

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
- braesola
- caviar
- charcuterie
- cocktail sauce
- cold food presentation
- depurated
- garni
- garniture
- grosse pièce
- on the half shell
- pâtés
- prosciutto
- raw bar
- sequencing
- sturgeon
- terrines

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. The following are some examples of cold food presentations:

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

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**



Source: Andrea1971/Fotolia

(an-tee-PAHS-toh) **platter**, an assortment of cured meats (such as prosciutto and salami), cheeses, and pickled vegetables.

Fruits are often presented on a platter. Because fruits oxidize and discolor when cut, platters often include 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. It usually includes 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), and 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. 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 10-19

Antipasto Platter

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

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

Source: DreamPictures/Getty Images

Chef's Tip

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.

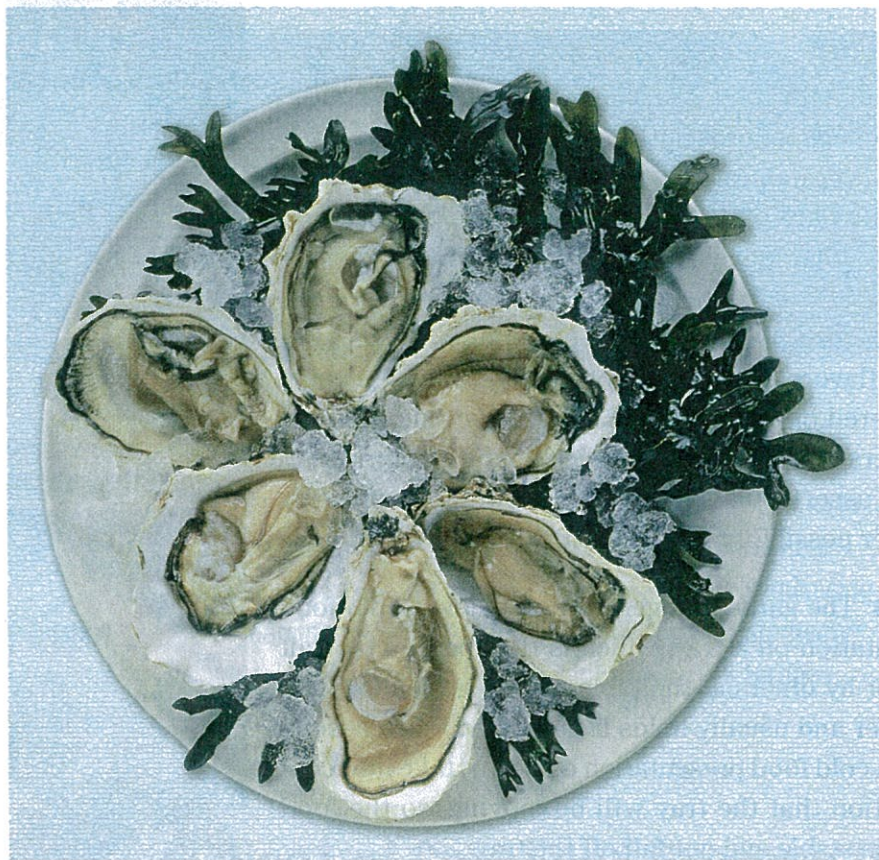
FIGURE 10-20

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.

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

Source: Clive Streeter/Image Partners 2005/
Dorling Kindersley Media Library/Dorling
Kindersley



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) are 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 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.



Beluga caviar

Source: Richard Embery/Pearson
Education/PH College



Osetra caviar

Source: Richard Embery/Pearson
Education/PH College

- **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. Sevruga caviar 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 on 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 a jar of caviar 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.
- Serve caviar in dishes set over ice to keep it very cold.
- Use special mother-of-pearl, bone, or tortoise-shell spoons that are made for handling caviar.
- Traditional accompaniments for caviar service include chopped hard-cooked egg whites, chopped egg yolks (served separately from the whites), lemons, and sour cream.
- Serve caviar with lightly buttered white-bread toast or **blinis** (BLEE-nees), very thin Russian crêpes.



Sevruga caviar

Source: Richard Embery/Pearson Education/PH College

FIGURE 10-21 Caviar Service

Caviar must be kept cold.

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

Source: Culinary Institute of America



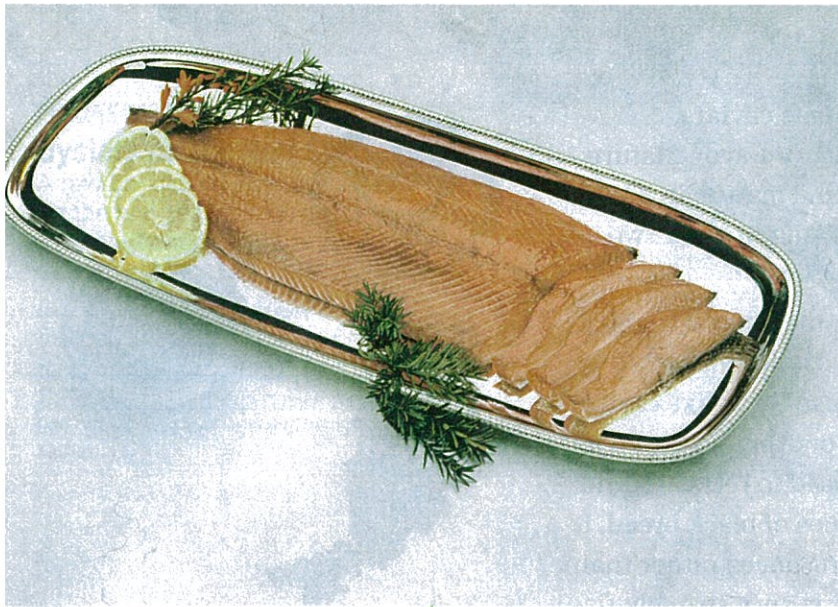


FIGURE 10-22

Smoked Salmon Platter

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

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

Source: C Squared Studios/Photodisc/Getty Images

Lesser quality, nonsturgeon fish eggs are not typically served by themselves. It is much more typical for nonsturgeon 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 the following:

- 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

Charcuterie Presentations **Charcuterie** (shahr-KOO-tuhr-ee) is a French term used in professional kitchens to refer to cured meats, sausages, pâtés, and terrines. These foods were traditionally prepared as a way to preserve foods successfully in an era when refrigeration was not available.

Cured meats include such items as hams like **prosciutto** (pro-SHU-tow), Italian country-style ham, and **braesola** (bray-SO-lah), Italian-style dried beef. These meats are brined with salt and a mixture of spices. They may also be smoked and dried, or simply air-dried.

Sausages are made by grinding meats along with salt, spices, and fat. Some sausages are more typically served hot at breakfast (see Chapter 9). Sausages may also be cured, smoked, or dried. These sausages can be sliced and served on a charcuterie platter. Examples include salami, pepperoni, summer sausage, mortadella, and Spanish-style chorizo.

Pâtés (pah-TAYS) and **terrines** (teh-REENS) are made by grinding meats together with spices, salt, and additional fat. They are placed in molds and gently baked. After they have baked and cooled, pâtés and terrines are sliced and served with a variety of accompanying sauces, such as mustard or chutney.

Pâtés are often baked in a crust-lined hinged mold. The mold makes it easy to remove the pâté from the mold without damaging the crust. Terrines are baked in special molds that are lined with thinly sliced bacon or even vegetables. Terrine molds were originally made from earthenware materials such as clay or ceramics. The term *terraine* is derived from the French term for earthenware. Examples of terrine and pâté molds can be found in Chapter 4.



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. 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 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

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.



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.

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

Source: David Murray/Image Partners 2005/Dorling Kindersley Media Library/Dorling Kindersley



Source: Olinchuk/Shutterstock

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.

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.