

# 11.

## Platform Demonstrations

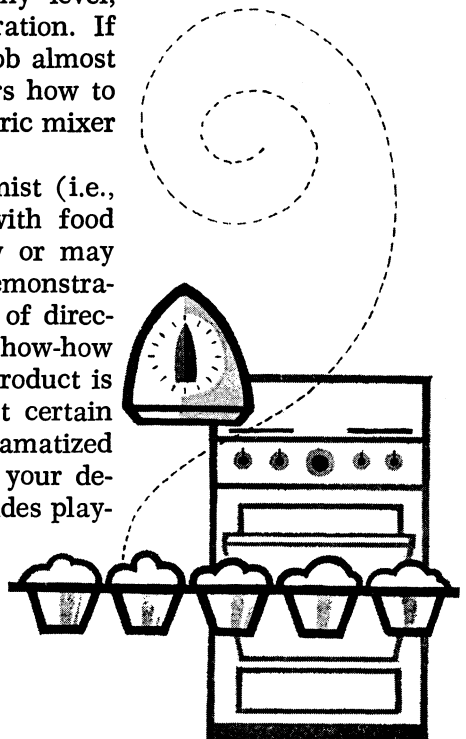
The art of teaching  
by showing how to do

NEVER UNDERESTIMATE the value of the demonstration and of the ability to give a good one. For the demonstration, carefully thought through and well presented, is a basic ingredient in home economics communications.

If you teach home economics at any level, practically every lesson is a demonstration. If you work in the equipment field, your job almost invariably includes showing homemakers how to use your range or refrigerator, your electric mixer or automatic washer.

If you are a "cupboard" home economist (i.e., a business home economist working with food items or household products) you may or may not be called upon to give platform demonstrations. But every time you prepare a set of directions to accompany a product, you do a show-how with words. If your food or household product is advertised on television, you are almost certain to work behind the scenes on concise, dramatized demonstrations for the commercials. If your department puts out a filmstrip or set of slides play-

*Giving a demonstration is like tailoring a coat. The smallest detail is important.*



**DEMONSTRATIONS YOU  
MAY HAVE SEEN**

A Mother-Daughter demonstration with a girl scout acting as helper to the home economist.

A Mr. and Mrs. feature, with a man and woman working together to get a complete meal.

A comparison of old and new methods of cake making: One woman makes a cake by a standard method; the other whisks up a cake-mix cake. Comparison of time involved and amount of dishwashing required makes words unnecessary.

A buffet cart on which finished dishes are placed, then wheeled down the aisles for the audience to inspect.

ing up your product, almost every "frame" or picture is a demonstration detail.

As a home economics student or a beginning home economist, then, you need to learn all that you can about giving platform demonstrations. Once you've mastered the art, you can apply the principles in numerous ways.

Let's look at the steps to be taken in planning and doing demonstrations.

***Consider Your Objective and Approach***

In giving a demonstration of any type you have some specific message or lesson that you want to put across. Take salad making, for example.

When a home economics teacher gives a demonstration of making tossed green salads, her aim is simply to teach the fundamentals of making a basic tossed salad. If she were to give such a salad demonstration, live or on film, for an educational television station, her aim would be the same — to teach fundamentals. She would, however, need to put some special showmanship into it. And she might well work in some historical background to give greater depth and interest to her presentation.

When a business home economist employed by a manufacturer of salad oil or vinegar or seasonings gives a salad demonstration, she shows how to make a variety of new and interesting salads and dressings with her particular brand of ingredient. If the demonstration is to be for a TV commercial, she must ordinarily narrow down her presentation to just one salad at a time, and plan a quick, smooth show-how that will "sell" her salad ingredient to viewers.

A home economist in the equipment field may utilize salad-making ideas to interest homemakers in her make of refrigerator. Or she may use

the blender to whisk up new types of salad dressings. Or the range to make a glamorous new cooked salad dressing.

And so it goes.

Until you know your objective and have defined your approach, you are certainly not ready to plan the next step.

### ***Visualize the Setup***

Before you plan even the first step of a demonstration you need to have a picture of your audience, and of the physical setup for the presentation.

Is your audience to be a group of students or of teachers? A gathering of young homemakers, or a club of older, experienced women? Is it a semisocial occasion, or a cooking school with any and all types of persons attending — some just for the door prizes, no doubt! What would your audience probably be most interested in seeing demonstrated? How much can those individuals absorb in the way of skills? A demonstration showing fancy tricks with bread dough might be quickly grasped by a group of experienced homemakers. Younger ones may be equally interested, but may need to have more of the demonstration time given to the making of the yeast dough itself. The better you understand your audience, the better focused will be your demonstration.

Now as to the setup. Will everyone in the audience be able to see what you are doing? What about the stage? Is it well equipped, or must you improvise, or alter the demonstration itself to fit the physical setup? What about background? What will you wear to harmonize with it? Will the group be large or small? All these questions enter into how you will plan and present your show and your show-hows.

### **MORE THEMES**

Wedding Gift Demonstration featuring small appliances.

After-Office Cooking, with ideas for quick-fix meals.  
Patio Cookery — with one or two men getting into the act.

How to Cook a Picture — flash the picture on the screen and then proceed to show how to fix each dish.

Party Fun From the Freezer — a demonstration not of freezing, but of using frozen foods of all varieties.

### **TAPE IT**

If feasible have a tape recording made of your demonstration. It will help you to see and improve possible weaknesses. And it will be of help if, later, your presentation is to be made into a filmstrip or given on television.

### Organize Your Plan of Work

If ever a job called for complete organization, a demonstration does.

Begin by figuring out exactly what you are going to do or make on the platform, and the order in which you will take every step.

Write down these steps in detail. Weigh them against the time allowed, the equipment available. It is assumed, of course, that you will not attempt to demonstrate a set of skills unless you have them in almost effortless perfection in your own fingers.

When the steps are established and you know that you can go through them without stumbling, study each step to determine what you are going to say about it. It is not enough to say flatly, "Rub the salad bowl with garlic."

You might explain that, used in this way, the garlic gives fragrance and flavor to the salad without overpowering it. Point out that you use a paper towel to brush out bits of garlic left after crushing. And, of course, admit that garlic can be omitted entirely, and perhaps a touch of herbs used in the salad instead.

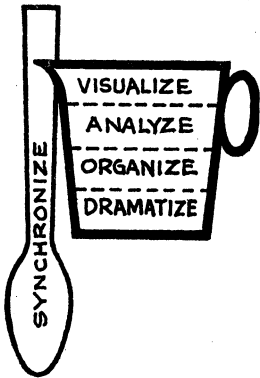
Make your comments full, with reasons why. But keep in mind that when you have finished rubbing the bowl with garlic, you must be through talking about it. Timing is quite a trick, as every actor knows. It can make the difference between interest and boredom to audiences.

But it's not enough to organize your order of work and your line of talk. You must organize your marketing lists down to the last bunch of parsley; your equipment list down to the plastic bag for the washed lettuce; the list of jobs to be done in advance; the placing of each bowl and cup and tray on your work table. If you have an assistant, you and she must rehearse your parts so that as a team your movements are

#### TERMINOLOGY

One government bulletin says, "Don't say *demonstration*, say *show*. Don't say *demonstrate*, say *show-how*. "One critic says, "Don't memorize. Don't patronize. Don't over-professionalize. Don't be too slick and smooth."

The expert says: "You want your demonstration to look easy, so avoid having too much stage help. Plan dishes that can be prepared with a minimum of assistance."



smooth, easy, and economical of time and steps.

If you are employed by a business concern with a well-developed home economics department, you may be given an entire presentation plan that has been worked out by someone else. If you are on your own, you will be responsible for every step of the organization plan. But regardless of who does that planning, you must have the entire picture in your mind as well as on paper before you get up on the platform. And it must be as attractive, interesting, and dramatic a picture as you can make it.

### ***Dramatize Your Demonstration***

When you stand before your home economics class or group of homemakers you are, in a sense, a showman. As such, you need to dramatize your demonstration — bring it to life — in every way that you can, yet not detract from the points you are trying to put across. Here are things to do:

*Give your demonstration an appealing title.* Get news into your show. Maybe you have a new product, or a new feature added to an established product. Certainly you can show new uses for a well-known product or piece of equipment; new recipes, new ways of serving and garnishing a familiar food.

Put originality into the wording of the title, as did the home economist who called her laundering demonstration a "soap opera." But never be content to parrot the phrases of others. Shake your own idea tree, and you can surely come up with a fresh and fresh-sounding title that is just right.

*Get off to a dramatic start.* If you are going to show how to decorate cakes, bring on a beautiful wedding cake or birthday cake at the beginning of the demonstration. Show it off with pride. Then go on to say (in effect), "This is a preview

### **COLOR COUNTS**

The platform with its bright lights and shining equipment is trying on the eyes. Bring in color and pattern wherever you can, even to those red tomatoes and peppers to be seen when you open the refrigerator door. Gay dishcloths, pot holders, aprons, dishes, all help to bring life to the setting. If possible, keep the curtain drawn until time for the show to begin.

of one of the things we are going to do today. Now let's start from the beginning, and see how easy it is, and how much fun it is, to decorate a beautiful cake."

*Figure out how to get the effect of camera "close-ups."* A platform demonstration, for most of the audience, consists of "long shots" or "intermediate shots" in television language. An overhead mirror can be mighty helpful in showing a process or a finished dish, but it is not the complete solution.

#### COOKING SCHOOL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strive for helpfulness.
2. Use familiar, tested recipes.
3. Be sure of yourself.
4. Be patient. Take time to answer questions, but keep the question-asking under control.
5. Always repeat the question your are answering.
6. Be sincere and tactful. Suggest rather than dictate.
7. Be friendly. Look friendly.
8. Keep the audience with you.
9. Summarize what you have done.
10. Give them something to remember you by, such as a set of recipe cards or a leaflet that tells in type what was done on the platform.

In order to focus sharply on what you are showing or doing, keep your working space free of clutter and confusion. Avoid "busy" designs in backgrounds or china, dress or apron. In general use soft grayed colors in china in order to show up foods to best effect — but don't forget to use some touches of red to give life to your display!

Remember that fairly large items are much easier to see than little tiny things. If you wish to show something small, such as fancy-shaped little rolls, perhaps you can make up one roll several times larger than normal in order to show just how you proceed. Remember that the audience has come to see what you are doing, not just to listen to what you say you are doing.

*Use meaningful household words as you talk.* If you say "sauté" or some other word that may not be in the vocabularies of those in the audience, define it. Better yet, use other simple words to express what sauté means. ("Cook the chopped onions in the oil in a skillet," or "Brown the cubes of beef quickly in a little melted shortening in a frying pan," or the like.) Never be guilty of using trite, worn-out phrases and dated slang. Work in plenty of human-interest stories or incidents rather than "funny" stories learned for the occasion. Mentioning how you used to have to tiptoe across the room when your mother made an angel food cake will send friendly nods of under-

standing through an audience of older women; will mean little to young women who have known nothing but standardized recipes and mixes, and regulated ovens.

*Handle heavy information with a light touch.* Forget that pompous lecturing tone of voice, and visit with the audience in a friendly me-to-you way. Yes, you can do it and still keep your position of authority. Put a little fun into the session. Laugh at yourself if you make a slight mistake. Never be self-consciously apologetic.

*Encourage audience participation.* Allow time for questions. Call for a show of hands occasionally, or ask the audience to clap for favorite dishes. If it seems sensible, invite one of the women to the platform to wash her hands and roll out the pastry or turn out a gelatin mold according to your directions. (Some pre-arrangement is advisable here, perhaps.)

*Display the finished products in some interesting way* so that the audience will carry home clear mental pictures of them.

In your search for the dramatic, however, keep in mind that a demonstration is to show how, not to show off. Don't attempt more in any session than you can do well, or more than the audience can absorb. Try a few spectacular stunts, if you like, such as sliding a baked custard pie filling into a baked pie shell. But, for the most part, keep to skills that women in the audience will use again and again in their own kitchens.

*Give them something to remember you by.* Be sure to have recipes or other printed information ready so that everyone present has something to take away with her. Discuss these with the audience. Sell homemakers on wanting the material. Don't say, "There are some recipes there on the table if you want them" — or words to that effect! Whether you do or do not give out take-homes, do give everyone in the audience a fresh word or

*The successful demonstrator has vitality and enthusiasm — enough of both to carry over into the audience.*

#### HOW MANY DISHES

One home economist says: "In giving a foods demonstration, figure to make not more than 6 or 7 dishes in a 1-hour show; not more than 9 in a demonstration lasting 1½ hours."

**WHEN YOU DEMONSTRATE EQUIPMENT**

It is not enough merely to introduce a piece of equipment. It must be discussed and described so that every woman in the audience becomes acquainted with it. Danger lies in too much talk-talk about the fine points of the range or sewing machine—not enough translating into uses; not enough show-how. Here's where you need to dramatize by means of meaningful words.

Remember, *you* are familiar with that piece of equipment, familiar with the terms used by the manufacturer. Give the audience time to absorb those details.

thought and a reassuring friendly smile to carry away with her.

*And above all else, be sincere.* If you approach your demonstration from the standpoint of really wanting to help and inspire your audience, you will feel some of that same inspiration yourself. With it, you are sure to put your demonstration across in a way that will please everyone concerned with it.

**Authors' Note:** There is far more to this subject than is suggested by this chapter. But demonstration techniques are learned by doing, not by reading. Every home economist who gives a finished performance has learned her art the hard way — by doing and doing and doing, or by working under the direction of someone whose techniques and synchronization are perfect. Analyze every demonstration that you see; ask yourself what makes it good or not so good. Analyze your own demonstrations; figure how each one might be improved in subject matter, or speeded up, or worked out more smoothly. A demonstration moves along step by step. It is only by improving *yourself* step by step that you learn to do a finished job.