



Living

FRENCH-STYLE
DINNER PARTY

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The Cook's Atelier is a magical place (think epicurean perfection x French-y wine shop by way of Beaune) created by mother-daughter duo American expats, Marjorie Taylor and Kendall Smith Franchini. Their cooking philosophy: "a bundle of this and a handful of that." Oooof. So Tig.

"Marjorie and Kendall believe cooking instruction can be both classical and improvisational and their foods adapt classic Burgundian recipes to a more modern, lighter and healthier taste. Their mission is to introduce the world to the culture and foods of France's Burgundy region so cooks can bring them home wherever home is." My kind of girls. Which is why it seemed fitting to have these lovelies guide us through the step-by-step tips for an ever so chic dinner party. Take it away, mes amis!

FROM MARJORIE & KENDALL

Here at The Cook's Atelier we love to host a dinner party. Our atelier is lit with plenty of candlelight and we set our zinc topped French farm table with crystal stemware, fresh flowers and vintage French treasures. Our style of entertaining is never fussy, but we really believe that it is all about the details. For us, great entertaining is all about good food and wine, ambiance and sharing a meal around the table with family and friends. Whether it be for one of our winemaker dinners, seasonal suppers or our artisan food producer dinner series, we always love to begin the evening with a glass of chilled bubbly and the quintessential Burgundian classic, Gougères.

1: *Be sure to cook with seasonal ingredients.*

When entertaining, it is very important that you give yourself enough time to plan and organize the event so you can enjoy the process of putting together a lovely evening for your family and friends. It really begins with the menu. We suggest that you create your menu around seasonal, market-inspired ingredients. We feel that if you cook within the season, you simplify your work in the kitchen. Your focus will be on what is naturally available which makes the process easier and much more enjoyable.



2: *Arrange your menu in courses.*

In the classic French style, we like to arrange our menus in courses. We begin with an apéritif, a little nibble to set the tone of the menu, followed by a seasonal amuse-bouche, a little surprise from the kitchen. Our first course usually consists of either a warm or chilled soup, depending on the time of year, or a delicate salad using the ingredients available at the market. The main course is usually a meat or fish which we source from our favorite French Master butcher or poissonnière, fancy French sauces are optional. Dinner wouldn't be complete without the quintessential French cheese course followed by a simple fruit tart or soufflé. To guild the lily, you can always serve the coffee and tea course with mignardises such as, our favorite, classic madeleines.



3: *Don't forget the cheese and wine!*

When selecting your cheese for your cheese course, be sure to include a variety of textures, affinages, and include cow, goat and sheep varieties. Always serve cheese at room temperature with the appropriate cheese knife, a crusty baguette and a pedestal of fresh seasonal fruit. Remember, the cheese course in a French dinner party is always served after the main course.

We like to begin our dinner parties with a glass of chilled Champagne. Each course is accompanied by a specific wine pairing. When pairing wines with your menu, remember to improve the selection with each course. For instance, a young wine should always be served before an older vintage wine. Begin with white wines and lighter reds before opening that special bottle of Ladoix 1er cru (Pinot Noir). Decant older vintages when necessary to appreciate their nuances and characteristics.



4: *To create the ambiance, be sure to set your table with things that you love.*

Whether you are serving family-style, or in courses, it is important to determine how you want the event to "feel". Give some thought to your table setting and be sure to incorporate what you personally love. Don't save items for "special occasions". We feel you should surround yourself with the things you love every day. When setting the table, think lots of candlelight. We love how the crystal sparkles on the table when surrounded with candlelight. We like to incorporate some vintage items too, such as French linens, and flatware that we find at our local village brocantes. We also like to incorporate a touch of whimsy such as garden flowers from one of our favorite artisan food producers, Madame Lochet.



5: *Do as much as you can in advance, so you can enjoy the dinner party!*

Begin the process of planning your evening as early as possible and spread the various tasks over the course of several days. Menu planning and shopping can be done early in the week, but save the few important details, like flower sourcing or fresh bread, to the day of your dinner party. Set the table the night before and make sure your glassware is clean and sparkly. Make your dessert the morning of your dinner party and get as much as possible done regarding the necessary prep work before your guests arrive.

