

Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND

Introduction

Food is a basic necessity for human survival. Likewise, many an artist will undoubtedly tell you that art is also a basic necessity, an inherent part of human life without which one literally cannot survive. Let's consider food from an aesthetic perspective. Art in the aesthetic sense deals with the idea of creation and reception, and a relationship between the object itself, the artistic creator, the artistic receiver, and the environment or context in which those three interact.

Food presentation is the art of modifying, processing, arranging, or decorating food to enhance its aesthetic appeal. The visual presentation of foods is often considered by chefs at many different stages of food preparation, from the manner of tying or sewing meats, to the type of cut used in chopping and slicing meats or vegetables, to the style of mold used in a poured dish. The food itself may be decorated as in elaborately iced cakes, topped with ornamental sometimes sculptural consumables, drizzled with sauces, sprinkled with seeds, powders, or other toppings, or it may be accompanied by edible or inedible garnishes (Styler & Lazarus, 2006).

Cooks often pay close attention to plate presentation, choosing ingredients and techniques to suit a desired effect, following a standard arrangement and wiping away drips. Some foods are included mainly to set off others, such as a parsley garnish, and such elements as shells are not to be consumed at all. Checking the food's appearance, which is the cook's last task, becomes the eater's first. Diners are often transfixed by the food when it arrives at the table, as if taking in the whole meal. Yet even the most impressive sculpture collapses at the strike of a knife, fork, or spoon, so that plate presentation is evanescent.

Aesthetics is the concept of what is attractive and pleasing to the senses. Presenting attractive, delicious tasting foods is the best marketing tool a foodservice facility can utilize.

Often, the quality of food being served is judged based on the way it looks. Poorly presented foods tell customers that their enjoyment is not the main priority of the foodservice establishment. Offering attractive meals not only shows creativity and skill in the kitchen, but also makes customers feel good about their meal. The way a meal looks will influence customer satisfaction and can also have an impact on the nutritional status of a client when serving foods in various settings as they are more inclined to consume if the meal looks appetizing. Presenting an attractive meal does not necessarily have to be a labor-intensive and costly project. Creative menu planning and ambition are the key ingredients to attractive plate presentation.

To be successful in the food business like catering services, one must be well-versed in the art of presentation. Simply slapping food on a plate with no rhyme or reason will doom to failure. Great care and professionalism will help to achieve culinary artistry. The way food is presented will have a direct impact on how the customer reacts to it. A pleasing visual appearance is often enough to convince the customer of its good favor. Presentation is an art of telling customers about the food by the way it is arranged on a serving piece. Good presentation makes you want to eat the food even before you have taken a single bite. Eating is one of life's great pleasures and cooking has been elevated to an art. First impression of the plate of food determines customer's expectations of quality.

Background of the Study

One new place to look for this trend in daily life is food design. The visual presentation of food is changing. Now, food has a post-artificial shape. Technology had an impact on the color, smell, consistency and shape of food. The aestheticization of other human activities had an impact on food too. Since the 1990s, art has become part of food design. Chefs became designers of the eating experience.

Telfer (2009) argues that although not all food is or should be considered art, there are many meals that are intended from their inception “to be savoured, appraised, thought about, discussed” in the same ways as conventional art, and many eaters consider them in this way. There is food in this world that is created to not only nourish the body, but to nourish the soul and the mind as well, encouraging us to be mindful and contemplative about what exactly it is that sustains us.

Although there are several factors to keep in mind when serving food, consideration of the aesthetic appeal of the meal is very important to customer satisfaction. Creating meals that are both aesthetically pleasing and flavorful leaves the customer with not only a nutritious meal, but a good feeling about the foodservice establishment; encouraging the customer to return to enjoy the food again.

This prompted the researchers to conduct a study to determine if aesthetics in food presentation as perceived by customers on a selected catering business in San Pablo City has an impact on customer satisfaction and therefore to the catering industry.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the study will be based on theory of sensory analysis by Jellinek (2005). Sensory analysis is very important in the development of any new product like food. Sensory analysis (or sensory evaluation) is a scientific discipline that applies principles of experimental design and statistical analysis to the use of human senses (sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing) for the purposes of evaluating consumer products. It uses testing techniques to accurately measure human responses to food products by minimizing any biasing effects such as brand identity which could possibly have an influence on consumer perception of the product. It attempts to isolate the sensory properties of food products themselves and provide important and useful information to the product developers and food scientists about the sensory characteristics of their products.

The theoretical framework of the study will also anchored on the marketing mix of Neil Borden as cited by Kotler (2012). This is one of the preliminary knowledge every marketer must have and is considered to be the basics of every marketing theory, which emerged henceforth. The basic major marketing management decisions can be classified in one of the following four categories, namely Product, Price, Place (distribution) and Promotion. Product: refers to the item actually being sold. The product must deliver a minimum level of performance. Price: refers to the value that is put for a product. It depends on costs of production, segment targeted, ability of the market to pay, supply - demand and a host of other direct and indirect factors. Place: refers to the point of sale. In every industry, catching the eye of the consumer and making it easy for her to buy it is the main aim of a good distribution or 'place' strategy. Promotion: this refers to all the activities undertaken to make the product or service known to the user and trade.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study is presented in Figure 1 which shows the relationship between the independent variables which include the demographic profile of the respondents such as age, gender, educational attainment and monthly income as well as the perception of the respondents regarding aesthetics in food presentation such as color, texture, shape, arrangement, garnish and dinnerware and the marketing strategies in terms of product, price, place and promotion. The dependent variables are the level of customer satisfaction as affected by food presentation in terms of food quality, menu variety, customer service, cleanliness and dining environment.

Research Paradigm



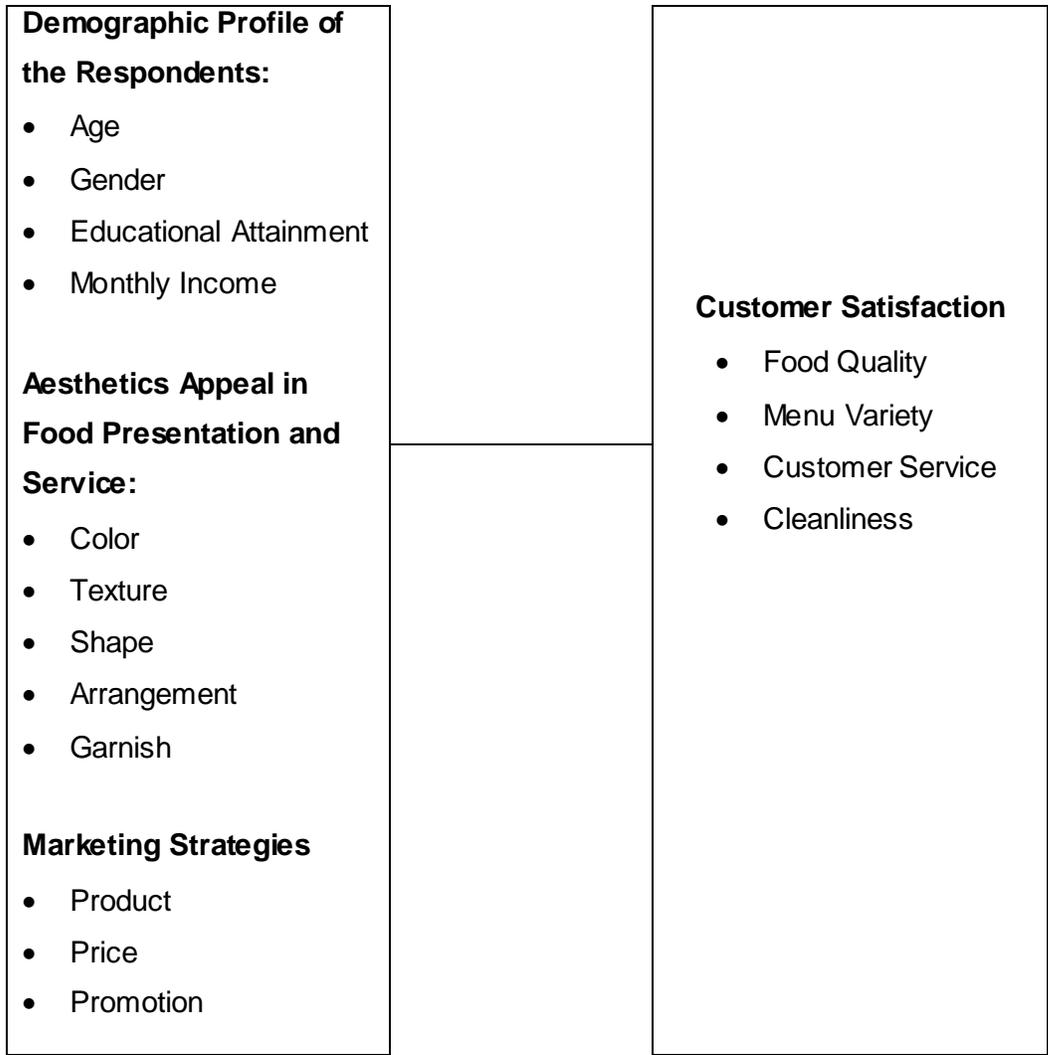


Figure 1.

The Research Paradigm Showing the Relationship Between the Independent Variables and the Dependent Variables.

Statement of the Problem

The study aims to determine the effects of aesthetics in food presentation of a selected catering business in San Pablo City to customer satisfaction. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1. Age
 - 1.2. Gender
 - 1.3. Educational Attainment
 - 1.4. Monthly Income
2. What is the mean perception of the respondents regarding aesthetics appeal in food presentation and service in terms of:
 - 2.1. Color
 - 2.2. Texture
 - 2.3. Shape
 - 2.4. Arrangement
 - 2.5. Garnish
3. What is the marketing strategies of Garcia's Catering Services in terms of the following:
 - 3.1. Product
 - 3.2. Price
 - 3.4. Promotion
4. What is the level of customer satisfaction as affected by aesthetics in food presentation in terms of:
 - 4.1. Food Quality
 - 4.2. Menu Variety
 - 4.3. Customer Service
 - 4.4. Cleanliness

5. Is there a significant relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents and the level of customer satisfaction as affected by aesthetics in food presentation?
6. Is there a significant relationship between the perception of the respondents regarding aesthetics in food presentation and the level of customer satisfaction?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents and the level of customer satisfaction as affected by aesthetics in food presentation.
2. There is no significant relationship between the perception of the respondents regarding aesthetics in food presentation and the level of customer satisfaction.

Significance of the Study

The researchers believed that this research study would be beneficial to the following:

Catering Business Owners. The study will give them opportunity to know what the customers want with respect to aesthetics in food preparation and how customer satisfaction it may impact the marketability and profitability of their business.

Future Entrepreneurs. The findings of the study will help them a lot to have an idea of presenting attractive, delicious tasting foods which is the best marketing tool a foodservice facility can utilize.

Hotel and Restaurant Management Students. The output of this study could be a great help to HRM students because it will allow them to learn in offering attractive meals that are not only shows creativity and skill in the kitchen, but also makes customers feel good about their meal.

Customers. This study will help the customers more satisfied with the food they are consuming because it is more attractive and delicious tasting.

Researchers. The study will serve as background and added information on how to make food presentation more attractive and pleasing to the senses. This study will enable the researchers to be more resourceful and studious in the field of this study.

Future Researchers. This study will serve as a baseline and framework for the future studies regarding the impact of aesthetics in food production to customer satisfaction.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study aimed to determine the effects of aesthetics in food presentation of selected a catering business in San Pablo City to customer satisfaction.

The study utilized the descriptive type of research which only included 100 past customers of a selected catering business in San Pablo City. The respondents of the study were selected through purposive sampling. The survey questionnaire was the main tool used in this study. The questionnaire is in the form of a checklist and utilizes the structured-type of question to gather data.

The questionnaires were personally distributed by the researchers to the respondents. The procedures and the purpose of the study were explained and they were given the assurance of the confidentiality of their answers. The data collected were be consolidated, tabulated and subjected to statistical analysis. The study will use of the frequency and percentage distribution, mean and Pearson correlation as statistical tools in the analysis of data.

Definition of Terms

To facilitate better understanding of the flow of the discussion, the following terms are defined conceptually and operationally as used in this study:

Aesthetics. In this study, it refers on how the food is presented in terms of color, texture, shape, arrangement and garnish.

Age. This pertains to the age in years of the respondents during the time of the study.

Arrangement. It refers to the proper placement of on a plate and how the respondents feel about the meal placed in front of them

Cleanliness. In this study, it pertains to the degree to which the staff and crew of the catering service are keeping place clean including tables, chairs and dinnerware.

Color. In this study, it pertains to the variety in the color of food being served and if it makes the food more attractive.

Customer Satisfaction. In this study, it refers on how aesthetics in food presentation affect their satisfaction in terms of product, price, place and promotion.

Customer Service. It pertains to the quality of service being provided by the staff and crew of the catering services to its customers.

Educational Attainment. The highest degree of education the respondents has completed at the time of the study.

Food Quality. In this study, it refers to the characteristics of food in terms of its taste how it was presented to the customers of the catering service.

Garnish. It refers to the addition of something as an accompaniment to food or drink that enhances its flavor or appearance

Gender. This pertains to the sexual orientation of the respondents whether male or female.

Menu Variety. It refers to the choices and kinds of food the catering service is offering their customers for different types of occasions.

Monthly Income. In this study, it is the amount of money received by the respondents received in a monthly basis.

Price. In this study, it refers to the value that is put for the food served provided by the caterer.

Product. In this study, it refers to the quality of food served provided by the catering services to the respondents.

Promotion. This refers to all the activities undertaken to make the product or service known to the user and trade.

Shape. Pertains to the shape of the food and if it has an aesthetic appeal to the menu.

Texture. In this study, it refers to the way food feels in the mouth – crunchy, smooth, soft, hard, grainy, coarse, chewy, etc.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

This chapter presents the review of related literature and studies which is relevant to the present study.

The food is generally the focal point for the guest. It supplies the majority of the drama, excitement, and interaction and it falls to the chef to produce food that is flavorful and attractive. Food presentation is an important opportunity that allows chefs to emphasize the talents of the kitchen staff. The chef's task is to exploit the full sensory potential of every dish to create a presentation that is practical, functional, and appealing to all the senses, which heightens the guest's experience.

Menu selections and food presentation integrate all aspects of the foodservice operation – including the theme, the menu, the style of service, and your clients' expectations. The goal is never to simply meet those expectations and standards, but to exceed them (Culinary Institute of America, 2010).

Catering Business

According to Pacificador (2009), Filipinos are genuinely fond of eating and gatherings, celebrating every important event of their lives. These celebrations also reflect the relationship and unity of Filipino families. The tradition and traits were already depicted by the historical roots of the early Filipinos even before the colonization of different nationalities. And through the

years of innovation and technology, the needs of Filipinos changed over time. The existing generation were able to cope to the fast phase lifestyle of the people in their environment. And with such, Convenience plays a major role, aside from other key factors in customer satisfaction. Convenience is already a must with every service that will be delivered. That's the main reason why several merchants like one-stop shops, fast food chains, catering services, are continuously growing.

And as Filipinos rejoice every significant event with their family or friends, the search for convenience, good planning, excellent service, quality food and stylish presentation will be the major factors to consider an event a successful one. Hence, more and more people are turning to the services of professional caterers for weddings, private dinner parties and corporate events for good reason. It takes a lot of preparation and planning to run successful event or party. With the help of a professional catering service, you can save yourself from the tedious food preparation and just spend the time with your family and guests (Pacificador, 2009).

Caterer, as defined in Merriam-Webster dictionary is one who supplies the viands of an entertainment. The word "cates" means provision that is usually considered to be more special and daintier than home productions. "Acatour" is a purchaser or a purveyor of provisions or one who provides or prepares delicacies. . Although catering has been considered a "service for the wealthy," it is now in demand for many occasions.

Through time, Catering service does not only provides food but are increasingly providing a wider array of event planning services such as decorations, equipment hire (tableware, linen, tables and chairs), staffing and event coordination. A caterer will work with you to develop an innovative menu to match your event or celebration's theme, your food tastes, and importantly, your budget. Also, there are several variations according to locations, the types of meals to be served, which define the service and equipment you will have to provide.

Currently, the catering sector is dramatically growing. Before, the market was limited only to high-income consumers but now, it has expanded to the lower-income groups. Perhaps it is because food plays an integral part in the Filipino's way of celebrating. It is a culture that traverses all income classes. In addition, many people do not want the hassle of preparing and would rather pay someone to do it. Food catering also appeals to the consumers since it brings prestige and stature to an event. These trends present huge opportunities for the catering businesses even in the coming years (Africa, 2010).

Food Aesthetics

Of the five senses involved in eating, taste is the most important. It is our most direct, embodied encounter with food; it affords pleasure and disgust; and it is the one sense we cannot help but use. Yet taste is more than something that just happens in the mouth: it is also the leading metaphor in aesthetics. Taste refers to our discrimination regarding art objects and our standards for artistic judgments. To have taste means the ability to discern aesthetic qualities in things. It is a particular kind of knowledge especially appropriate for artworks – one that bridges epistemology and philosophy of art (Kaplan, 2012).

Kaplan (2012) added that when we direct aesthetic attention to food and drink, however, we find that the parallel to artworks is tested. Judgments about tastes in food are more difficult to justify. Although most of us believe there is a difference between good food and bad food, we also acknowledge that tastes are highly subjective, or at least cultural. The sense of the taste itself – what happens in the mouth – is one of the least reliable senses. It is difficult to describe how something tastes because it is less differentiated and less sensitive than vision or hearing. Food is aesthetic in two senses. First, as the object of aesthetic experience it has a taste and it appeals to the senses. We describe food as, for example, delicious, satisfying, or disgusting; over-cooked, fresh, or crunchy. Second, food is artful. We describe it in terms of its visual presentation and sensual composition. We attribute aesthetic properties such as elegant,

hearty, or simple. Food on this model is primarily the subject of aesthetic judgment about its taste and appearance and only secondarily about nature and nutrition.

Judgments about what is fashionable or beautiful are subjective. They change over time, sometimes quite rapidly. However, the basic principles behind good design and presentation remain constant, even if the specific expressions of those principles keep evolving into new styles and trends. It is important to remember and always think of these techniques as enhancements to the foods' appeal. The food on a plate supplies important visual elements: colors, textures, and shapes. Additionally, the foods you serve also supply two important, but nonvisual, elements: aroma and flavor. The design principles at the chef's disposal include symmetrical or asymmetrical compositions, contrasting or complementary arrangements, and the use of lines to create patterns or indicate motion (Culinary Institute of America, 2010).

According to Christensen (2009), in restaurants, how food is plated and presented is just as important as how it tastes. Home cooks aren't under quite as much pressure to perform for their guests as top chefs, but plating can still play a role in our cooking. How food is presented definitely has an effect on how we perceive and enjoy it. Just imagine the difference between a pile of meat on a platter versus sliced meat carefully arranged over oven-roasted vegetables. Even the most humble home cooked meal can feel fancy if it's arranged and presented with care. Making an effort to plate food in a thoughtful way also makes guests feel special and honored. It's a small thing, but it can make a difference.

Simmel (2010) mentioned that cooks should be careful not to make food seem too good to eat, as if it were some untouchable work of art. Good presentation can contribute greatly to, but should not be allowed to distract from, either conviviality or the appreciation of the food's natural roots.

According to Kuehn (2008), assessment of the ability of food to represent the aesthetic in the everyday perfectly captures the experience with food as art. The meaning of food as art lies in the organic interaction between its production, presentation, and manner of appreciation.

All these aspects occur around an artistic medium that is literally essential to our survival, food not only must be art, but it potentially offers some of the greatest artistic meaning we can experience.

Color

Scientific studies have shown that the color of food plays an important role in customer food preferences and their ability to identify flavors. When preparing a menu or plate, consider the colors of all the foods being served. A plate containing fish, cauliflower, dinner roll, mashed potatoes and a chocolate chip cookie is not aesthetically pleasing because these food items are all white and brown colors. Instead, serve a meal with fish, broccoli, mashed sweet potatoes, a dinner roll, and fresh strawberries with whipped cream. The more variety in the color of foods being served, the more attractive the meal (Reinhert, 2012).

Spang (2010) stated that to respond to contemporary dietary trends, cooks may include, for instance, green and orange colors in their presentations. Another source of the cooks' aesthetic impulse is the mixture and distribution of ingredients according to a routine or pattern which according to her can lead to pared-back elegance. She added that cooks who want to show off ingredients find that presentation encourages inspection. Alternatively, in search of amusement, may make foods look like something else, such as food products made out of vegetables.

According to the Culinary Institute of America (2010), a food's natural color is an important factor to consider in design and presentation of dish. Green gives the impression of freshness and vitality. Brown, golds, and maroons are warming, comforting and rich. Orange and red are intense, powerful colors. A dish should have colors that are in harmony (for example green, blue and violet are complementary colors, while blue and orange are contrasting). Clashing or contrasting colors are rarely an issue; a more common problem is the overuse of one color, which has a tendency to make the food look flat and unexciting.

Texture / Consistency

Texture refers to the way food feels in the mouth – crunchy, smooth, soft, hard, grainy, coarse, chewy, etc. Consistency refers to the way food stays together – runny, firm, gelatinous, etc. Serving foods of similar textures or consistencies can become very boring to the customer. Instead of serving mashed potatoes and pudding with a meal, serve the mashed potatoes but offer fresh fruit instead of the pudding for a more crisp texture. Variations in both of these areas are necessary for greater menu appeal (Reinhert, 2012).

Forester (2007) mentioned that the texture of what people eat is the number one thing they base their likes and dislikes on. Making sure that commercial food products feel right in our mouth is an enormous part in the development of any new food item.

Institute of Science and Technology (2010) revealed that texture is a very important character of every food people eat or drink. To many people, it is even more important than taste. Think of all the ways we describe a food's texture. The components and ingredients within foods plus the processes they go through determine their texture. The human body is very adept at evaluating a food's texture. People use not only the sense of feeling in our mouths or mouthfeel, as food professionals refer to it but also our other senses to evaluate the texture of foods.

Texture is important to the way food looks, as well as the way it feels in the mouths. The surface of the food will have a tendency to either reflect light or absorb it, making some food glossy and others matte. Some foods have highly textured exteriors while others are very smooth. The way the food feels when you bite into it is another aspect of texture that the chef needs to include in a plan. Too much of the same texture is monotonous (Culinary Institute of America, 2010).

Another important rule of food presentation is balancing variety and contrast. It is good to have a variety of textures on the plate, but how these textures are combined is just as important (Bone, 2013).

Shape

The shape of food plays a large part in the aesthetic appeal of the menu. It is very monotonous to always have all the food on a plate be shaped the same. Be mindful when cutting foods into different shapes that the food must look edible and be easy to eat. If food becomes intimidating, the consumer will be unwilling to eat the food that is served. Use shapes such as carrot triangles and cucumber juliennes for contrast. Today's food processing equipment and availability of ready-to-use convenience foods make it simple to offer attractive variations (Reinhert, 2012).

Culinary Institute of America (2010) also mentioned that food has many dimensions and the shape, height, and lines of the food are important components of presentation. Cubes, cylinders, spheres, pyramid, and lines are just some of the shapes food can consume. Alternating or repeating shapes in a design is one way to add visual interest to food arrangements; you can modify the natural shape of food by cutting or slicing it. To give height to foods that are naturally flat, you can roll or fold them, and arrange them in piles or pyramids.

Arrangement

Proper placement of food on a plate is important to how the customer will feel about the meal placed in front of them. When plating food, be sure not to leave too much space between food items. Additional space will make the portions appear small and cause customer dissatisfaction. Also, be careful not to overcrowd the plate because the appearance can get

messy and intimidating. For example, if too much gravy is used or foods are too close together, the gravy can spread to all the other items on the plate. Do not place everything in the middle of the plate; rather, select a focal point and build from that part of the presentation (Reinhert, 2012).

Food arrangement is just as essential to the success of a dish as its taste and flavor. The way the food looks on the plate is what tempts the eyes and makes customers want to taste it. Imagine how your room looks when it's messy and how it looks when you clean it up, the same ingredients, different results. It is just as true with food presentation and how the elements are arranged on the plate. No matter how delicious a dish may be, if it is served on a dirty plate, you will definitely not be tempted to taste it. Make sure all plates are sparkling clean. Adapt your plate presentation to the occasion. If you are preparing a kids party, choose fun food presentations that will make them want to eat. They prefer "fun" designs rather than serious and traditional presentations. Food presentation is all about timing. There is no point in offering your guests a fancy dish if it is served cold, when it was supposed to be served hot. So spend just enough time plating your dish (Bone, 2013).

He added that matching portion size with plate size is another important aspect of food presentation. A plate that is too small for the food portion it offers will look messy and overcrowded. On the other hand, a small portion on too large a plate will look sparse. Never serve hot foods on cold plates and the other way around. This is another essential rule of food presentation.

Garnish

According to Food Encyclopedia, a garnish is an item or substance used as a decoration or embellishment accompanying a prepared food dish or drink. In many cases, it may give added or contrasting flavor. Some garnishes are selected mainly to augment the visual impact of the plate, while others are selected specifically for the flavor they may impart.

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