

long!), I sensed that the entire family was a little tired and that I needed to leave. I was halfway home before I realized that I hadn't even seen the kitchen, fridge, freezer, etc. Duh! All's well - the first cook day, she was there and I explained what I needed (fridge and freezer space, etc.), and she was very understanding. They have been one of my favorite clients ever since.

According to my wife, I do several dumb things on a daily basis, wrote **Personal Chef Rick Sost**. I recently was with an individual who was purchasing a gift certificate (service) for a friend who had cancer. I explained that I had cooked for a number of clients with cancer, but unfortunately three of them passed away. I wonder if she thought it was because of my food! I did get the service. I would never say this to an actual client, and I am aware that maybe providing too much information is not the best thing to do.

A second dumb thing I did early on was to make the statement to a client, "just follow my heating instructions and you will not have any problems." When this 86-year-old client told me she must have done something wrong by putting a Rubbermaid container in the oven, she said was just following my instructions. Oops! I failed to change the heating instructions, when I changed the type of container. **Rick Sost**

Personal Chef Brian Ramirez wrote, I overheard this at a past conference, it didn't happen to me. The Personal Chef told me, "During a client interview with an elderly couple, the wife asked the chef 'where did you learn to cook?' The chef told her the CIA. She had a puzzled look on her face, leaned over real close and said 'are you sure you should be telling us about this?'"

Cooking with Seasonal Produce

By Personal Chef Lia Soscia



As foodies, you know how delicious a just-picked tomato tastes – especially when compared to a tomato that has been shipped in from another country. And think about locally grown, juicy ripe peaches.

One of the greatest gifts the earth gives to a cook is being able to prepare meals with the vibrant colors, nutritional benefits and delicious aromas of fruits and vegetables in season. Now that the weather has warmed up, we are seeing an abundance of fresh produce filling up our grocery stores from local farms.

Over the past 10 years, we have seen a growing source of "out of season" produce appearing year round due to imports and scientific farming advances, but nothing beats the fresh taste of locally grown produce. And, as people who love to cook and provide the freshest meals, we should rely heavily on local produce as often as possible.

Produce that comes from other countries could be weeks old and the quality deteriorated by the time it arrives at supermarkets.

Fresh produce memories can be created for our clients as well. Although many parts of the country have fairly short growing seasons, farmers have much to share in summer and fall. And many of us live and work in areas where locally grown produce is available year-round.

Blending local produce into our client's menus will delight their senses. Finding local produce can be challenging at times, but if you look for it you may find some. Here on Long Island, the smaller independent supermarkets carry local produce when available. And, we are also fortunate to have farmers markets nearby during the height of the season.

Several personal chefs on the message board told me that they have noticed local produce in season at their supermarkets. If you want to add the bright, fresh taste of just-picked produce, ask your supermarket produce manager if they will have any available during the season.

To give you a head start in your search for fresh produce, you can visit the United States Department of Agriculture – Farmers Markets website. Here you will find all the information you need regarding the U.S. farming community, a list of the farm stands in each state. Visit: www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/ to learn more.

In addition, there may be local produce cooperatives and CSAs (community supported agriculture – usually organic farms) that you can join in order to have fruits and vegetables delivered or picked up.

Cooking in season will give your client's taste buds a real treat. And, since just-picked produce contains more vitamins and minerals, you will be providing them great nutrition too!



(Editor's note: Even if you lived in Arizona's Yuma Valley where winter lettuce and vegetables grow abundantly, you'd have to shop at a farmers' market or independent grocery store to get the freshest produce. If you shopped for lettuce at one of Yuma's large chain supermarkets, the lettuce you buy has been picked and packed locally, trucked to the distribution center in another city or state, and then trucked back to the Yuma supermarket.)

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- 1) Never assume anything
 - 2) Always double check and come prepared for anything and everything
 - 3) Never, Never rest on past Laurels.... every situation is a new experience and I need to be on my fresh toes.
 - 4) Always be willing to learn from my mistakes.....mistakes happen.....use the knowledge gained to improve for the future.