

The Perfect Dinner Party 101
McCracken Country Public Library
November 9, 2017 @ 7pm

Hosted By: Sara Bradley of The Freight House

- Guest list
 - The size of the guest list will determine the menu and type of party you are having
 - Does anyone have any dietary restrictions
 - Don't invite all strangers
 - Don't rely on guests to cook, serve, or do the dishes (family is different)
- Menu Planning
 - Make a list...then make another....then another
 - I always start by planning a menu that will allow me to sit down and enjoy my company
 - Do all your shopping at least the 3 days before the party, booze included
 - Try out a recipe earlier in the week to avoid catastrophic failures (if these do occur, be ready to laugh at yourself)
 - Read recipes through numerous times before you begin
 - Avoid "a la minute" items
 - MISE EN PLACE please people
 - Start cooking earlier than you think you should
 - I always have out snacks for my guests to munch on. You never know if you are going to be running behind or if someone else may be running late.
 - Pick a dessert that doesn't require your attention during the meal and have the coffee pot loaded
 - NEVER APOLOGIZE
- Setting the table/mood
 - Clean your house early in the week
 - Make sure you have a vessel for every item you are preparing at least a day before
 - Set the table a day before. Don't preset glasses
 - Do not use any disposable items
 - Let the food be the center piece. It saves time and money
 - Avoid trying to please everyone (i.e. drinks and menu)
 - Play music in the background...only in the background
 - Make sure your dishwasher or sink is empty (clean as you go/or put it on your back porch)
 - Make sure all the trash has been taken out
 - Have a buffer subject ready for the dreaded politics discussion.
- After the dinner/party
 - Don't be upset if things don't go as planned
 - Have something in mind for people to do
 - Offer to go boxes
 - Start clean up before you go to bed
 - Call a taxi or offer a couch
 - Don't write thank you notes/don't expect one

The Freight House Cranberry, Apple, and Oat Crumble

adapted from the 9th street house

serves a large group!!

like 15ish people

Filling:

2 granny smith apple

1 jonathan apple

1 honey crisp apple

1 macintosh apple

1 ½ bags of fresh cranberries

(we know not all apples are created equal. the freight house uses a ratio of 8 cups of apples to 6 cups cranberries)

2 cups white sugar

1 cup demerara sugar

1 tablespoon unbleached flour

Topping:

3 cups of quick-cook oats, toasted in the oven until brown

½ cup dark brown sugar packed

2/3 cup unbleached flour

1 cup raw chopped pecans

8 oz. melted butter

1/8 teaspoon cardamom

In a 9x12 mix the apples, cranberries, and sugar. In a separate bowl, mix all the topping ingredients. Pour the topping mixture over the filling. Bake at 325F for 45mins to 1 hour. Make in the morning before party and let set at room temperature. Reheat for 10 minutes before serving. Serve with vanilla ice cream. Offer rye whiskey and coffee.

This recipe is used at the freight house for a Friday or Saturday night service. You can cut this is half for a smaller dinner party. It's almost better the second day.

Slow Roasted Pork, Fennel, Orange, Olives

Serves 4-6

2 to 3 pound pork loin

For Brine:

- ½ gallon water, divided
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ salt
- 2 stems of fennel chopped (save the bulbs for salad)
- 1 head garlic
- 1 bunch thyme
- 1 teaspoon black peppercorns whole

For salad:

- 2 medium size heads of fennel
- 2 oranges (I prefer cara cara, but any will do)
- 1 small jar of castelvetro olives pitted
- 1 Tablespoon honey
- 1 big fat pinch of salt
- 1 lemon for squeezing juice
- * drippings from searing pork loin (as long as they aren't burnt)

For searing:

- 2 big pinches of salt
- 2 big pinches of black pepper
- ¼ cup veg oil for searing (or whatever is your preference)
- 1 pretty platter

3 days before the party:

To create your brine, place half of the water in a pot with all other ingredients. Bring to a boil and let simmer for 5 minutes. Mix with other half of water and refrigerate. Once cold, pour over pork in a container/bag that allows meat to be fully submerged. Keep refrigerated.

You can use this technique for chicken also. Instead, brine for 1 day instead of 2 and use half the amount of sugar. You can also mix up the spices and herbs.

1 day before the party:

Remove the loin from the brine, rinse with water, let sit uncovered in your fridge. This will help create a crisp skin when roasting.

Remove all outside layers of leaves from the fennel. Cut the bulb in half, from top to bottom. Lay on side and slice as thin as possible. Use a mandolin if you have one. Store in cold water until tomorrow. Peel oranges and slice (just like a tomato). Store until tomorrow. Split olives in half and store back in juice.

Day of Party:

Three hours before party, remove pork loin from fridge, pat dry. Season on all sides. Sear in a hot pan with the vegetable oil on all sides. You are not cooking the meat, just searing. Transfer to your roasting pan and let sit at room temp.

One hour before guests are supposed to arrive, put loin into preheated 350F oven. You are looking for an internal temp of 145F. You should start checking it around 45 minutes. It will rise 1 to 2 degree every 1 minute.

Remove and let rest for at least 20 minutes before carving. This can be the time when you are getting all your other goodies warm.

To serve. Drain your fennel and pat dry on a towel. Drain the olives. Warm the pan drippings on the stove/microwave until warm. Toss all salad ingredients in a bowl. Slice roast into an even number of pieces and arrange on your platter. You can put back under broiler or in oven if you want to warm back up or prefer meat well done. Top with salad.

Charred Cauliflower, Chilies, Garlic, Capers

Serves 4

For cauliflower:

- 1 large head cauliflower, cut into big florets
- ¼ cup roasted garlic oil
- 2 big fat pinches of salt
- 1 big fat pinch of black pepper
- 1 medium size pinch of crushed red chili flakes
- 1 lovely serving dish

For roasted garlic:

- 2 heads of garlic
- 1 homemade aluminum foil pouch
- ½ cup oil

For dressing:

- 1 tablespoons roasted garlic
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon capers, drained
- 1 chilies sliced thin, medium heat (use anaheim or serrano)
- 2 tablespoons fresh chopped parsley (we used the leaf and stem)

3 days before party:

Make aluminum pouch. Place garlic and oil inside and seal tight. (garlic should be covered with oil)
Cook at 275F for 1 to 2 hours or until golden brown. Let cool. Separate cloves from skin. Store cloves in oil, in the fridge until needed.

Day before party:

Mix the first 3 ingredients of the dressing. Slice the chilies, but do not mix. Wash the parsley and store. Your dressing will be ready to assemble tomorrow. You can cut the cauliflower today if you prefer.

Day of party:

Turn oven up to 400F. Toss cut cauliflower with oil, salt, pepper, and chili flake. Roast in oven until brown and caramelized. Don't be afraid to get good color. While cauliflower is cooking, finish dressing. Cut parsley. Mix with chilies and other ingredients. Pour over cauliflower before serving.

Sweet Potatoes, Bacon Jam, Marshmallow Fluff, and Walnuts

Serves 4

3 days before party:

Bacon Jam:

- ½ pound of sliced bacon, chopped, cooked, and drained
- 1 cup chopped red onion, sautéed
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup red wine vinegar
- 1 pinch red chili flake
- 1 pinch garlic powder

Cut the sliced bacon into small pieces. Sauté in a pan until very crispy. (reserve 1 Tbsp of oil) Drain on paper towels. Sauté the red onion in same pan using the reserved bacon grease. After the onion has become translucent, combine with the four remaining ingredients in sauce pot and reduce by half. Add bacon and cool. This will keep in the fridge for weeks.

Marshmallow Fluff:

- 1 cup of room temp water, divided in half
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 3 envelopes of unflavored gelatin (look near the jello)
- 2 ¼ cups sugar
- 1 cup light corn syrup
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Mix ½ cup water, salt and gelatin in bowl on stand mixer. Stir and set aside. In a small sauce pot, mix the remaining water, sugar, and corn syrup. Be careful not to get any sugar grains on the side of the pot. Bring to a boil, then cook until temp reaches 240F or soft ball. BE CAREFUL, sugar burns are the worst!!! When the sugar reaches 240F turn on your stand mixer to low and gradually pour the hot syrup over the gelatin. Try to not pour on the side of the bowl, but directly into gelatin. Turn mixer on highest setting and mix for 9 minutes. Add vanilla. Mix 1 more minute. Store in airtight containers for up to a week.

Toasted Walnuts:

- ½ cup walnuts

Toast walnuts at 350F for 3-5 minutes or until you can smell them. Chop them when they cool. Store.

The Day Before:

3 to 4 medium size sweet potatoes

Salt, pepper, olive oil

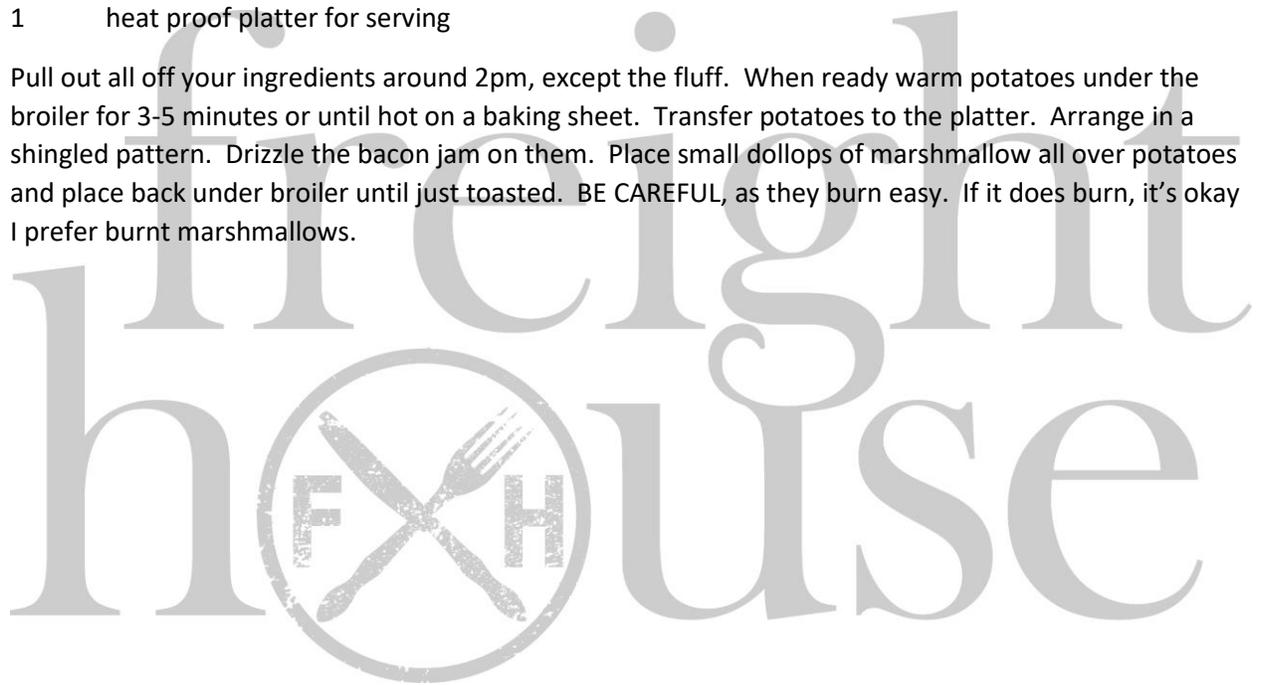
Preheat oven to 350F. Wash sweet potatoes and slice about ½" thick. (no need to peel) Lay on a baking sheet and drizzle with olive oil, salt, and black pepper. Flip and repeat. Bake about 20 minutes or until tender, but not mush. I always use a cake tester or unfolded paper clip to pierce the center and make sure it is done. You are not going to cook them anymore after this step, only reheat them. So make sure you like the doneness.

Day of the party:

1 baking sheet for warming

1 heat proof platter for serving

Pull out all off your ingredients around 2pm, except the fluff. When ready warm potatoes under the broiler for 3-5 minutes or until hot on a baking sheet. Transfer potatoes to the platter. Arrange in a shingled pattern. Drizzle the bacon jam on them. Place small dollops of marshmallow all over potatoes and place back under broiler until just toasted. BE CAREFUL, as they burn easy. If it does burn, it's okay I prefer burnt marshmallows.



Red Cabbage, Pear, Bleu Cheese Coleslaw

Serves 4

- ½ head red cabbage, sliced thin (used a food processor if possible)
- ½ cup golden raisins
- 2 tablespoons fresh dill, chopped (reserve a few springs)
- ½ cup mayo (make fresh aioli if you are good for it)
- ½ cup sour cream
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- ½ tablespoons sugar
- 1 good pinch salt
- 1 pinch black pepper
- 2 d'anjou pears, medium dice
- 1 cup bleu cheese crumbles (reserves 1 tablespoon)
- 1 amazing bowl

Additions salt, pepper, sugar, bleu cheese, and mayo as desired

Day before party:

Shred cabbage in food processor and mix with all ingredients, EXCEPT bleu cheese and pears.

Day of party:

Add bleu cheese and pears. Taste and adjust for seasoning. Chopped reserved dill. Garnish salad with dill and reserved bleu cheese. Serve cold.