



Downloadable Guide

CHEF TIPS



Professional kitchen advice, flavour ideas
and better cooking habits.



By Raymond Goldhawk

Think Like a Chef



Good cooking starts before the pan gets hot.

Professional kitchens rely on preparation, organisation and consistency. A calm, organised station gives you more control over timing, seasoning and presentation.

- Read the whole recipe or plan the dish before you start.
- Prepare, weigh and portion ingredients before cooking.
- Keep one clear area for plating and finishing.
- Taste components as you go instead of waiting until the end.
- Clean as you work so your station stays safe and efficient.

Preparation creates confidence. Confidence creates consistency.

Seasoning & Flavour Balance

The five checks

Salt	brings flavours forward
Acidity	adds brightness and cuts richness
Sweetness	softens bitterness and sharpness
Bitterness	adds depth when controlled
Umami	builds savoury depth



Chef habit

Season gradually. Salt added early can penetrate and build flavour; a final adjustment at the end sharpens the finished dish.

Before serving

- Taste the sauce on its own.
- Taste the full bite with garnish.
- Check whether richness needs acid.
- Finish with fresh herbs only when they add something.

Control the Heat



Heat is an ingredient.

- Preheat pans properly before searing, but do not let oil smoke aggressively.
- Dry meat and fish before cooking to encourage browning instead of steaming.
- Give ingredients space in the pan; overcrowding drops the temperature.
- Use lower heat for delicate sauces, eggs and slow reductions.
- Rest cooked meat before slicing so juices redistribute.
- For fish, crisp skin needs a dry surface, steady contact and controlled heat.

The goal is not maximum heat - it is the right heat for the result you want.

WHERE A DISH COMES TOGETHER

Sauces & Finishing

A simple sauce framework

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| 1. Base | stock, cooking juices, tomato, dairy or vegetable puree |
| 2. Depth | aromatics, herbs, spices, wine or roasted flavour |
| 3. Balance | salt, acidity, sweetness and richness |
| 4. Texture | reduce, blend, strain or emulsify |
| 5. Finish | butter, herbs, citrus, oil or a final seasoning check |



Finishing tips

- Reduce only until flavour is concentrated, not harsh.
- Mounting a sauce with a little cold butter can add gloss and body.
- Use garnishes that reinforce the dish rather than decorate it randomly.
- Wipe plate edges before service.

MAKE THE PLATE EASY TO READ

Plating & Presentation



Five plating principles

- Choose a focal point - the diner should know what the main element is.
- Use height carefully; structure should look intentional, not unstable.
- Balance colour and negative space so the plate does not feel crowded.
- Repeat shapes or lines to create rhythm.
- Sauces should guide the eye and support the food, not flood the plate.

Plating is not about adding more. Often the strongest plate is the one with better editing.

QUICK PROFESSIONAL REMINDERS

Meat, Fish & Vegetables

MEAT

- Season evenly.
- Allow larger cuts time to lose the fridge chill.
- Sear for colour, then finish with controlled heat.
- Rest before slicing.

FISH

- Pat skin dry.
- Use a clean, hot pan and enough fat.
- Avoid constant moving.
- Finish gently to prevent drying.

VEGETABLES

- Season during cooking.
- Keep colour and texture in mind.
- Roast for caramelisation; blanch for freshness.
- Use acid or herbs to brighten.



BEFORE THE PLATE LEAVES THE KITCHEN

The Final Chef Checklist

- ☐ Is the food properly seasoned?
- ☐ Does the dish need acidity or freshness?
- ☐ Are hot components hot and cold components cold?
- ☐ Is the main ingredient cooked correctly?
- ☐ Does every garnish have a purpose?
- ☐ Is the sauce the right consistency?
- ☐ Is the plate clean around the rim?
- ☐ Does the portion look balanced?
- ☐ Would you be happy to serve this plate to someone important?

Cook with intention. Taste constantly. Keep learning.

Free Chef Tips Guide - By Raymond Goldhawk

For educational and culinary inspiration.