Tease the Appetite With Eye-Appeal

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Jane Hakes insists that appearance of a food is as important to the eater as preparation.

VITAMINS take a back seat when the gourmet sits down to enjoy an inviting dinner. Food, to be enjoyed, must present a pleasing picture to the eye and thus stimulate the appetite. No matter how satisfying the flavor it must first invite one through appearance.

Color, shape, texture, arrangement and background all lend to the final picture. Color gives the first food impression. From the beginning of history, color has attracted man to experiment with berries, fruits and vegetables.

All the colors of the rainbow present themselves in the vegetable platter. Yellow bantam corn, red cabbage, flowering broccoli, ruby red beets and slender carrots are rich in natural color. Do nothing to destroy their beauty in preparation processes if possible.

Some foods are extremely tasty and yet completely lack color. A dinner plate of creamed tuna fish and noodles, cabbage salad and wax beans almost fades away. The same tuna fish and noodles baked in a ring mold with an outside crust of buttered crumbs and the center piled high with bright green peas attracts the spotlight.

A few sprigs of parsley, quarters of tomato, slices of lemon or shining ripe olives will bring out the best in a meat platter. A contrasting flavor and color garnish can be made by partial slicing of cucumber sections and inserting thin slices of radish.

Red rimmed pineapple has an unusual appearance and is quickly prepared by rolling pineapple slices in red granulated sugar. Don’t overwork the cherry. It is an accent, but has lost its glamour through years of hard use.

Artificial coloring may have a place, but it is doubtful. Blue ice cream scares one away before even a taste can convince one of its harmlessness. Green or red cream cheese sandwiches and colored breads are objectionable.

Colored ice cubes add sparkle to a drink of ginger ale or fruit juice. Green minted apple rings have an appetite appeal.

Unusual colored food combinations such as diced carrots and turnips in green pepper cups, potato salad heaped in the center of tomato aspic ring or grated carrot sprinkled over a sliced cucumber swirl, will add zest to an otherwise dull meal.

Natural forms are pleasing but try to bring them together in such a way as to produce interesting contrast. Peas, baby beets, lima beans and onions have a charm of their own, but served together their similar shapes lose interest.

Remember when arranging a salad plate from which several people must serve themselves, that the plate should be attractive even after several portions have been removed. Group the various ingredients in separate units so that when one portion is taken, the whole structure will not collapse.

Don’t let food appear exhausted from numerous attempts to decorate it. Develop a type of nonchalance and know when you have achieved the desired effect.

A fruit plate may simply sparkle with life or look sadly tired from being worked over.

Among the line-up of vegetable wall flowers, the carrot often appears because no one investigates all its possibilities. But try making a carrot ring souffle of the non-collapsible variety to lend new zest to a familiar vegetable.

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