



International Caterers Association

International Caterers Association - 3601 East Joppa Road
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Peer to Peer Learning – ICA Roundtable

Ideas for Garnishes

Kevin Lacassin – June 19, 2015

Q: Garnishes. Can you tell me your favorites? It's probably the place where I struggle the most, from plated entree garnishes to those for passing trays.

Instead of being PC, let me go ahead and offend everyone with my opinion and perhaps someone can school me on a new way of thinking. I totally dislike the edible purple orchids. Minced parsley dusted on the plates is old school. Micro-greens are the hip thing and we use them, but I don't always see the point. They are beautiful and make a great plate presentation, but I find they don't always enhance the dish (flavor and texture). Perhaps some micro-cilantro can work well on an Asian or Mexican dish, but I don't find the rainbow micro greens entirely appetizing.

My latest and greatest has been to start incorporating salsas or sauces to be the garnish. Things like blistered tomatoes or grilled scallions can really help a plate to pop. But what about those times where a sauce isn't ideal? And passing trays full of apps are all starting to look the same to me. Would love to hear some thoughts and new perspectives.

A: Stephen Spyrou- I look forward to the responses, and completely agree on orchids and parsley!!

Cynthia Creighton-Jones I do purple orchids and parsley dust on the same plate!! So there! ;) I have been considering learning how to make pearls - I would love to do cilantro pearls, parsley pearls, tomato pearls etc, that would enhance and compliment/contrast the dish. However I have no idea how to make the pearls!

Margot Jones- Here is how we pass crab cakes. We put rosemary in a little square vase and put lemons under the crab cakes.



Sarah Mustapha- Line the platters with pretty paper to give it a pop of colour!

Mara Routh- I like clean no garnish one item trays
The food is beautiful enough I also like white and black trays and platters ...See More

Margot Jones- We also use stickers to spell out the name of the hors d's which adds to the look.



Kevin Lacassin- Now that is pretty cool Margot Jones!

Margot Jones- It's great with servers that don't speak English clearly....

Monica Holmes- We like to carve fruits and vegeys for passing trays. Simple, easy and pretty.



Lisa Teiger- we use other interesting shapes and colors of natural items like mini hot chili peppers in various shapes and colors or sci fi looking vegetables like bitter melon that we get at the Indian market. Fresh tropical leaves - such as pan leaves, nasturium leaves and such, use oil and spices to paint the plate to create color and movement. Layering is very important for garnish for our presentation. I just did a consulting job for a African lodge teaching the chef and his staff to use what they have for more natural garnishes and this plate was a collaborate result for an upcoming plated dinner presentation where the protein would go on the nasturium leaf with some sauce napped on the side. He had the idea to cut the carrots to be part of the plate garnish as well as part of the "plate, and we did go with a certain color wash.



Cynthia Creighton-Jones Mimi Cohen Markofsky I was just joking!! smile emoticon. On butler trays we usually do flowers. A little more difficult for plated. I was taught that you do not out any sort of garnish on a plate that is not edible. Therefore we do not garnish with for eg a piece of Rosemary. Most folk don't eat edible flowers but at least they are edible.

Rachanee Keovorabouth- We do so much with garnishes lately...it's the greatest up sell too...Our favorites are carrot chip ribbons and Brussels sprout purée dots...



Julia Kendrick Conway- CIA taught me "garnish" vs. garniture. If the garnish is a component of the dish, great, if not, it does not belong on the plate. We too use the generic micro rainbow mix on family style platters to pump up the color. We are more about an attractive visual impression paired with exceptional flavor that flash and dash from a visual standpoint.

Amy Jurist- I don't like purple orchids. But I do really like the edible violas. I think they're so pretty. And my produce guy at restaurant depot will special order them for me so they're super fresh. Yes. I have a produce guy at RD too!! I also do little bundles of tempura-frenched green beans and rest them on a filet. Also have done little tempura bundles (I call them rafts) of a mix of julienned veggies-- like sweet potatoes, beets, onions and broccoli. Nice and colorful and everyone loves a crispy surprise. We fry the bundles up on site as we're doing apps. And then refry for a sec to crisp up at service.

Julia Kendrick Conway- Amy Jurist, the "fry Queen". ;)

Amy Jurist- Here's the edible flowers



Amy Jurist- Here's one with my green bean raft



Amy Hamilton- For plated entrees, if I can add a pickled item as a garnish I will. Julienned beets, carrots or radishes. Preserved lemons are another favorite. I love bright/tart bursts.

Vanessa Yuknis- Rachanee Keovorabouth - very true! We used parsnip chips tonight!

Angela Cholakis- We used sugar cane, fresh mint and lime on jerk chicken tonight, but I admittedly had to dust a couple of purple petals for a punch of contrast



Angela Cholakis- And dirty rice used Indian cinnamon sticks, fresh chives and tri color peppers brunoix



Angela Cholakis- And pink peppercorn...

Amy Jurist- Love that Angela!