

## 10.4

# Cold Food Presentation

### READING PREVIEW

#### Key Concepts

- Identifying types of cold food presentations
- Identifying elements in cold food presentation
- Preparing centerpieces and garnishes

#### Vocabulary

- antipasto platter
- blinis
- caviar
- cocktail sauce
- cold food presentation
- depurated
- grosse pièce
- on the half shell
- raw bar
- sequencing
- sturgeon

“**M**aking a beautiful cold platter is a lot like putting together a jigsaw puzzle. Everything needs to fit together to make a delicious and beautiful presentation.”

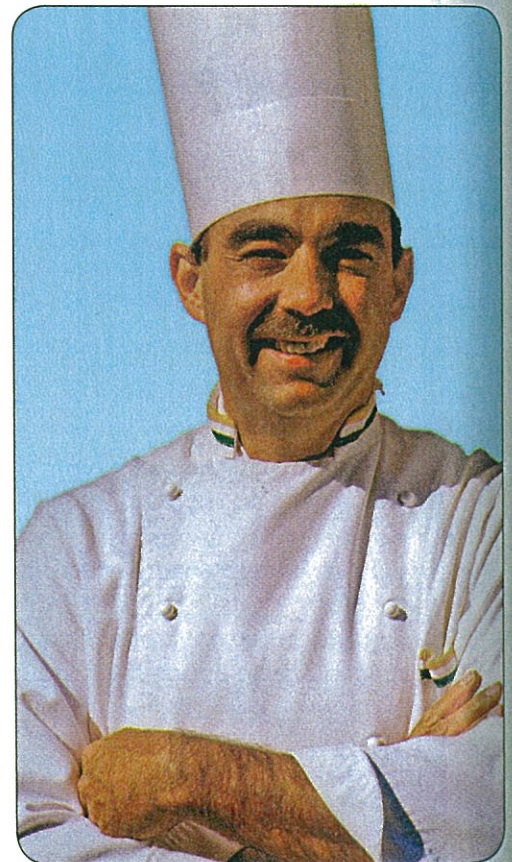
- Pierre LeBlanc

### Types of Cold Food Presentations

A **cold food presentation** is a collection of cold foods that are presented in an artful manner, often in a buffet setting. Guests choose for themselves from among the foods, or they indicate their choices to wait staff, who assemble individual plates of food.

Cold food preparations present the garde manger with an opportunity for creative work and artistry. Because cold food presentations must be prepared ahead, the chef has greater control and flexibility than is possible with typical cooking. Cold food presentations may be simple or complex, focusing on one type of food or providing a wide variety of foods. Some examples of cold food presentations are:

- Platters
- Trays
- Raw bars
- Caviar presentations
- Smoked fish presentations



**Pierre LeBlanc**  
The Culinary Institute of America



**Platters** The garde manger often uses a single large platter of cold food as an opportunity to provide a sampling of cold meats, cheeses, vegetables, fruits, and, perhaps, breads and crackers. A popular choice is the Italian **antipasto** (an-tee-PAHS-toh) **platter**, an assortment of cured meats (such as prosciutto and salami), cheeses, and pickled vegetables. (You'll learn more about cured meats in Chapter 11.)

Fruits are often presented on a platter. Because fruits oxidize and discolor when cut, platters often include whole fruit that can be eaten whole, such as grapes and strawberries. Cheese platters should offer a variety of types, flavors, and textures of cheeses. Cheeses should be offered on cheese boards for easy cutting. Fruits, crackers, and breads often accompany a cheese platter. An assortment of different kinds of salads presents another possibility for creativity.

**Trays** The garde manger may assemble a cold food presentation on a tray, which is then passed by wait staff or by diners, at the table. A tray is smaller than a platter and usually holds less variety. When assembling a cold food presentation on a tray, take into consideration that the tray will be moving, so the food must be stable and not fall off the tray.

**Raw Bars** A **raw bar** is a bar or counter at which raw shellfish is served. It is an elegant and luxurious type of cold food presentation. These usually include oysters, and sometimes clams, along with cooked mussels, scallops, shrimp, and lobster. The oysters and clams can be served **on the half shell** (meaning they are opened and served on one of their shells). Other raw seafood that can be served includes shrimp and crab. Fresh lemon, **cocktail sauce** (a dipping sauce of ketchup, horseradish, and possibly Tabasco sauce), or other accompanying sauces are included on the raw bar, as well.

Throughout the world, shellfish is commonly eaten raw. However, raw bars or any service of raw shellfish and other seafood comes with a risk. The restaurant must be aware of possible associated health hazards. By law, all raw shellfish must come from suppliers with a tag detailing the place of origin, the date of harvest, and the wholesale grower and seller. These regulations make it possible to trace any shellfish sold to restaurants in the event of an outbreak of disease.



**FIGURE 10-19**  
**Antipasto Platter**

An antipasto platter consists of cured meats, cheeses, and pickled vegetables.

**Predicating** Do you think you would like the combination of flavors and textures in an antipasto platter?



## FOCUS ON SAFETY

### High-Risk Eating

Individuals with certain health conditions—such as liver disease, diabetes, cancer, stomach disorders, blood disorders, or immune disorders—who consume raw shellfish or other seafood are at a higher risk than others.

When purchasing shellfish, follow these guidelines:

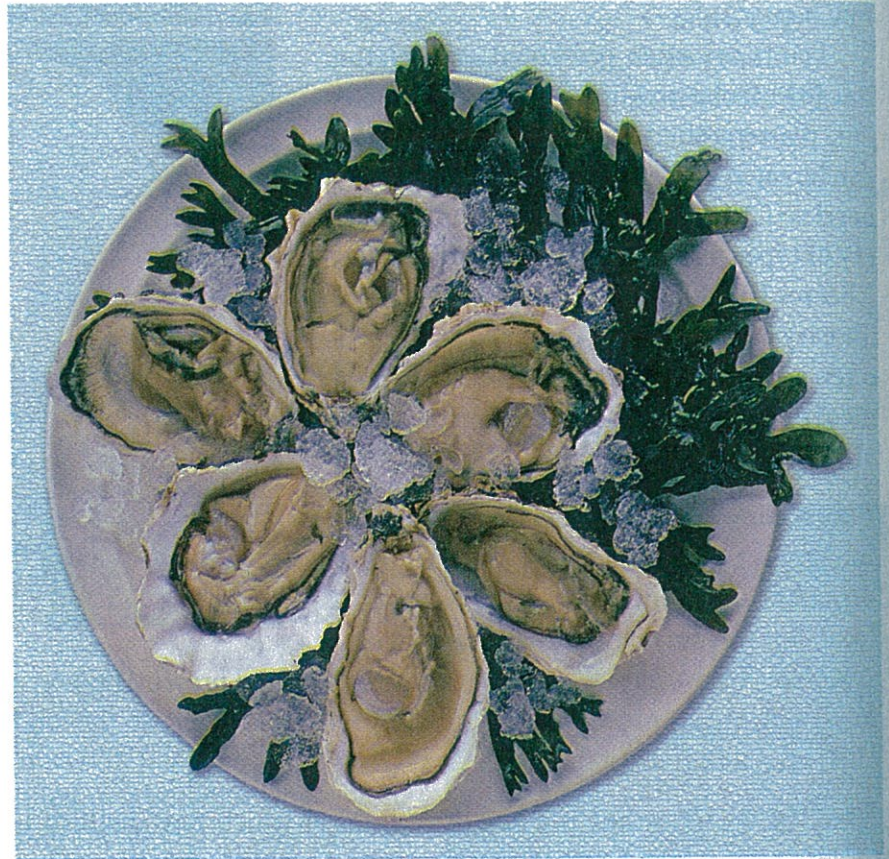
- Buy only cultivated shellfish that is raised in clean, controlled environments.
- Buy only depurated oysters, clams, and mussels. **Depurated** (DEP-yew-rate-ed) shellfish have been placed in tanks of fresh water to purge them of their impurities and sand.
- Get to know your suppliers and make sure they sell impeccably fresh shellfish.

FIGURE 10-20

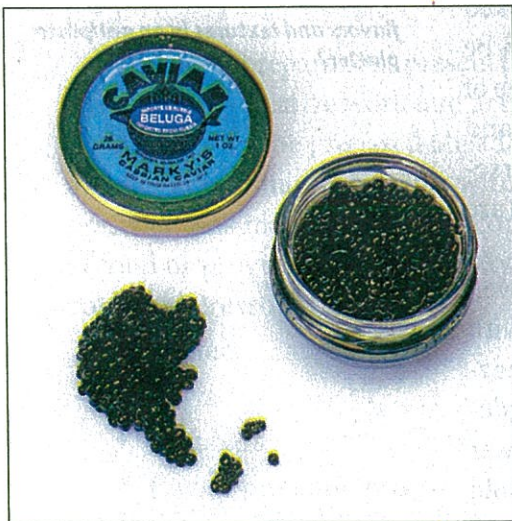
### Oysters on the Half Shell

A raw bar usually includes oysters on the half shell placed on ice to keep them at the appropriate temperature.

**Predicating** Have you ever had raw oysters? If not, do you think you'd like them?



### Beluga caviar



**Caviar Presentations** Caviar is a type of salted fish eggs. In France and the United States, only the eggs from a large fish called a **sturgeon** (STURH-jen) is classified as caviar. Fresh sturgeon caviar should be plump and moist, with a nutty and mildly briny flavor. There are three types of European sturgeon: beluga, osetra, and sevruga. Each provides caviar and each type of caviar has a different flavor and texture.

- **Beluga Caviar.** The beluga sturgeon is the largest type of sturgeon, reaching its maturity at about 20 years, when it may weigh as much as a ton. This long growth period makes the beluga eggs very expensive. Beluga caviar has the largest eggs, which vary in color from light steel gray to dark gray. Beluga caviar is always sold in blue tins or jars.



- **Osetra Caviar.** Brownish with golden highlights, osetra caviar has a nutty flavor that distinguishes it from other caviars. The osetra sturgeon reaches a weight of 500 pounds and matures at between 12 and 15 years. Osetra caviar is always sold in yellow tins or jars.
- **Sevruga Caviar.** The smallest of the three true caviars, sevruga caviar is dark brown, with an assertive flavor. Mature sevruga sturgeon weigh about 150 pounds and mature in 8 to 10 years. It is less expensive than the other two true caviars and is always sold in red tins or jars.

In America, the black sturgeon provides caviar that is commonly referred to as American caviar. Eggs from fish such as the hackleback, gray paddlefish, white fish, salmon, and lumpfish are also eaten like caviar.

Pressed caviar is made from mature, broken, or overripe eggs. The salted eggs are collected in a linen sack and pressed to release liquid. The result is a spread, which is often used on slices of black bread. It is also included as an ingredient in dishes and in sauces rather than using the more expensive caviar. Pressed caviar is very strongly flavored, with a different texture than other caviar.

Because of the high cost of and luxury associated with caviar, it is typically served for very special occasions. There are time-honored rituals and etiquette associated with serving and eating it. If caviar is served by a restaurant, the garde manger needs to be well informed about buying, handling, and serving it, because of its cost and rarity. Here are some guidelines to handling and serving caviar:

- Don't use metal utensils when handling caviar. Metal reacts with caviar, producing an off flavor.
- Chill caviar to 32°F. Because most refrigerators are not this cold, it is usually necessary to keep caviar on ice in the coldest part of the refrigerator. Replenish the ice when it begins to melt.
- Do not open caviar jars until you're ready to use it. Once the jar is opened, the caviar should be served within two to three days.
- Serve caviar in its original container or in a nonmetallic serving bowl. Because it is highly perishable, the container or bowl should be placed on a bed of ice. The best serving platters or plates for caviar are nonmetallic and nonabsorbent, preferably of china.
- Handle caviar carefully to prevent the eggs from breaking.

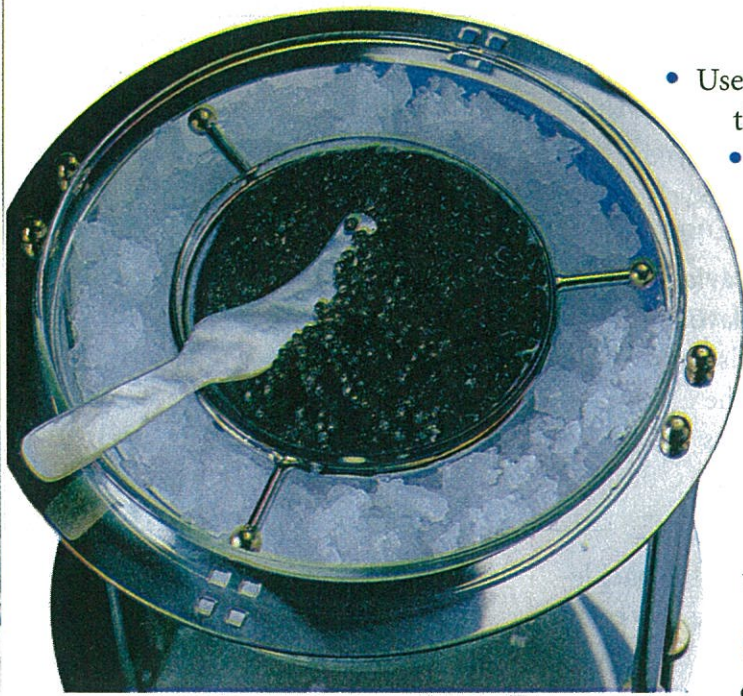


▲ *Osetra caviar*



▲ *Sevruga caviar*





**FIGURE 10-21**  
**Caviar Service**

Caviar must be kept cold.

**Predicating** *Have you ever had caviar? If not, do you think you'd like it?*

- Use special mother-of-pearl, bone, or tortoise shell spoons that are made for handling caviar.
- Serve caviar on lightly buttered white-bread toast or on **blinis** (BLEE-nees), very thin Russian crêpes, accompanied by sour cream.

Lesser quality, non-sturgeon fish eggs are not typically served by themselves. If they are served by themselves, they are served on ice and offered with buttered toast and accompaniments of chopped hard-cooked egg whites, chopped egg yolks (separately from the whites), lemons, and sour cream. It is much more typical for non-sturgeon fish eggs to be used as ingredients or garnishes for other dishes.

**Smoked Fish Presentations** Smoked salmon and other smoked fishes are often used for cold food presentations. Their natural oils keep their flesh tender and moist. Thinly sliced salmon can be served on toast, black

or whole grain breads, or other bread products. Classic combinations include:

- Smoked salmon, minced onion, and capers
- Smoked salmon, chopped hard-cooked eggs, capers, and parsley
- Smoked salmon with caviar-, mustard-, or horseradish-flavored sour cream
- Smoked trout with horseradish sauce
- Smoked sturgeon with caviar

**FIGURE 10-22**

**Smoked Salmon Platter**

Salmon is often served with black bread, minced onions, and capers.

**Predicating** *Have you ever had smoked salmon? If not, do you think you'd like it?*





## CULINARY DIVERSITY

### Sweden

One of Sweden's most famous dishes, cured salmon, or gravlax (GRAHV-lox), has become a favorite salmon dish for the garde manger. It has a clear, delicate flavor and is easy to prepare.

Like most cured and smoked fish products, gravlax was born of necessity. Fishermen in Sweden and surrounding Scandinavian countries long ago devised this recipe as a way of preserving fish. After filleting the salmon, they covered it with salt and sugar and buried it along a cool, shaded stream while they continued their salmon fishing upstream. Prepared this way, the fish took on a delicate flavor and remained moist and fresh for up to a week. When the fish was cured, the fishermen returned to collect it.



▲ Gravlax

The popularity of gravlax spread to bordering Norway, Finland, and Denmark. Today, it is found on the menus of fine restaurants and hotels all over the world.

Gravlax is still prepared by using sugar and salt, flavored with dill and white pepper, and topped with a weight that acts as a press. After preparation, it is eaten uncooked,



accompanied by a sweet-and-sour mustard-dill sauce. Gravlax is an ideal dish for the garde manger station because it is prepared well in advance of serving.

### Research

Research the method used for making gravlax. List the ingredients and describe the procedure. Research the traditional sauces that are served alongside it in three Scandinavian countries. Describe each sauce, list the ingredients, and explain the method of presentation.




### Reading Checkpoint

What are five common types of cold food presentations?

### Elements in Cold Food Presentation

The garde manger can use cold food presentation as a way to showcase the talents of staff, but design and decoration aren't everything.





## CHEF'S TIP

### MAKE IT EASY

Arrange platters and dishes of food on a long table or sideboard so they are easy to see, easy to reach, and easy to serve.

The food must be tasty and, ideally, healthful—as well as visually appealing. Serving tools should be both useful and attractive. In addition, thought should be put into creating an attractive and functional table arrangement.

**Design Elements for Food Arrangements** Although any of the following design elements can be used as a focal point in any sort of plating or food arranging, these design elements should be combined to create energy and interest. Too much repetition, regardless of the element used, is monotonous.

- **Balance.** Balance creates a sense of calm. Use symmetry and evenness in the composition when it comes to shape, color, and texture. Balance the colors, shapes, heights, and textures.
- **Color.** Nothing communicates excitement and vitality like color. Use natural colors, never artificial elements, to stimulate interest. When natural colors are used, you have no need for concern about colors clashing. Use colorful garnishes if the food is dull in color (as meats often are). However, using too much of the same color in an arrangement can be monotonous.
- **Texture.** Glossy surfaces add sparkle. Rough surfaces, such as homemade breads, for example, can reflect a rustic quality. Velvety textures, such as that of fresh mozzarella cheese or the creamy textures of soft cheeses, are seductive. Combining textures is very important when you are designing cold food presentations.
- **Cooking Technique.** Unlike hot foods, cold foods lack the advantage of any significant aroma to entice guests. Certain cooking techniques create enhanced visual appeal suggestive of an aroma. For example, charring or searing meats used for cold salads, or roasting vegetables to give them a warm cast, suggests an aroma, a taste, to your guests. Remember, the chef's saying, "people eat with their eyes"? This is a case of fooling people's noses so they smell with their eyes.
- **Shape and Height.** To communicate abundance and excitement, you can adjust the shape and height of your cold food presentations. You can roll flat foods such as sliced meats and thin breads. You can stack food in interesting arrangements, such as raw or blanched vegetables cut into long, thin strips and formed into haystacks, teepee shapes, or other artistic designs. Grated granular cheeses can be melted in a circular shape on a pan surface and then pinched into little basket shapes for nesting greens or other foods. Pencil-thin breadsticks can jut out of an arrangement of silky prosciutto slices draped over each other on a platter.



- **Focal Point.** You need to provide a center of interest for your presentation. It can be a single item or a combination of items.
- **Strong, Clean Lines.** Whether you use straight rows, angles, or curves, strong uninterrupted lines can be effective design elements. For example, you can create rows of vegetables rather than just placing them randomly or in a jumble. You can arrange sliced foods to form long overlapping lines.

**FIGURE 10-23**  
**Presentation Design**

Multiple platters were used in this buffet.

**Interpreting Illustrations** Do you see any design elements that have not been addressed in this buffet presentation?



**Buffet Table Design** The arrangement of items on a buffet table is just as important as the arrangement of food on your platters. Here are some tips for buffet table design:

- Guests should be able to reach food easily.
- Serving utensils and table utensils should be plentiful and within easy reach.



## FOCUS ON SANITATION

### Cross-Contamination

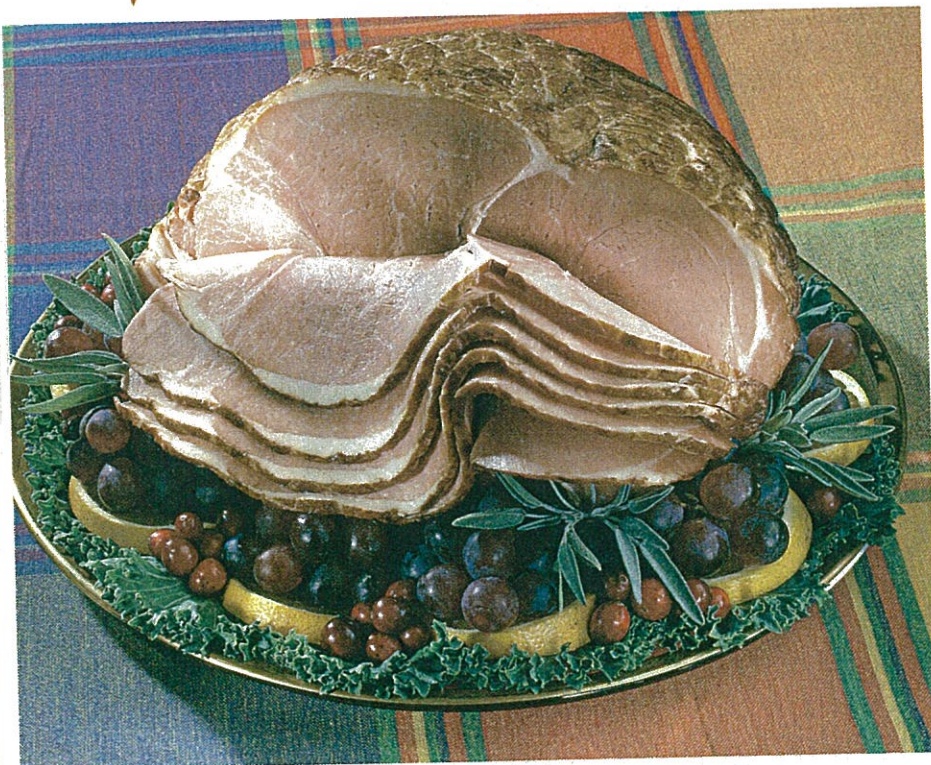
Use gloves, tongs, and other tools when you're setting up or serving a buffet to prevent contaminating food as you work.

FIGURE 10-24

#### Grosse Pièce

A large portion of this ham has not been cut.

**Predicting** Do you see any design elements that have not been addressed in this presentation?



- Table design and layout must allow for any equipment necessary to keep foods cold as necessary.
- Larger or higher items should be placed behind smaller or lower items on the table surface.

**Serving Main Items** There are typically two ways to serve the main item in a cold food presentation or a buffet:

- **Slicing and Sequencing.** Slice foods with irregular or tapered shapes to create definite lines when the slices are arranged in a sequence. Arranging slices to overlap one another in the order they were cut is referred to as **sequencing**. When a tapered turkey breast is sliced and sequenced, for example, a regular design with clean lines results.
- **Grosse Pièce.** Serving the main item **grosse pièce** (GROHSS pee-YES) means that a large part of the main item is left

unsliced. Grosse pièce means “large piece” in French. A main item can be presented grosse pièce, but the slices cut from the main item can be sequenced.

**Serving Tools** Serving tools are important for cold food presentations. Although these are functional items, they are set on the table and therefore become part of the presentation. For this reason, you should use dining room tools for a cold food presentation rather than kitchen tools, which may be too large for serving and are certainly not designed for food presentation. Dining room serving tools include ladles, tongs, serving spoons, serving forks, serving spatulas, and serving scoops.



What are the two ways that main items are typically served in a cold food presentation or a buffet?

## Centerpieces and Garnishes

Two other considerations remain for cold food presentations and for buffets. These are centerpieces and garnishes. They help bring the presentation or buffet together.



**Centerpieces** A beautiful centerpiece can be a great attraction, communicating excitement and reflecting the artistry in the food presented on the table. They reinforce or magnify the buffet's theme or concept. They help the guests understand the function or meaning of any presentation.

Tall or very large centerpieces must be carefully located. They should never block a guest's view or access to the food. Stabilize top-heavy centerpieces so they don't wobble or fall over. Be certain that all elements of the display are safe when used with food. For example, toxic flowers (such as lilies of the valley) should not be used in a centerpiece where they could drop onto food and someone could accidentally eat them.

One of the most spectacular, but expensive, centerpieces is an ice sculpture. Ice carvings can be purely decorative or they can function as receptacles for food such as cooked shrimp or seafood salads. Individual ice sculptures in the form of decorative cups can hold frozen dishes, fruits, or vegetables.

Ice carving is a highly specialized skill, with the additional challenge that ice melts. However, some ice sculptures can be made easily from molds and assembled into larger pieces. When assembling ice sculptures, plan to use a sturdy base. Set the sculpture in a pan connected to a drain or valve that can capture water from the melting ice and transfer it to a tub. The base can be camouflaged with cloth, edible flowers, plants, or other safe decoration.

**Garnishes** The purpose of a garnish is to add flavor, color, and texture to individual items, individual dishes, composed platters and trays, and to buffets, in general. A garnish is meant to draw attention to the food, not to overwhelm the food or detract from it in any way.

It used to be that all kinds of things with little eating appeal were used for garnishes simply for color effect. However, because well-trained culinary professionals know the importance of quality in food preparation and presentation, the garde manger thinks of garnishes as food, not simply decoration.

Garnishes cannot be an afterthought. The garde manger needs to put thought into the selection and preparation of garnishes because they must be an integrated part of the dish or presentation. Garnishes should not be boring or overused, like the ho-hum scrap of tired parsley tossed on top of every dish.

Here are additional guidelines for garnishing.

- **Function.** Garnishes should be used to create a visual impression and also to add a taste experience.
- **Flavor.** Garnishes should taste fresh and complement the taste of the item they garnish.






▲ *Ice sculpture centerpiece*



- **Color/Visual Appeal.** Garnishes should be visually attractive as well as good to eat. Typically, they add a different color to the main theme of the dish or presentation. The color of a garnish adds a new effect to the overall dish or presentation (see the chart “Color Effects of Garnishes”).
- **Textural Appeal.** Typically, garnishes add a different texture than the dish or presentation with which they are used.
- **Appropriate Size.** Keep scale in mind in designing garnishes. If they are too small in proportion to the food presented, they will look lost on the plate. If they are too large, they compete with the food that should be the focus of the dish or presentation.
- **Special Effects.** Use fanning cuts (on pickles or strawberries, for example), sequencing, julienne or matchstick shapes, spiral cutting (using a spiral cutter), crinkle cuts, rosettes (such as radish “roses”), curls, paper-thin cuts, and molds for soft food such as aspic or butter, food sculpting, or ice sculpting.

### Color Effects of Garnishes

	Color	Effect	Food Garnish
	Green	Freshness and vitality	Chives, parsley, fresh herbs, green sprouts, scallions, greens, limes, green peppers
	Browns and Golds	Warmth, comfort, richness	Lemons, breadsticks, bread products, hard-cooked egg wedges, butter curls, yellow peppers, miniature yellow tomatoes
	Oranges and Reds	Intensity, desire, hunger	Tomatoes, radishes, radicchio, carrots, red or orange peppers, edible nasturtium flowers



## BASIC CULINARY SKILLS

### Making a Fan Cut

- 1 Place item on its side on a work surface.
- 2 Cut in paper-thin slices from tip to stem, leaving the flesh at the base of the stem still attached.
- 3 Spread the slices out, using your fingers. It should be spread like a fan.
- 4 Lift the fan carefully onto the plate or platter you are garnishing. Use a knife, spatula, or palette knife. Fruits such as strawberries can also be fanned.



#### Reading Checkpoint

What are the purposes of centerpieces and garnishes?

## 10.4 ASSESSMENT

### Reviewing Concepts

1. What are five common types of cold food presentations?
2. What are the two ways main items are typically served in a cold food presentation or a buffet?
3. What is the purpose of a garnish?

### Critical Thinking

4. **Drawing Conclusions** Why are only pressed caviar and other types of fish eggs used in cooking?
5. **Compare and Contrast** What design element for food arrangements do you think is most important? Why?
6. **Predicting** How is the appeal of a meat dish improved by the use of a garnish?
7. **Drawing Conclusions** Any service of raw shellfish or other seafood comes with a risk. Why would a restaurant take on that risk?

### TEST KITCHEN

Divide into four teams. Each team will create a small platter as a cold food presentation, complete with garnishes. Evaluate other teams' efforts based on the design elements for food arrangements. Tally the results.

## SCIENCE

### Smoked Fish

Research how fish, such as salmon and trout, are smoked. Focus on such questions as: How long does the process take? At what temperature are they smoked? Is any special type of wood used to produce the smoke? Are herbs or spices used in the smoking process to add flavor? Are there regional or national differences in how fish are smoked?