



# Cooking for the Holidays

CULINARY CONNECTION



The preparation and service of the foods your guests expect can make or break their experience during the holidays

Everyone celebrates the holidays differently, but the one thing that unifies our many celebrations is the tradition of food and beverage. Although food is necessary for survival, it plays a significant role in our quality of life. Diet reflects our culture, beliefs, and preferences. Perhaps no other time of the year is the significance of the menu more profound than during the holiday season. Because there are many different holiday traditions throughout the United States and across the world, it is important for us to know our customers on a deeper level.

Understanding your guests' background, family traditions, diet, and beliefs are vital elements in identifying what menu items will enhance their experience in your facility. This knowledge will help you create a holiday menu

catered to your guests' wants and needs, making the season gratifying and enjoyable.

Whether you are cooking for Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, or the New Year, the preparation and service of the foods your guests expect can make or break their experience. There are unique menu options for each region of the United States depending on the area's growing season, culture, and diversity. Guests of New England facilities might appreciate a traditional English holiday dinner which may include whole roasted turkey or goose, plum pudding, cranberry sauce, and mince pie. The same menu may not satisfy guests in New York City. With such a diverse demographic, rich with heritage and tradition, you need to research what makes sense for your



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menu depending on the part of the city where your facility is located.

For guests who celebrate Kwanzaa, adding black-eyed peas, gumbo, jerk chicken, and sweet potato pie will bring a taste of home to their stay. Guests who celebrate Hanukkah may enjoy a selection of potato latkes and house-made applesauce, beautifully braided challah, and Sufganiyot, a jelly-filled fried doughnut. Guests of Germanic ancestry may appreciate a selection of sausages, sauerkraut, and Lebkuchen, a traditional molasses cookie.

In North Dakota and Minnesota, where there is a robust Scandinavian heritage, your guests may enjoy a smorgasbord of smoked or pickled fish, lingonberry sauce, and lutefisk (a type of cured codfish). Hoppin' John and collard greens are a New Year's tradition in South Carolina, as it is believed eating these foods can bring good luck and fortune in the year to come. Pennsylvania Dutch have their own tradition on New Year's. For them, eating pork and sauerkraut brings good luck.

Serving new dishes that reflect traditional foods can also be an exciting way to celebrate the season

and allow your guests to create new memories. The Feast of the Seven Fishes is an Italian tradition served on Christmas Eve. Many courses of seafood are served, while red meat is reserved for the Christmas Day meal. In the recipe provided here, we incorporate all seven fish into one dish and serve it with pasta. This play on the tradition is a take on the classical French dish Fruits De Mer or fruit of the sea.

Talk to family members, the staff, and your guests for menu inspiration. Developing a holiday menu that is diverse enough to entertain all your guests should be an enjoyable experience for all. Understanding their wants and needs will allow you to present them with something truly special, give them something to look forward to, and add cheer to the season. Take the time to train your staff in your menu selections, traditions, and the origins of your dishes.

Think about the smell of a turkey roasting. It can instantly transport you back to a Thanksgiving in your childhood. Your memory recalls the taste and texture of the food. Food awakens and entices our senses, invoking extraordinarily powerful memories of the past. The first time we smell an apple pie baking on a fall afternoon—or perhaps the smell of a particularly good batch of mom's soup—are known as sense memories. These memories are relived each time they are recalled through the taste, smell, or texture of food. Our culinary culture is based on these philosophies—simple, well executed, technique-driven menu items that provide nutrition and comfort to the body and soul. Through the holidays, we create these memories and continue to prepare our traditional recipes not just because they taste good, but because we enjoy reliving these memories

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### SERVING NEW DISHES

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time and time again. We enjoy passing these traditions on to our younger generations. Our guests have lived these memories many times over. They want to be reminded of home and the overall sense of belonging that they felt when they were young. Bringing a taste of home to the facility is an important component for the overall well-being of the guests. The culinary team should be well versed in traditional foods to accommodate a variety of backgrounds and tastes.

People use food to come together in every situation in life—to rejoice, to mourn, and to celebrate. Holiday celebrations provide a way to give back to our loved ones, unify ourselves as a community, and strengthen our relationships. Food is comforting and helps give a sense of community. The menu has the power to enhance a very important occasion or ruin a once-in-a-lifetime event. The utmost care must be given to food preparation so that the latter can be avoided at all costs.

The staff must be able to execute the menu as well, so proper training is a key element to overall success during the holidays. Remember that your guests, more often than not, would love to be at home with their loved ones enjoying the holidays the way they remember them. We must care for our guests in a way that we would want to be cared for and that reflects the standards of our industry. After all, *“Good food is the foundation of genuine happiness.”* — *Auguste Escoffier, the father of modern French cuisine.* **E**

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# RECIPE



## FEAST OF THE SEVEN FISHES TOMATO SAUCE

*Yield: 8 large entree bowls of pasta*

### INGREDIENTS

- 3 lbs. Vine ripe tomatoes, cored, peeled, seeded, and coarsely chopped
- 8 oz. Red onions, chopped
- 6 cloves Fresh garlic, peeled and halved
- 3 sprigs Fresh basil
- TT Coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 oz. Tomato paste
- 24 each Mussels
- 1/4 lb. Calamari
- 1/2 lb. Crab meat
- 16 each Clams
- 6 each White anchovies preferred, you can use regular
- 1/4 lb. Shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1/4 lb. Smoked white fish
- 1 lb. Your favorite pasta

### DIRECTIONS

- Score, core, blanch, shock, deseed, and rough chop tomatoes.
- Sweat the onion, garlic, and basil in kettle with 2 Tbsp. coarse salt.
- Once tender, add tomatoes and stir.
- Bring to a boil.
- Reduce to medium heat and cook, stirring occasionally, until the tomatoes collapse, about 15 minutes.
- Reduce heat and simmer until the sauce is thick, about 1 hour.
- Add basil in the last 15 minutes of the cooking process.
- Remove from heat and chill thoroughly.
- Pass the sauce through a food mill fitted with the finest blade or puree in blender.
- Poach the shellfish and chill.
- Reserve the poaching liquid and reduce by half.
- Add tomato paste.
- Add the tomato sauce from above.
- Season with pepper and more salt if necessary.
- Add a little sugar if the sauce is too acidic.
- Warm seafood in sauce,
- Serve over pasta.



*This Level 1 article assumes that the reader has entry level knowledge of the topic. The desired outcome is to ensure a foundation of basic concepts of the subject matter.*

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- Diet reflects our:
  - Mood, attitude, and social status
  - Health, height, and eye color
  - Beliefs, culture, and preferences
- What knowledge will help make your holiday menu successful?
  - Background, diet, family traditions, and beliefs
  - What seasonal produce you can get from your food purveyors
  - How many guests you have in your facility
- What is a Sufganiyot?
  - A type of sausage served in Germany for Christmas
  - A spread of food typical in Scandinavian celebrations
  - A jelly-filled fried donut typically enjoyed during Hanukkah
- What does the tradition of eating Hoppin’ John for New Year’s represent?
  - You may have good luck in the coming year
  - Your financial situation will improve
  - You will find something you lost in the previous year
- The Feast of the Seven Fishes is:
  - A play that is acted out in Greece to ring in the holiday season
  - A traditional Italian menu, typically comprised of all seafood, served on Christmas Eve
  - A New Year’s meal typically served in parts of New England
- Sense memories are:
  - Created only through aromatherapy
  - A sign of a medical condition
  - Relived each time they are recalled through the taste, smell, or texture of food
- Holiday celebrations can provide:
  - A reason for the staff to change the menu as they see fit
  - An opportunity for the facility to get new linens and cutlery
  - Comfort, community, and strengthened relationships

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