

TIPS FOR CULINARY ARTS EVENT

Read and re-read the Judge's scoring rubric. UNDERSTAND what the judges will be looking for when scoring each item. Make sure you are doing the obvious things they are looking for!

Practice writing the written plan. Have your teacher give you a menu and three or four recipes. Write the plan - working backwards. (i.e.: 12:00 Noon - present plate / 11:55 - Plate and garnish / 11:45 - chill salad plates & preheat dinner plates / 11:35 - put rice on (takes 20 minutes)...etc.

Determine who does what best - Johnny is best at sauteing / Mary is best with sauces / Tianna is best with pastry - so you can plan in advance who will prepare what when you get the recipes.

Try to FOLLOW the written plan – unless you run into a problem and then be creative in solving it.

While two of them are writing the plan - the third should be mise en placing....you CAN NOT wash, cut or prep any food - but you can set up stations on your table for what each person will be preparing...putting the ingredients and equipment/tools/utensils at that station.

Work like you only have 30 minutes rather than 1 hour.....EVERYONE runs out of time because you work carefully, methodically.....and then all of the sudden...you only have 15 minutes left and haven't even started one of the recipes....and then only 10 minutes...then ONLY FIVE MINUTES! WORK FAST and FURIOUS.....Look and act like you are on "Iron Chef".

You cannot deviate from the recipes....in other words – You can't add extra, different spices/herbs that are not on the recipe. You may need to slightly increase or decrease the salt or pepper...or other spices....but you can't use it unless it's on the recipe.

Don't be afraid to ask a judge or the Event Manager (an FCCLA adviser/Culinary teacher who is in charge of the kitchen) if you have a question while preparing. You may or may not be able to be answered...but it doesn't hurt to ask if you are confused about something.

Wear CLEAN, STARCHED & IRONED uniforms. NO jewelry other than watches. CLOSED TOED shoes – non skid. Hair nets AND hats if any loose hair. NO nail polish. You should "look" like a TEAM....all with the same uniform. A thermometer should be part of your uniform.

WASH hands AS SOON as you go in the kitchen...and BEFORE you start to mise en place your equipment.

WASH hands frequently while cooking.

Don't touch foods that will be served uncooked - unless you have gloves on.

If you drop a utensil.... WASH it. If you drop a chicken breast...tell the judge or event manager and get a new one.

CHECK TEMPERATURES on meats!! DO NOT serve chicken undercooked!! The judges will check it for 165 degrees minimum. Use a thermometer. PRE-CALIBRATE the thermometer before coming. It should be in your sleeve pocket as part of your uniform. All three team members should have one.

CLEAN as you go.... keep area neat.

If you cut yourself – tell judge/manager. Get a band-aid and glove – don't try to hide it.

Preheat dinner plates / Chill salad plates.

Don't drown a salad in dressing.

Do not leave the stove unattended – or at least REMEMBER to check it frequently.

TASTE as you go. Plastic spoons are provided.

Don't OVER season...but be sure the item has flavor.

Only put correct serving amounts on the plate. Example: If asked to make a whole pie and present only two servings...don't cut the pie in half and serve it. Cut it into the number of servings the recipe yields (6 or 8) and serve ONE serving per plate.

EXCELLENT KNIFE SKILLS can WIN the competition. PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!! Be confident – look professional. Look like you are having fun.... or at least don't look like “a doe in the headlights!!”

One person should do most of the chopping, dicing, slicing. If two recipes call for onion...one designated person can prep the onion for both recipes – rather than two team members having to use the knife and cutting board. Get it done as efficiently as possible.

Work as a team...talk to each other – help each other.

Know preparation terms – some I've seen in the past: sweat onions, tomato concassé, al dente, trinity, dredge, al dente, blanch, butterfly, reduce sauce, deglaze, chiffonade, roux, scald, zest.

Have creative, attractive, APPROPRIATE garnishes. Don't OVER garnish. Watch colors – are they complementary or do they clash? Use ingredients of recipe as garnish if appropriate.

Practice PLATING foods – look at magazines – Food Network – Internet for creative ways to plate. Build foods UP.