Check. Gunk on the cook top and oil on the bottom of the oven? Check. Flour on the floor and dish towels stained? Check and check.

After a couple of weeks of this, my sweet wife explained how she was spending significant amounts of time cleaning up after me. In her wisdom, she did not tell me to make a smaller mess or how to conduct my business. She simply said, “If you are going to cook, do the dishes, pots, pans and clean up after yourself. Period”.

Pigs are not allowed in the kitchen. It is a matter of cleanliness and respect for your room or life mate. The fact is, a little cleaning every day beats a full day of cleaning later.

Taste the Food as it is Made. Recently I was watching one of those cooking contest TV shows. The four contestants were all Executive Chefs at note-worthy restaurants. Each made a three course meal, including a dessert. One of the chefs mistook salt for sugar in his dessert and served it to the judges. Another served a bland entree, so said the judges. Here is the kicker: Both admitted to failing to taste the dish! Taste your food along the way as you make it. Keep several small spoons or forks nearby to do so; use a clean one each time. When making something that should not be tasted raw, have a small sauce pan with boiling water handy. Drop a spoonful of the food item into the boiling water, allow it to cook and taste.

Salt and Pepper Eggs and Tomatoes. If you are under doctor’s orders to avoid eating salt, or cooking for someone that is, skip to the next paragraph. Otherwise, salt and pepper raw tomatoes and all sorts of eggs before serving. I love both of these foods, but without salt and pepper, they are as near to tasteless as anything. When making a sandwich, salt and pepper the tomato. Frying an egg? Salt and pepper before serving. Sliced boiled eggs ... likewise.

If you cannot bring yourself to do that, make sure you pass the salt and pepper at the table. You do not really want to serve bland, almost tasteless food, do you?

Season as you Go. Recently, I was asked when to season foods ... when the cooking process is complete or before? Ninety percent of the time, one should season the preparation at each ingredient addition along the way. After all, if you are making fried fish for example, sprinkling salt and pepper at the end will just season the crust, while leaving the fish itself without seasoning. Also, the idea is to build layers of flavor. Let's say you are working to make rice pilaf. First, you are going to sauté your chopped vegetables in butter ... salt and pepper them lightly so *they* will taste good. Next, you might add the rice to give it a quick sauté to allow it to soak up some butter and brown a little – no salt needed at this level. The seasoning from the vegetables flavors the rice, as will the butter ... the addition of some fresh herbs would be good at this point, though.

You see, one flavor will build and support the next, providing complexity or a happy marriage of ingredients. There are exceptions with this. For example, if I am preparing an over easy egg, I will not salt and pepper until plating the cooked egg. Another example concerns preparing dried beans. It is thought by many that simmering the beans in salty water makes them tough. Frankly, I have never really tested that for myself as it is easy enough to skip the salt until they are tender. Of course, this prohibition does not stop seasoning with pepper, coriander and/or vegetables.

Exceptions or not, use your head here. Avoid over-seasoning; too much salt is a bad thing (**Tip:** if that happens, try adding a little lemon juice at a time until it moderates the salty taste). Your layers can have different flavorings. Seasoning is not just about salt and pepper! The recipes in this book will endeavor to instruct you in seasoning effectively.

Microwaves are Not Ovens, They are Heaters Melters and Defrosters. Microwaves are fantastic at some things. Nothing re-heats a glazed yeast doughnut and coffee better than a microwave! During my travels, I have been without a microwave and the convenience lost is maddening. The microwave's ability to defrost foods is worth the price alone. In spite of all of this, do not use one to actually cook! (Before you harried young Mothers take me to task, I do not define zapping a box of processed mac and cheese "Cooking" ... microwave away!)

A microwave will not crisp a crust or brown anything. See [Using a Microwave](#) for tips on getting the most out of yours.

Do Not Use Condensed Canned Soups in Your Cooking. If you catch me with a can of Cream of Chicken or Cream of Mushroom soup in my pantry, shoot me. The only food I can think of on your grocer's shelf that is more processed than canned soup is Velveeta (sorry, Kraft). They are full of salt! In a single serving of the leading brand of Cream of Chicken soup, there are 830 mg of sodium (with 1 gram of sugar). Yes, "low sodium" variants are available and salt is cut to a livable 75 mg, but this reduction in salt comes with an increase in sugar to 8 grams per serving.

If nutritional information does not persuade you to dispense with the red and white cans, what about flavor that is salt and/or sugar driven? The question is, can you spend an additional five minutes preparing to make your own cream sauce for that wonderful casserole recipe? Of course you can. Here's how:

To replace a 10 ounce Can of Condensed Soup in a Recipe:


¼ Cup ***Mushrooms***, Celery or Whatever (actual chicken not needed for Cream of Chicken, but feel free to add ¼ cup diced chicken at the end, if you like)
2 Tablespoons Yellow Onion Chopped
1” Carrot, Peeled, Chopped Finely
1 Tablespoon Butter
1 Tablespoon Oil
2 Tablespoons All-Purpose Flour
5 Ounces Chicken or Vegetable Broth (Home-made preferred)
5 Ounces Milk or Half and Half
4 Twists of the Black Pepper Mill

Heat oil and butter over medium heat in a sauce pan. Add the vegetables and sauté 4 minutes. Sprinkle the flour over all and stir well to combine it into all other ingredients. Add the milk and broth, stir. Give it another stir every now and then and allow the mixture to come to a complete boil. Remove from heat and use as you would a can of condensed soup.

Tip: If you need a can of Cream of Celery and another of Cream of Chicken, use both main ingredients as above and double the rest of the recipe so you can make them at once.

Good Can be Fast, But Fast Isn't Necessarily Good. Of course, I know your daily schedule is packed and I am guessing you are stressed as well! Even so, when you need a quick meal to prepare, please find a recipe that is good, but quick to make, rather than something simply quick. Here's an example of what I mean. Waistline aside (and you can afford something rich every now and then), Fettuccini Alfredo is 5 little 'ol ingredients: cream, butter, parmesan, pasta and pepper. Boil one; then sauté everything else together for 5 or 6 minutes. No real prep, just enjoy a relaxing, nutritious glass of red wine while you literally watch it come together.



Look for the  tags in the recipes in this book to find recipes that meet this rule.

Garnish, Garnish, Garnish! Enjoying food to the maximum is achieved when three senses are stimulated: taste; smell; and appearance (sight). A good recipe will take care of two of them, the taste and smell. You have to add the third. An effective garnish is easily done and the impact on your diners will be huge.

Recently, I prepared the meal for a dinner party at a friend's home. Along with the various dishes I had made, I brought a grapefruit and a handful of fresh basil leaves along. I chopped the basil finely and sliced the grapefruit into one-quarter inch thick slices. When I plated the entree, I sprinkled basil on it and added a "Stand Alone" slice of grapefruit to the plate. As the plates were delivered, I heard my diners, "Wow, a ruby red grapefruit ... I've never seen that used before!" "Look at that, how special and beautiful!" After a positive start because of a simple garnish, do you think their special experience continued with the food? Of course it did ... the garnish set the stage! Garnishes scream, "Special, Special, Special!"

Adding a garnish is so simple and powerful, there is NO excuse! You can learn more about garnishes and presentation in Chapter Four, which is dedicated to the subject.

The Quality of Ingredients Matters. This seems like something everyone would embrace. Not so. Many of you regularly buy the cheapest food stuffs available. Sometimes that is OK, most of the time not. Think about canned tomatoes. The lowest priced ones are acidic, not ripe and seedy. Not yummy. Generally, you get what you pay for unless it is on sale or you have a coupon. Also, the warehouse stores such as Costco, usually offer superior products at wholesale prices (and unfortunately, huge quantities – make sure you can use all you buy there or the bargain disappears). Here are some strategies to use in obtaining top quality ingredients at low prices:

When “the good stuff” is on sale, stock up.

“Family-size” packs of meat are big savers. Separate the large quantity into portions and store in your freezer. Use storage bags or a double layer of plastic cling wrap; or a combination of the two (1 layer of plastic wrap per piece, all pieces in a single storage bag).

Use Manufacturer Coupons. Many, if not most manufacturer websites offer coupons. The plus side is that coupons are generally available on name brand products of good quality.

Buy large or institutional-sized products – even canned goods. Upon using your first large-package ingredient, bag the balance in sandwich bags (use a ladle to simplify this process for liquids), one portion at a time. Label and date a second sandwich bag for each portion and put the original bag in it, seal and store in freezer. The second bag creates insulation to help prevent freezer burn over time. And, these bags are inexpensive per each.

None of this is to say that only national brands must be used. The point is you must use good ingredients to serve great food. With a little planning, the highest price on the shelf may be avoided.

For food stuffs, the best thing to do to buy suitable product is to determine freshness. Is the vegetable shiny, the meat red, the fruit firm? Is the product within the “Buy by Date” or “Sell by Date” – the earlier the better. Watch this extra closely for meats, dairy products and eggs.

You Get What You Look For

This concept may be understood on several levels. For example, if you are looking for and expecting nothing that is likely what will be found; not much.

However, I want to go in a more fundamental direction with this topic. In my experience, the human mind is more “machine” than we usually think of it. The fact is, “Garbage In, Garbage Out” is a truth, right? If you hang around a positive, productive group, you will be positive and productive ... that is the way it works. Or, if you are to successfully memorize something, how do you go about that? My guess is that you will repetitively poke the thing to be memorized into your brain until it is stuck there. You did not “reason” yourself to store something away in your mind; you basically “inscribed” it there, right? These examples depict a mechanical aspect to the way our brain functions.

Taking this a little further, think of the transmission in your car. A transmission is a machine that contains multiple “gears”, using the one most appropriate to the situation at hand. In today’s cars, my description is an oversimplification, but you get the idea. The truth is, when you put your mind to work looking for something, it will be in “gear” to find it – and in most cases, locating it will be accomplished.

Getting to the point, when you believe someone is critical of you, a search for proof is undertaken ... and it will likely be found, real or imagined. Perhaps, a feeling exists that a “road block” in your future will appear that cannot be overcome. With that thinking, I guarantee a way will be found to recognize a “pot hole” as a “Road Closed”.

Many years ago, I was the largest shareholder in a telephone company and as such, ran the company on a day-to-day basis. We bought a lot of service from the “Bell” Company to interconnect our network with theirs. Once a year, they would send a marketing team to my office to buy lunch for me as a show of appreciation for our business and to do an extensive customer survey. This survey was a multipage form that folded up like a map. The front cover page said, “Customer Perception Survey”.

This “perception” qualifier always struck me like a poke in the eye. To me it screamed, “What input you provide to us may or may not be true or the reality about an issue, as we clearly understand it is just your ‘perception’ of the situation”! While I did not like that they had given themselves a built-in excuse, over the years, I have learned that our *perception* is our personal *reality*. The way we see something makes up the truth for us.

Let’s say you are the witness to a street robbery. You saw a fellow in a straw hat and a long sleeve shirt rip the purse off of the victim’s shoulder. You “saw” it was a guy in a straw hat and long sleeves because that was your perception ... whether or not his hat was really a ball cap and he was actually wearing a hoodie.

Take this to heart. When something is pre-determined, it is likely to be received because you will be *looking* for it. Whether the result is reality or perception is not material.

The moral in all of this? Do not go looking for negatives and bad stuff. When in the dark, hunt for opportunities. Search for blessings so you can count them when deflated. Look for the positives in yourself and others. Study methods you can use to reach your goals. And, you know what? You will find what you are looking for!

Chapter 4: Garnishes

Everyone should share my opinion, of course. A plate of food without a garnish is a meal, no matter how delicious. However, that same plate with a well-considered garnish is *dining*. A garnish says “This is special”. It makes your hard work a gift of Art, even better, it is *edible* Art.

It would be different if using a garnish required that you travel to China to learn the skills from the masters required to carve carrots into Buddhist temples. It simply does not. Beautiful, effective garnishes can be made in seconds by the art-less. All that is needed is “want to” and a little planning.

Now that I have pounded the table, what is a garnish? It is something edible that is arranged and placed on a plate of food to enhance the appearance of the dish being served. The human being enjoys food with three of his or her senses: Taste, Smell and Sight (appearance). Your good work and the recipe are going to take care of two; taste and smell. Just before serving, it is also your job to take care of the third sense. Thoughtful garnishes are so seldom used, people go gaga over them. I promise that you will enjoy the praise!

Many of the recipes herein will suggest a garnish, some will not. Please, no confusion, I want you to add a garnish every time two or more are served (yourself plus one or more people). Frankly, you deserve one even when dining alone!

The basics of deciding what garnish to use are few and easy to apply:

What do you have on hand? This is where planning comes into play. Think about a garnish when you make your grocery list. If you do not have a morsel or tidbit to use, you cannot plate it, right?

Color. Generally, you want to use a contrasting color in a garnish. This creates “pop” and interest. For example, if you are serving Fettuccini with Vegetable Marinara, which is very “red”, a radish would not be the best choice, nor would a strawberry – no contrast with these! An orange or a lemon would offer a color pop in this case, right? Also, chopped fresh or even dried parsley, would bring another color to the dish if sprinkled lightly over all.

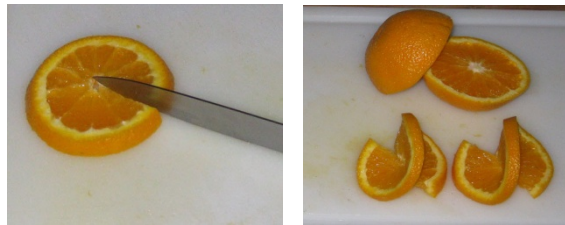
Thinking of parsley, I am not a big fan of placing a sprig of parsley, curly or flat, on a plate and calling it a garnish. It has been used to death and is thoughtless. Parsley leaves, chopped finely, may be used as a sprinkle garnish whenever its deep green is a contrasting color, on eggs or macaroni and cheese.

Be bold and have a big imagination! For example, when serving Fettuccini Alfredo on a large white oval plate, with lots of white showing, sprinkle chopped parsley all over the plate! A sprinkled garnish can be anything edible. A couple of carrot sticks, a few thin cucumber slices, a

cinnamon stick, a tomato peel wound into a flower, 4 or 5 small avocado chunks soaked in lemon juice ... anything!

Here are some simple garnishes that you can make that will “Wow” your diners.

Stand Alone Citrus Slices. A favorite garnish of mine uses an orange or other citrus fruit. These are super easy to make and most diners will eat them, as an added bonus. To prepare, wash a citrus fruit and cut uniform slices from the middle as seen in the following picture. The slices work well at 1/4” thick. Next, lay the slices flat on your cutting board and cut from the center, straight out through the rind. Use both hands to grab the orange on each side of the slice; twist carefully in the opposite direction and stand up on work surface as shown.



Carrot Stars. Orange is often the perfect contrasting color for dishes that are red, white or green. These are a little more time consuming to make than are Stand Alone Citrus, but will certainly cause more “Ooooo’s and Ahhhhh’s”. Begin by peeling a nice-sized carrot and cutting off as many 1 1/2” sections as you feel you’ll need. Next, use a paring knife to cut out triangular-shaped sticks from the length of the carrot.

The technique here is to place the knife blade where you want to cut, apply a little downward pressure and rock the blade back and forth to a depth of up to a 1/4” depending on the diameter of your carrot; smaller carrot, more shallow cut. Then, place the blade parallel to the first cut at an angle aiming at the bottom of the first cut; rock back and forth to cut to the original slice and remove the stick. Continue in the same way, cutting sticks equally spaced around the carrot. Finally, once all of your sticks are cut away, cross-cut disks of star-shaped carrots. See pictures.



In the process of making the stars, you will end up with some carrot sticks. You can eat them as a reward or make a garnish with them. In the picture, I have stacked them as a “hash tag” and put a drop of Ranch Dressing on them as a taste treat. This is another way to use carrots; just cut some sticks ... I am not suggesting you use these two shapes together! By the way, you can use the same technique to make garnishes from cucumbers and zucchini.

Strawberry Fans. Wash a whole fresh strawberry, leaving the green leafy stem in tact. Lay the berry on its side on your cutting board. Use your sharp paring or utility knife to make several cuts all the way through the strawberry lengthwise, being careful to leave about 1/4" just below the leaves uncut. Place the prepared berry on the serving plate. Hold the big end between thumb and index finger, while using the other hand to spread and push down on the thin slices you cut.



Strained Powders. Put a teaspoon of cocoa powder or confectioner sugar into a tea strainer. Hold the strainer level, about 6 inches above the dessert to be beautified and lightly tap the strainer's edge with a finger. Move the strainer around to dust the target evenly. You can also tap some onto the serving dish if you like.



Cookie gets chocolate powder garnish

Chocolate Syrup Stripes. This is just what you would think it is. Using a squeeze bottle of chocolate syrup, point the cap spout at your plated dessert and very lightly squeeze while moving the bottle over the plate in a zigzag pattern. Make the pattern almost as wide as the plate in order to make stripes on it as well as the confection. If you want to be bold, put the plated dessert on your cutting board and do parallel stripes by starting the flow before the bottle swings over the plate and stopping it once the plate has been passed; repeat. Be creative. And, please refrain from putting your thumb in chocolate when you serve your creation!

Chocolate Curls. Refrigerate a milk chocolate bar for 10 minutes (if the bar is too cold, it will crumble). Unwrap and use a vegetable peeler by pushing the blade down the edge of the bar. You can collect the chocolate in a bowl and sprinkle over your plated dessert. Feel free to substitute almond bark, white chocolate or gourmet high chocolate content bars (such as 80% chocolate, etc.).



Tomato Rose. For this trick, you will need a very sharp paring knife and a medium ripe, red tomato. The idea is to start at the top of the fruit and peel the entire tomato by cutting a single strip of skin 1/2" to 3/4" wide; one strip. Taking a little meat with the skin will provide the strength needed to stay in one piece. Once complete, stand the skin strip on its edge on your work space, as shown in the following picture. Now, roll it up fairly tight beginning at one end. If a good job has been done peeling (and it will be after a little practice), you will have an eye-catching rose!



Kiwi Slices. Kiwi fruit has a delicate, but complex appearance when sliced cross-cut. Greens and black burst with color and interest. To use kiwi as a garnish, peel with a sharp paring knife and make 1/4" slices at the middle. Simply place one or two of them flat or layered on the plate.



Paprika. Simple, simple! Shake a little paprika onto the top of the item to give it a red contrasting color. This looks great on potato salad, tuna salad or anything savory and light in color (and not red please!).



Rustic. Anything can be used as a garnish as long as it is the right size and clean: a 4” long fresh sprig of rosemary or thyme and chunks of pineapple with a cherry will do the trick as well. A chopped herb or leafy part of a vegetable minced can be effectively sprinkled over your service plate ... before or after the food has been arranged on it. Sprinkle shredded cheddar cheese lightly over appropriate dishes just to add color. Cut three pimento-stuffed green olives in half and arrange on the side of the plate, cut sides up.



Anything can be a garnish

Whipped Cream and Cherries. A dollop of whipped cream on each side of a slice of cake or pie or on a plate of cookies (for dipping) is a great touch and tastes good, too! Place a cherry on top for additional effect. **How to whip cream.**

Goals, a Primer

Have you set goals applicable to various aspects of your life? Do you have a goal written out that contains the steps to take to achieve it? What is a goal, anyway?

Worthwhile results just do not happen all by themselves very often, if ever. Accordingly, to increase the odds of success, how ever you define it ... is to define it! A Goal is a result, a planned destination of *your* choice, that includes a detailed “road map” of how to arrive there.

Perhaps you would like to retire by the age of 45. That would be a “like to”, not a Goal. To make that a Goal, one would start by defining exactly what “retire by 45” means. Do you want to travel the world? Become a missionary in Peru? Would retirement mean you will be moving to a mountain top or an ocean front?

Once you determine “What” exactly you want to accomplish, figure out the “How” to achieve it. For example, how much will the lifestyle you plan cost to obtain and maintain? How much will need to be saved and how will you save it, at what regular rate? To protect your savings from economic calamity, what steps will be taken? Should Spanish be learned, and if so, where and when? One of the real keys to defining goals is doing so with as much detail as possible; the more the better.

Over the years, I have taught 100s of people the fundamentals of Goal Setting and achievement. What I observed in the process is that we humans think that goals are a good thing; everybody ought to have a few. One day I was teaching such a class when a young man commented, “You know, I like this “Goal” stuff. There are a bunch of things I want to happen in my life. But, taking steps one at a time is not the way for me. I want to take an elevator!”

You see, there are no elevators available toward reaching your goals. Even if there were, I would encourage you to stay off of them. An elevator goes down as often as it goes up, making it a 50% chance of which direction you get. You deserve better odds than that!

Here is how to set an effective goal:

Take a piece of paper or open a spreadsheet. Define your goal in hyper-detail. What does reaching it “look” like? When do you want to arrive at the prize? List every component wanted/needed to reach the ultimate success you can imagine. **Tip:** A well-set goal is a lofty one. Think realistically, but BIG! You want to stretch yourself. Why set a goal easily attained? A perfectly constructed goal is one in which you will fall a tiny bit short of reaching. Back to the “retire at 45” goal. If after a lifetime of focusing on and working toward the prize, you are unable to retire until age 46, I think that was a well-set goal and a mighty achievement. In the alternative, if you manage to retire at 43, you could have set it higher!

Do the research and study pertinent information to outline the foundational elements needed in order to build the support for your goal. Be they educational, experiential, financial, spiritual, familial, or whatever, chart them, define them, detail them, and put them in the appropriate order of execution. Get the facts, the “How and When”, about what is required to underpin your goal on paper.

Once you know the “What” of your Goal and the “How and When”, get to work on your plan. Chart your progress. Mark off the steps accomplished. Be prepared and determined to make a sacrifice here and there. Look for opportunities to delay gratification. Refer to the road map leading to your goal often, even daily; update it, improve it. Remember, you will find what you look for and get what you expect!

In about 1973, I somehow finagled a job managing a telephone solicitation room with 24 telephones. I was responsible for the last shift of the day, from 5:00 PM to 9:00 PM. The folks that look to work the phones during this time of day are the ones that prefer to sleep late or those that cannot work earlier. One of the former was a mature gentleman named Shepherd King. He was likely 65 years old and drank too much, too often, all day, every day.

Shepherd had inherited several million dollars as a twenty-something. He must have come from a significant upbringing as even in his broken state, he wore a suit, white shirt and tie to his \$3.25 per hour job every day. As the heir to such a fortune, Shep became a famous international playboy. I saw his scrap book, which was full of pictures and newspaper clippings of Monte Carlo casinos, parties with European royalty, in clubs with a girl on each arm, and more. He was the biggest of spenders, taking over whole cruise ships for a night of fun on the Mediterranean.

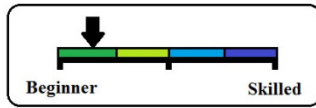
When, I met him, the money was gone, frittered away, leaving him with nothing but memories of his boundless stupidity. So, he drank to hide from them in a cheap bottle of vodka.

You must make well-set goals for yourself. I urge you to take the time in order to apply the energy required to know where you are going and how you will get there. Just so you know, you can, and should, have several active goals in your life ... at least one for every area (spiritual, family, health, financial etc.).

Finally, I leave you with my favorite saying about planning. It is sort of an “Archie Bunker” incomplete thought, but I like it because a life without goals is exactly that ... an incomplete thought: “If you don’t know where you are going, you will surely get there”.

Chapter 5: Appetizers

Baked Brie



Having a party or get together? Here's an easy, memorable appetizer to provide an elegant tray. Of course, you may scale down its size for a smaller group.

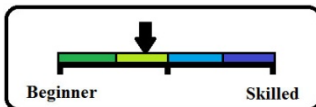
Place a rake in the center of your oven and preheat to 325 degrees.

2 1/2 Pound Brie Wheel
10 Tablespoons Dry White Wine (a Dry Chardonnay works well)
5 Tablespoons Orange Juice
1 Cup Sliced Almonds

Place brie in center of oven proof serving dish. Combine wine and orange juice and pour/spread over Brie. Arrange almonds attractively over the cheese. Place on the center rack of a 325 degree oven for 15 to 20 minutes, until the almonds show a little browning. Serve with cocktail rounds. Makes 36 servings.

To Garnish: Cut a small slice out of the brie wheel so your guests know where to start. Place a bunch of red seedless grapes (several grapes still on the vine) on top of the wheel on the side opposite the cut. Arrange your crackers or rounds on a matching or complimentary plate adjacent to the cheese wheel. Put them in stair-step stacks around its edge, with the "stairs" sloping to the center of the dish, and add red and green seedless grapes to the space in the center. In the alternative, you may use "Stand Alone" orange slices in place of the grapes -- or any combination that appeals to you!

Fried Tortellini



Tortellini is stuffed Italian pasta that one does not normally think of as a fried appetizer. These are not as much work as one might think and they are definitely worth the time ... particularly if you enjoy hearing raves about your culinary skills! The key to batter frying anything is making sure that the item is dry before coating. In this recipe, a Chinese technique (drying with corn starch) is employed to ensure your success!

Preheat Oil to 325 degrees.

4 Ounces Frozen Cheese Tortellini
1 Cup Bread Crumbs
1 Cup Corn Starch
Canola or Olive Oil 2" Deep in a Pot 9" in Diameter or More
Egg Wash (recipe follows)
Remoulade Sauce and/or Tangy Marinara for Dipping

Place the egg wash, corn starch and bread crumbs each in pie or round cake pans. Shake and roll the tortellini in the corn starch to achieve a thorough coating and to dry them. Using a large fork, dip and turn the tortellini in the egg wash, wetting them all over. Next, roll them in bread crumbs. Drop into preheated fry pot and cook until golden, turning over half way; about 1 1/2 to 2 minutes. Drain on paper towels; salt to taste. Transfer to a serving plate and garnish. Serve with Remoulade Sauce and/or Tangy Marinara. Makes an appetizer serving for 2 or 3 people.

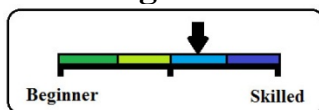
Egg Wash:

1 Egg
2 Tablespoons Milk or Half and Half
Dash Salt
Dash Ground Black Pepper
2 Drops Tabasco Sauce

Crack one egg into a pie or round cake pan. Add 2 tablespoons milk or Half and Half and a dash of both salt and ground black pepper. Shake in two drops of Tabasco. Whisk all ingredients together until well combined.

To Garnish: Spoon your dipping sauce(s) into ramekins that match or compliment your serving plate and place the bowl(s) in the center of the tortellini if serving one sauce, or one on each side of it, if serving two. Take a slice of lemon for each ramekin and cut is as for ice tea and slide onto the side of the bowl(s). Scatter dried parsley flakes over all. Yum!

Fried Vegetables



Fried fresh vegetables are a real treat. In this recipe, I have again thrown in a Chinese twist to a wonderful Italian wet batter. The Italians would not typically look for their savory fry batter to rise during cooking, whereas the Chinese would. I prefer the lighter texture that the baking powder gives to the end product. Of course, you may leave it out if you prefer.

Batter:

1.00 Cup Cold Water
3/4 Cup All-Purpose Flour
1/2 Cup Grated Parmesan Cheese
1 Teaspoon Baking Powder
1/2 Teaspoon Dried Whole Basil, **Crushed**
1/4 Teaspoon Salt
1 Tablespoon Olive Oil
Dash of Freshly Ground Black Pepper
Remoulade Sauce and Tangy Marinara for Dipping

Combine all ingredients and mix with a dinner fork until just moistened. Batter should resemble the consistency of sour cream. If it is too thick, add a tablespoon of water at a time and stir. Place in the refrigerator for up to 30 minutes until ready to use.

Tip: Use batter within 30 minutes of mixing or it will become "gluey".

Vegetable Preparation:

Preheat oil in pot to 325 degrees.

1 Medium Zucchini, Cut Length-wise into 1/4" - 1/3" Thick Slabs
1 Medium Yellow Crook Neck Squash, Cut Length-wise into 1/4" - 1/3" Thick Slabs
1 Small Eggplant, Peeled, Cut Length-wise into 1/4" - 1/3" Thick Slabs, Then Halved
8 Stalks **Asparagus**, Snap Off Tough part of Stalk
1 Medium Sweet Onion, Slice 1/3" Thick, Separate into Rings, Use Only Larger Rings
1 Medium Green or Red Bell Pepper

For Squash and Eggplant: Place slices on double paper towel sheets and sprinkle with salt. Wait 15 minutes, turn each slice and salt again. After another 15 minutes, dry with additional paper towel, batter and fry.

For Asparagus: Snap off the woody portion of the bottom of each stalk. If wet from being washed, lay out in a dry place to dry before battering and frying.

For Onions: There are a lot of "The World's Best Onion Rings" out there. And, for each claim, there is a technique or secret ingredient involved. I knew a chef that soaked his sliced rings in ice water for at least an hour before use. His idea was that the cold water helped separate the slippery membrane from the inside of the rings ... which he would remove by hand before frying. This would prevent the membrane from detaching and disfiguring the batter on his fried rings. Thick

sliced? Thin Sliced? Corn meal coating? You get the idea. This rendition is very good, but no outlandish claims are offered. Just make sure the onion rings are dry before battering and frying.

For Bell Peppers:

Cut the pepper in half from top (the stem side) to bottom. Pull out and discard all of the seeds and veins with your fingers. Slice in strips 1/2" wide and the length of the pepper half. Let dry if wet.

Frying Vegetables:

Preheat oil in your pot to 325 degrees.

Canola or Olive Oil 2" Deep in a Pot 9" in Diameter or More

Choose any three of the vegetables above and prepare them according to the instructions. Dip the dry vegetables in batter using a dinner fork to handle them. Drop into hot oil and fry until golden, turning once during the process. Do not crowd them in the pot. Remove to double paper towels and drain. Salt to taste, if desired. Transfer to large serving platter.

To Garnish: These deserve a sauce or two for dipping. Try Blue Cheese dressing in the next Chapter or Tangy Marinara. Spoon your sauce(s) into ramekins that match or compliment your serving platter and place one of the bowls on each side of it. Take a slice of lemon for each ramekin and cut it as for ice tea and slide onto the side of the bowls. Scatter dried parsley flakes over all. Yum!



Fried Zucchini with a Slice of Ripe Tomato as Garnish

Note: This recipe receives a rare Difficulty Scale score of 3 because of the multiple steps, but mostly because of the experience required to know how each type of vegetable is going to respond to the frying. In spite of that, give it a try because that is how you will gain the experience. Plus, even if you are not perfect, you will have some fantastic vegetables to enjoy, I promise!

Heavenly Deviled Eggs



Frankly, these are the best deviled eggs I have ever tasted. That is why I call them "Heavenly". See if you agree.

- 1 Dozen Premium Eggs*, Hard Boiled, Cooled and *Peeled*
- 1/2 Cup Mayo
- 1 1/2 Tablespoons *Grated Yellow Onion*
- 2 Tablespoons *Bacon Bits*
- 2 Tablespoons Grated Parmesan Cheese
- 1/2 Teaspoon *Minced Garlic*
- 1/2 Teaspoon Dijon Mustard
- Dash of Salt
- 3 Twists Of Black Pepper Mill

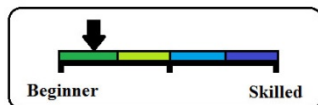
Halve eggs lengthwise and remove yolks to a bowl without damaging the white. Using a fork, mash the yolks together with the remaining ingredients. Choose a spoon for the job (such as one you would use to stir your coffee) and fill the white egg halves with the yolk mixture, mounding the filling higher than the white of the egg . In the alternative, you may use a pastry bag with a wide tip to fill the eggs. Yield: 24 egg halves.



To Garnish: Arrange the filled eggs on a platter lined with lettuce leaves. Green leaf lettuce works great for this, but any variety will do. Lightly dust the eggs with ground Paprika. Cut 8 pimento-stuffed green olives into thirds. Use the smallish Manzanillo olives for this as we do not want to overwhelm the flavor of our eggs. Place a single olive slice in the middle of the egg yolk filling in each egg, flat side up to show the red pimento. Scatter a little shredded Parmesan Cheese over the eggs. If you do not like or want to add the green olives, just leave them out.

***Note:** For best flavor, the finest ingredients are necessary. Certainly certified organic eggs are of premium quality. Additionally, eggs from hens that have been vegetarian fed, such as Eggland's Best, taste great, too.

Peppered Olive Oil for Dipping

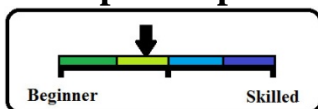


Shame on me, but I love to eat Fried Bread Sticks with room temperature salted butter. However, it is unlikely to be served at a cafe in Italy. The probability is that you would enjoy flavored olive oil for bread dipping there. Of course, this is a lighter approach and your diners will think you are quite authentic!

- 1/4 Cup Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 1 Clove Garlic, Peeled and Sliced Thinly
- 7 Twists of the Black Pepper Grinder
- 1 Pinch Dried Whole Basil Leaves

Whisk together all ingredients in a bowl and allow to stay at room temperature for 2 hours before serving. Serve with bread pieces for dipping; do not strain. To make a larger quantity, simply double, triple or more the quantities. A good way to serve is by pouring a generous puddle on a bread plate for each diner. Garnish with fresh minced parsley or a very few crushed red pepper flakes.

Shrimp Scampi



So simple and yet a dish with such phenomenal flavor. The key to making this shrimp perfection is to act quickly while sautéing, so as not to overcook the butter, garlic or shrimp.

- 6 Medium-Sized (31 - 35 per pound is a good size) Peeled, Deveined and Butterflied Shrimp (*How to prepare Shrimp*)
- 4 Tablespoon Butter
- 2 Cloves of *Garlic, Crushed*
- 1 Teaspoon Lemon Juice
- 1/2 Tablespoon Green Onion, Sliced Thinly
- Parmesan Cheese

Place butter, lemon juice and garlic in an 8" fry pan over medium-high heat until garlic just begins to brown. Add green onion and shrimp. Sauté until shrimp is pink -- a minute will likely do it -- do not overcook or burn butter! Place shrimp in small *rarebit* or other serving dish using tongs. Pour a little of the butter remaining in the pan over the shrimp and sprinkle with Parmesan; leave large pieces of garlic in the pan. Garnish and serve immediately. Makes 1 appetizer serving.

To Garnish: Place serving dish on a folded napkin, on a matching or complimentary plate. Sprinkle with fresh chopped or dried parsley flakes. Place a seeded wedge of fresh lemon on the plate next to the serving dish in case your diner would like to squeeze it over the shrimp.

Note: This may easily be made into a main dish. Per Person:

Increase the shrimp to 8 pieces per person
Up the butter to 5 tablespoons
Bump the green onions to 2 teaspoons
Use 3 cloves of garlic, crushed.

Boil 2 ounces of linguine per person. Transfer the cooked shrimp on top of the hot pasta, pour some of the garlic butter sauce over all. Be generous with the parmesan. Serve with crusty bread.

Stuffed Mushrooms



These were the most popular appetizer at my restaurant. They are pure Italian and even mushroom haters have been heard raving! Several good techniques to learn and practice with this dish and a great reward at the end ... you get to eat Mona's Stuffed Mushrooms!

Place a rack in your oven, one slot above the center, and preheat it to 500 degrees.

12 Large Fresh White Mushrooms
2 1/2 Tablespoons Butter
1 Tablespoon Finely Chopped Yellow Onion
3 Tablespoons Chopped Cooked Ham (get one 1/4" thick slice at the deli
Salt to Taste
4 Twists of the Black Pepper Mill
3 Tablespoons Freshly Grated Parmesan
Plain Bread Crumbs
Béchamel Sauce (Recipe Follows)

Clean mushrooms. Make sure that they are very clean; dry with a towel. Detach the stems and set the caps aside. Chop the stems very fine. Using 12" fry pan, sauté the onion in the butter over medium-high heat until pale gold, about 3 minutes. Add the chopped ham and sauté for about 1 min; add mushrooms stems and pepper and cook for 2-3 minutes. Tilt the pan causing the fat to puddle away from the mushroom mixture and using a tablespoon, remove all of the fat. In a bowl,

stir the contents of the pan together with the warm Béchamel; add the parmesan and mix again. Allow to cool for 10 minutes.

Place the mushroom caps in a butter-smearred baking pan or oven-proof casserole; sprinkle them with a little salt. Using your tablespoon, generously fill the caps with Béchamel stuffing (mound the stuffing); dust with bread crumbs; and dot each stuffed cap with a half pat butter. Place in upper third of oven and bake for 15 minutes. Remove from oven, cover loosely with aluminum foil and let settle for 10 minutes. Remove foil, garnish and serve. Makes 6 appetizer servings.

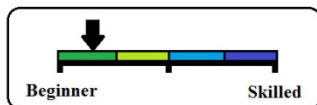
Béchamel Sauce:

1 1/2 Tablespoons All-Purpose Flour
1 1/2 Tablespoons Butter
1/4 Teaspoon Salt
1 Cup Milk

Melt butter in saucepan over medium heat. Whisk in flour and salt to make an even paste and allow it to simmer for one minute to remove the raw flour taste. Add milk while whisking to blend and simmer until the sauce takes on the consistency of sour cream. Remove from heat.

To Garnish: Transfer mushrooms to a serving casserole or platter. Arrange them so that there is a space in the middle. Place a "Stand Alone" orange slice in the space. Sprinkle some shredded parmesan cheese and fresh chopped parsley (or dried parsley flakes) over all. Use a large serving spoon at the table for service.

Marinated Carrot Sticks



These tidbits were never served at the restaurant, but I have used them many times when catering or serving appetizers to friends. They are easy to do and a colorful addition to your table!

1 Pound Baby Carrots*, **Blanched** for 2 - 3 Minutes depending on Size until **Tender-Crisp**
4 Cloves **Garlic, Peeled** and **Crushed**
4 Twists of the Black Pepper Mill
1 Teaspoon of Dried Whole **Oregano Leaves, Crushed**
4 Tablespoons Tarragon Vinegar
Extra Virgin Olive Oil

Place carrots in a medium sauce pan and fill with water to cover. Heat over high heat until boiling, then reduce heat to medium-high and boil for 3 minutes. Pour the contents of the pan into a

colander to drain; run cool tap water over them to cool. Combine all ingredients in a shallow container with a water-tight top. Pour olive oil over all to just cover carrots. Put the top on the container tightly and shake vigorously to mix the vinegar and oil together. Store in refrigerator for at least 24 hours prior to use.

***Note:** Full-size carrots may be used. Simply peel, cross-cut into two inch pieces, then cut sticks of similar size to a baby carrot. Blanch and proceed as instructed above.

To Garnish: Transfer carrots to serving dish and pour some of the vinegar and oil over them. Take a lemon slice and cut a slit from its center to the edge. Slide the slice on the serving dish's lip as for iced tea. Or, arrange a sprig of fresh tarragon on the inside of the dish. Or, both! Provide a salad fork for service.

