

Ensure Students Are Learning: Faculty Descriptions of Innovative Teaching Practices

Culinary Exercises Simulate Realistic Scenarios for Students

Innovative Teaching Practice Description:

The practices described here, which apply to several different culinary arts courses, challenge students to work on different scenarios they may encounter after graduating.

Scenario #1

In one scenario, students must design a menu and plan a themed party for 200. Students are required to create a written document that specifies the theme, the cost, and the intent. All items must be edible, including anything constructed for the décor. While the full menu has to be developed, students only have to prepare 12 portions of each hors d'oeuvre on their menu. Students must also create a tablescape based on their party theme. The professor recruits five local restaurateurs and/or caterers to serve as guest judges and help grade the assignment. The judges rate hors d'oeuvres in a blind tasting; ratings are collected on scoring sheets that do not include the judges' names. This allows students to receive constructive feedback from experienced people in the industry.

Scenario #2

For this assignment to succeed, the instructor forms partnerships with local vendors—in this case, at a local farmer's market. Students sign up for a day and time to visit the farmer's market. Students come prepared with simple spices, oils, and burners. At the farmer's market, students visit the different vendors and gather available ingredients to prepare quick, easy, and tasty samples for the shoppers. Because the

students do not know exactly what will be available, this exercise teaches them to think on their feet to prepare a dish with limited ingredients, and how to get the most out of their ingredients with minimal to no waste. This also gives the students the opportunity to have direct contact and interaction with the public, as well as the experience of communicating with vendors. The instructor arranges with the vendors to donate the food the students use in their dishes.

Scenario #3

In a very different setting, students further practice interaction with clientele by hosting a chef's table. The instructor creates a menu, and students are expected to organize, direct, and participate in the preparation of the meal as if they were hosting the chef's table in their own restaurant. An important part of the grade for this exercise is how the student communicates with and engages the guests.

Scenario #4

As a capstone project, students must plan, prepare, and serve a full multi-course meal. Students work on this project in teams. As a team, the students design the menu, and each student is responsible for one part of the meal (main dish, sides, salad, dessert, or bread), including determining the cost details for their assigned component, designing the presentation, and preparing the food. Finally, students are required to sell five tickets to the event, usually to family and/or friends. Select college administrators also are invited.