

Entertaining Ideas

Creative Ways To Butter Up Your Guests

(NAPSA)—Anytime can be the right time for entertaining friends and family in your home—or backyard. While entertaining others can seem intimidating for some, it can also be a great chance to spread your culinary wings and share a passion for food with guests.

Don't let a fear of failure keep you from getting started in the first place. Some practical tips designed to make your summer entertaining absolutely flawless:

- Don't be afraid to try new things. This is an almost universal challenge to entertaining at home, according to Chef Mary Pagan, founder of the Culinary Center of Monterey. She encourages home cooks to start simple and allow themselves to make mistakes.

- Plan ahead. Pick the date, create a guest list and determine what type of scenario works best for you—sit-down, appetizers only, outdoor barbecue or buffet. Map out your menu a couple of weeks in advance to have plenty of time to shop and adjust if necessary.

- Ingredients are the key to success and substituting one ingredient for another can completely change a dish's texture and appearance. For example, Chef Pagan uses Plugrá European-Style Butter because it has 82 percent butterfat, combined with a lower concentration of water.

Pagan explains that using the right butter enhances the chemistry of cooking. "I've found that 82 percent butterfat is the sweet spot for cooking," she says. "There are many varieties of butter avail-



Whether you are hosting a sit-down dinner or outdoor brunch, it's best to plan the setting and menu a couple of weeks in advance.

able, some with higher butterfat, but for me, Plugrá at 82 percent is pitch-perfect."

- Accuracy counts. It pays to measure ingredients when you're dealing with more than a pinch. Pagan says this is especially true when baking. Adding too much or too little of an ingredient can ruin the entire dish.

- Be creative. Pagan says a simple way to express your culinary self is to create a signature compound butter (a mixture of butter with spices or other ingredients). This can be used as your secret ingredient in finishing sauces for seafood; spread over a variety of vegetables, crackers or breads; and used as a topping for steaks.

No matter what form your entertaining takes, remember to relax and enjoy time spent with family and friends. Chef Mary Pagan says, "Remember, with the right ingredients and a little practice, you, too, can cook like a pro."

For more helpful recipes and entertaining tips, visit www.plugra.com.