



Culinary Institute
of America

Food Presentation Principles



Food Presentation

- Not limited to hot or cold food, but ALL food
- Intent is to stimulate ALL the guests' senses
- Enhance desire to taste food
- There is beauty in simplicity
- Bring out the food's natural beauty



Food Presentation

To produce a pleasing physical layout, consider the following:

- Balance
- Focal Point
- Visual Lines
- Flow and Sequencing
- Unity
- Height
- Shape
- Color
- Texture



Balance

Color Selection

- Complementary colors (adjacent colors on the color wheel) offer a harmonious appearance.
- Opposing colors (earth tones with vibrant colors) create high contrast and vibrant visuals
 - Can be used to highlight main ingredients



Balance

Shapes

- Use a variety of shapes
- Avoid:
 - Same shapes on one plate
 - Too many whole vegetables
 - Too many loose items

Textures

- Crispy/Crunchy or Mushy/Soggy
- Heavy/Dense or Light/Fluffy



Balance



Texture

- Avoid too many similar textures on one plate
- Utilize purees, custards, fried and toasted items, etc. to provide a variety of textures

Cooking methods

- Enhance taste, texture, and appearance
- Use different yet compatible methods
- Will inherently add textural variety

Balance

Flavorings/ Seasonings

- Avoid using the same herbs and spices in multiple preparations
- Pair complementary flavors:
 - Rich with lean
 - Spicy with bland
 - Smoky (salt) with sweet
 - Sweet with sour (acid)
 - Sweet with spicy



Color

- Strategic use of color makes dishes more visually appealing/ appetizing
- Primary categories: earth tones, vibrant
- Reinforces appearance of freshness, quality, healthfulness
- Signals proper cooking technique:
 - Roasts: caramelized on outside
 - Sautés: evenly brown
 - Steamed items: fresh bright colors



Height

- Use the natural shape of food
- Provide varied but not extreme shapes
- Height enhances flow



Height

- Too flat
- Inappropriate bowl-style plate



Focal Point

- The Focal Point is the area to which the eye is automatically drawn.
- Both platters and plates should exhibit a focal point.
- Existence and location are dependent on placement and relationship of components.

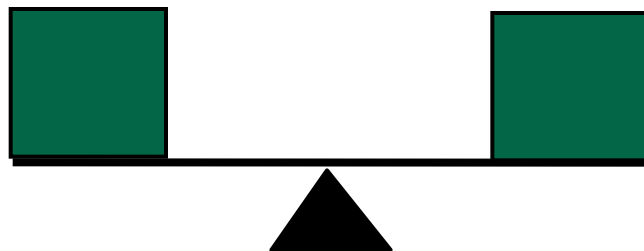


Focal Point

- Point or area to which the eye is automatically drawn
- Dependent on food components placement and relationship

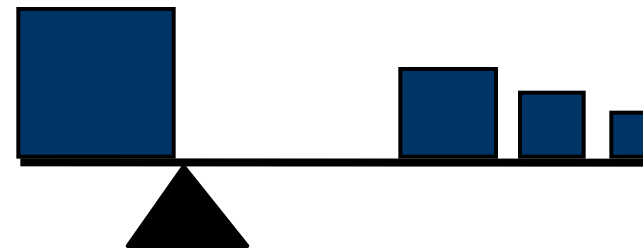
Symmetric

- Static feel
- Locks eyes to middle
- Boring



Asymmetric

- Unified
- Strong flow
- Strong focal point



Symmetric Balance



Asymmetric Balance



Unity and Flow

Unity

- Platter should form a cohesive unit
- Common thread to tie platter together
- Elegance in simplicity
- The fewer areas of focus, the better

Flow

- Sense of movement on platter
- To achieve flow, the platter must have proper balance, focal point, and unity



Unity and Flow

- Layout should work as a cohesive unit
- Reduce number of areas of focus
- Emphasize that food items are interrelated

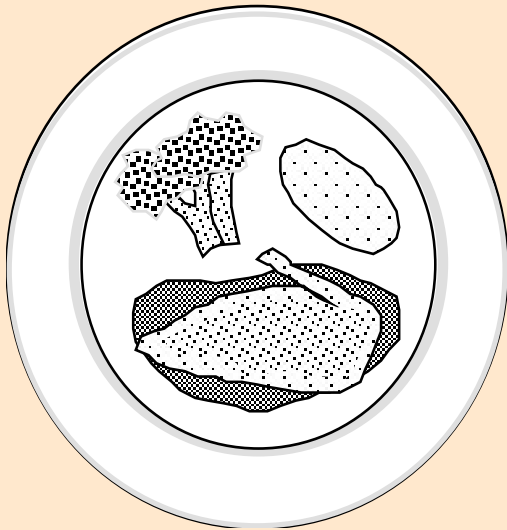


Figure A.

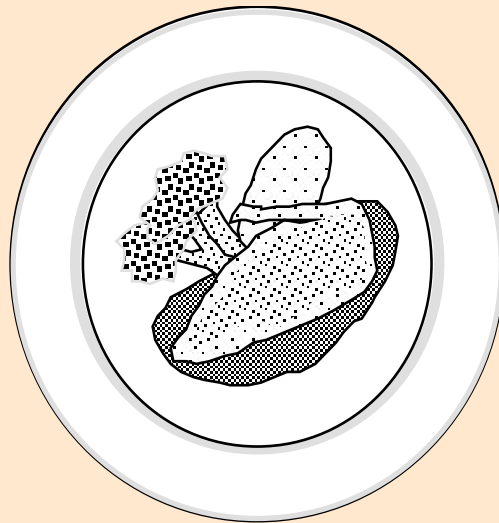


Figure B.

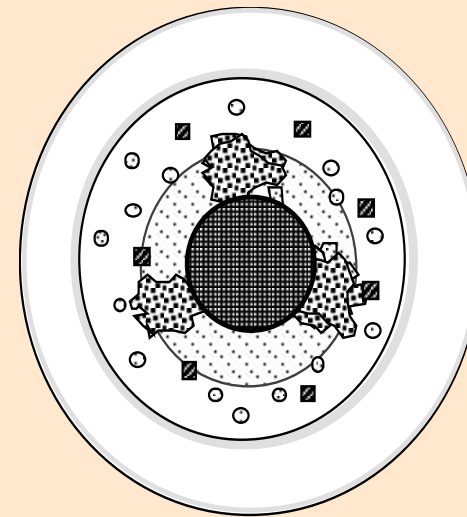


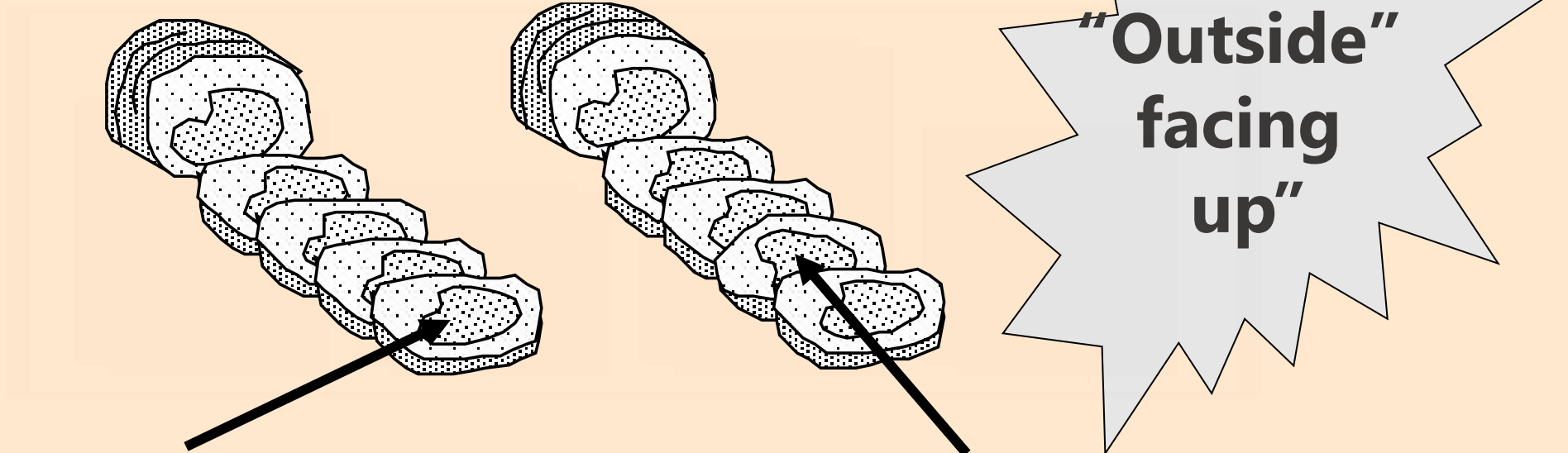
Figure C.

Flow

- If balance, unity, focal point are handled properly, the presentation develops a sense of movement or “flow.”
- If the layout is symmetric, the sense of flow may be stifled by locking the eye in the middle of the plate or platter.
- If asymmetric, there is a stronger sense of flow.



Platter Design: Facing



Notice each slice matches design from gross piece

Slices are not consistently arranged

Food Sequencing

- Display items in same order they are sliced
- Provides consistent progression

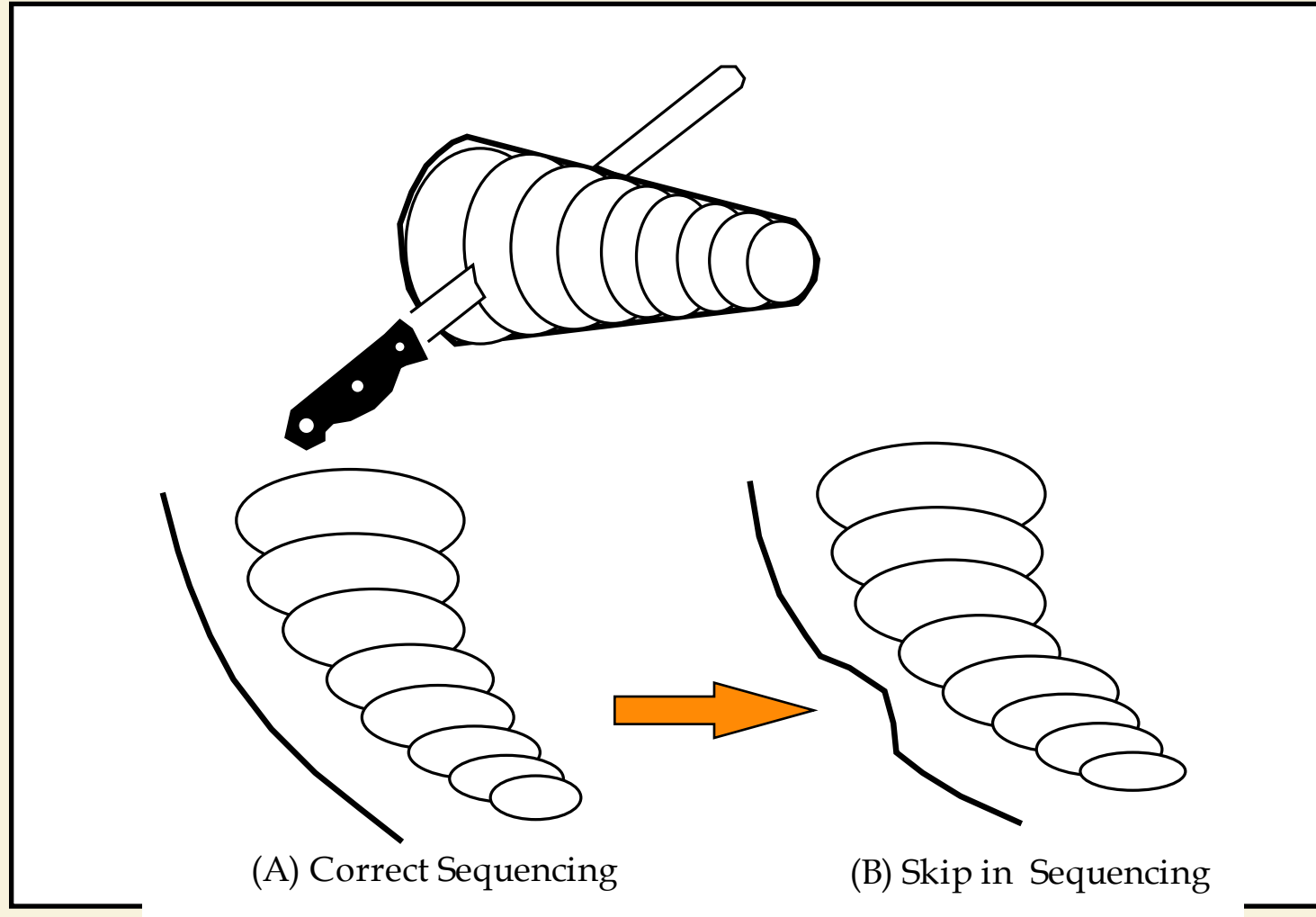


Properly Sequenced



Out of Order

Sequencing

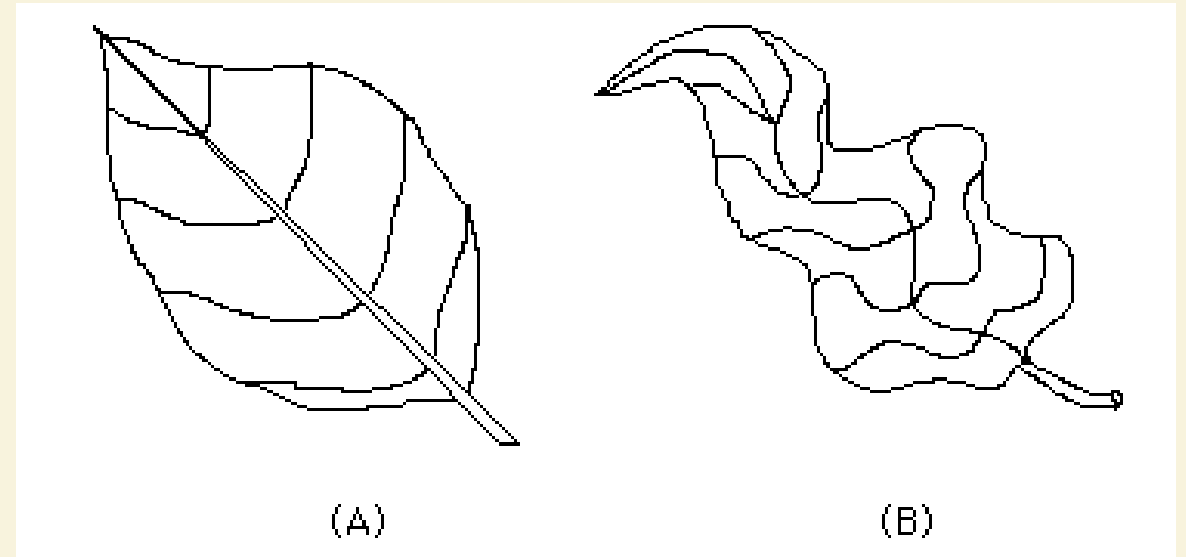


Sequencing

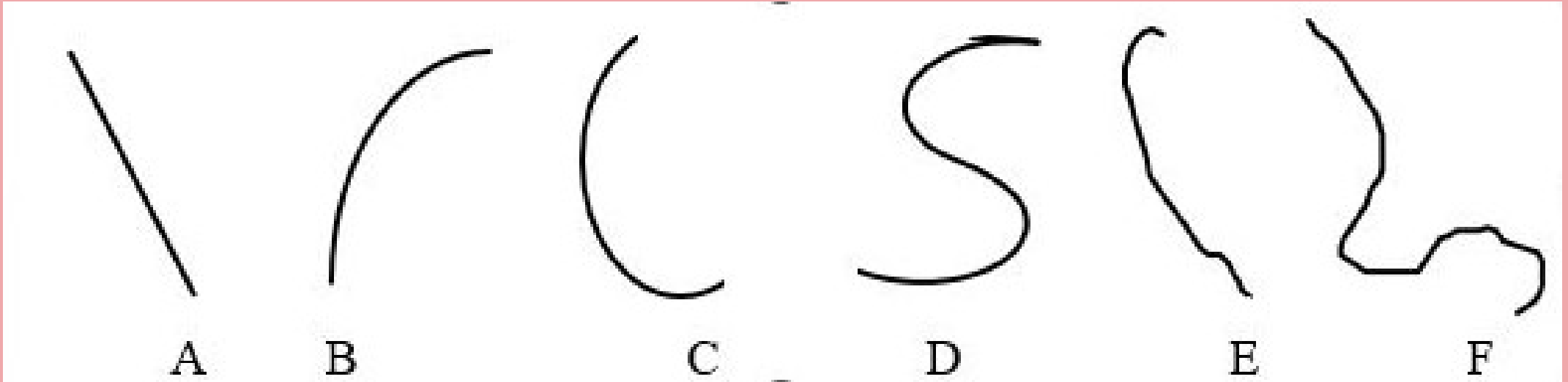


Direction Lines

- **Strong Lines (A):** Freshness, strength, structure, and direction
- **Weak Lines (B):** Age, decay, weakness, poor structure, and lack of definite direction



Strong Lines



Line A - Strongest Line

Lines B, C, D - Indicate a General Direction of Movement

Lines E, F - Inconsistency in Line or Direction

Strong Lines



Plating

The rim is for the guest and server only!



Garnishes

- Add color, texture, taste, interest
- Not the focal point-- should not distract from the focus
- Harmonize with items, enhance, and complement
- Should have a function
- Everything should be edible



Non-Functional Garnishes

- Avoid any item, edible or inedible, that does not contribute to the taste or texture of a dish.
 - Wedge or slice of orange or lemon
 - Sprig of parsley or watercress
 - Tomato roses and apple birds
 - Paper or foil frills





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Any Questions?