

The Saturday Night



"Bringing great meals to the table"

BEFORE YOU BEGIN COOKING –

- MESSAGE FROM THE CHEF
- PREPARATION ESSENTIALS
- UTENSIL ESSENTIALS
- KEY FOOD NOTES

*In this section, you will find the buying guidelines, kitchen setup strategies, and organizational tips that will be of great benefit in helping you prepare the kinds of recipes found in **The Saturday Night Chef**.*

1. Begin by organizing your cards behind the appropriate tabs. The tops of the recipe cards are color-coded to match the colors of the 13 food category tabs. There are no cards for the 14th tab, “MY FAVORITE DRINKS.” Behind the 15th tab, “MISCELLANEOUS,” put the two “Products to Buy” and “Products to Avoid” cards. Although **The Saturday Night Chef** offers buying suggestions, you will probably discover additional products whose quality needs noting. The Measurements Conversion Chart can also be placed behind this tab, but a better place would be to tape it to a convenient reading location near the cooking action, such as the back of a cabinet door.
2. After purchasing items listed under *Utensil Essentials* (pages 8 - 11), buy only the cooking utensils and general supplies that you don’t have, but will need for a particular meal. To make the recipes in **The Saturday Night Chef**, very few supplies will be necessary beyond those listed in *Utensil Essentials*.
3. *Buy the best food ingredients at the best price:* Although they sometimes overlap, there are generally three distinct types of grocery stores:
 - a) *Limited Selection* stores – Generally offering the highest quality of fresh vegetables, meats, and fish but more expensive and more limited in variety of brands and selections of the kinds of food than the other two. (Examples: Whole Foods or local butchers)
 - b) *Boutique* stores – Less expensive than the *Limited Selection* stores. These stores very frequently but not always offer a higher quality of fresh vegetables, meats, and fish than *National Brand* stores although often at a slightly higher price. *Boutique* stores offer a greater variety of brands and selections than *Limited Selection* stores but less variety than *National Brand* stores. (Examples vary depending upon where you live.)
 - c) *National Brand* stores – Offering the most complete variety of food types and brands, often costing less but sometimes of lower quality than the above two, especially for certain types of food, such as fresh vegetables, meats and fish. (Examples: ShopRite, Stop & Shop)

The general rule, which cannot be emphasized strongly enough, is that the better the ingredients, the more exceptional the meal. This doesn’t mean you have to shop at Whole Foods for everything. Many quality items can be bought elsewhere for less. For one thing, *Limited Selection* stores like Whole Foods often do not have the range of products you will need that can be found at either the *Boutique* stores or *National Brand* stores. In certain areas, Whole Foods offers excellent meats and fish, but in other areas, better quality can be purchased at *Boutique* stores (and in rare cases, *National Brand* stores).

Generally, since *Boutique* stores are less expensive than *Limited Selection* stores, check the quality of vegetables, meat, and fish at a *Boutique* store first. For all your necessary national brand-name products, buy from the *National Brand* stores since you may obtain a real savings there, although this will often require that you shop at both a *Boutique* (or *Limited Selection*) store and a *National Brand* store during the same shopping cycle.

Always consult KEY FOOD NOTES (pages 12-17) before purchasing groceries. It is especially important to be familiar with the meat and seafood notes before shopping.

When buying ingredients for a recipe, try to avoid making changes to the ingredients. This applies both to the *type* of ingredient and the *brand* suggested. The success of the meal will depend upon using the listed ingredients.

(Special Note: Occasionally, **The Saturday Night Chef** will make purchasing recommendations for utensils, recipe ingredients, or sources of supplies. We do not commercially endorse products or sources. Our suggestions are based entirely upon the superior results we have experienced from these selections.)

4. *Typically, choose your main entrée first, then select the side dishes.* Follow these simple suggestions:
 - Keep the side dishes less demanding if your main entrée is complex or challenging or requires a lot of your attention as the meal

is nearing completion. However, where the main entrée requires less concentration for an extended time period—oven baking time, for example—you can upgrade your side dishes for complexity and elegance. Also, locating a willing sous chef is always an advantage and gives you (or the sous chef) the opportunity to spend additional time on the side dishes. As you continue to prepare the meals in **The Saturday Night Chef**, you will gain the experience that will allow you to better coordinate more complicated side dishes with the main entrée.

- A good general rule is not to cook two dishes in the same oven at the same time (even when the listed temperatures for both are the same), since the actual temperature will be lower than required. There are exceptions to this rule as mentioned in the recipes.
 - If the main entrée requires constant attention and prep, and the side dishes you have selected can be reheated at the very end of the meal without a loss of quality, completely prepare the side dish or dishes first, move on to the main entrée, then reheat the sides just before serving the dinner.
5. *Before you start preparing your meal, set up an environment that you will enjoy while you are cooking.* Set up a snack of crackers and cheese and an olive bar assortment or tortilla chips and salsa, along with a glass of wine or beer, if you find these enjoyable, and maybe a little music.

To create the dinners in **The Saturday Night Chef** you will need, at some point, the following hardware and general kitchen supplies. Durable, professional hardware is considered basic if you are serious about exceptional cooking. This is an investment that will last practically a lifetime and, because of its utility, will prove to be invaluable toward achieving your cooking goals. You should have most of these in your kitchen before beginning these recipes.

A. Hardware

1. **Pans:** Quality pans are the foundation to classic cooking. Examples are All-Clad®, Calphalon®, or Emeril Lagasse®. You will need the following sizes, **with covers that fit correctly:** (Measurements are the diameters across the top, from outer edge to outer edge.)

- 10" and 12" steel omelet pan (stainless steel is highly recommended)
- 10" and 12" steel sauté pan (anodized or stainless steel)
- 10" and 12" non-stick sauté pans
- 8" and 10" non-stick omelet pans
- 10" and 12" cast iron pans

Total pans – 10

2. **Stovetop pots:** These do not have to be as high in quality as pans. Mid-price range is acceptable. Where possible, buy pots with a thicker rather than thinner bottom. And try to buy pots with copper bottoms if they are about the same price. (Copper offers better heat dispersion.) You will need the following sizes:

- two 1 or 1 ½ quart steel pots

- 2 quart steel pot
- 4 quart steel pot
- two 8 to 10 quart steel pots with a heavy bottom (about 3/8" bottom thickness)

Total pots – 6

3. **Dutch oven:** This is a heavy, enameled cast iron pot that can go from the stovetop to the oven if need be. These are often used for braising, for example. You will need the following sizes:

- 4 or 5 quart, with cover
- 7 or 8 quart, with cover

Total Dutch ovens – 2

4. **Oven baking dishes** (either constructed with glass or pottery), jelly roll pans (baking sheets), and baking pans: You will need:

- 8" X 8" X 2" (high) glass or pottery baking dish
- 9" X 13" X 2" (high) glass or pottery baking dish
- 10" X 15" X 2" (high) glass or pottery baking dish
- 1 quart size, square or oval glass casserole dish with cover

KEY FOOD NOTES 1

The following notes pertain to various food categories and provide further information not found on the individual recipe cards. They give details that will add to the quality of the meal and its ease of preparation.

BEEF NOTES:

1. Buy most beef at *Limited Selection* or *Boutique* stores only (see PREPARATION ESSENTIALS).
2. Almost all beef sold in the retail market is graded prime (the highest grade), choice, or select (the lowest grade). For the beef recipes in **The Saturday Night Chef**, choice grade is almost always sufficient in flavor. Prime grade is a lot more expensive. Buy prime grade only if the time spent looking for choice grade is impractical and the available choice grade does not pass the test outlined in #3, below. Never buy select grade, a much lower quality grade. (Where in the rare case stores have a grade in between choice and prime, select this middle grade.)
3. Beef should be pink and well-marbled with fat streaks. Avoid beef that is solid red in color or very red throughout its surface. (This rule does not apply to beef chuck roast or bottom round that tends to be redder and less marbled.) Always avoid beef that is bloody or covered in blood. The presence of a lot of blood on the outside of the meat is a sign of poor quality. Cooking this type of beef in wine and/or spices will not improve the outcome. Never order beef from your butcher over the phone if you cannot inspect it before buying it.
4. Special note for *filet mignon*: Buy choice grade beef that you rate either *good* or *very good* in appearance, the rating dependent upon how pink and well-marbled the beef is. If your rating is only *okay* in appearance, look elsewhere. (Where choice beef does not look acceptable and prime beef does and the price is reasonable, buy prime.) *Limited Selection* and *Boutique* stores (see PREPARATION ESSENTIALS) give you the best chance of finding these better steaks. However, you can occasionally locate quality beef in a *National Brand* store.
5. Raw meat should be cooked or frozen within two days from the date of purchase. If it is to be cooked within two days, it should be kept in the colder, back section of the refrigerator.
6. For beef chuck roast – buy top blade, blade, shoulder, or flat iron chuck.
7. Bring beef to room temperature or close to room temperature before cooking it.

PORK, HAM, LAMB NOTES: (Realizing pork and ham are from the same source, they were separated for clarity.)

1. Most often the better grades of pork chops or roasts can be found only at *Limited Selection* or *Boutique* stores (see PREPARATION ESSENTIALS). However, you can occasionally locate a *National Brand* store selling pork that is very good in appearance.

2. The labeling of pork chops is confusing and sometimes misleading. There are 3 cuts of pork chops: *loin (blade)*, *rib*, and *sirloin (T-bone)*. Avoid the loin and sirloin chops for the recipes in **The Saturday Night Chef**. The most important words to look for are “rib chop.” Many times, this identification also has “center cut” along with it (“center cut, bone-in rib chops”). These are the chops to buy. Also avoid center cut rib pork chops that have approximately half as much meat or more on the other side of the bone from the primary chop side. This is a sign of a poor quality pork chop. And always buy chops that are pink in color (not a solid, darker red) and are **well-marbled with fat streaks**.
3. Bring pork to room temperature or close to room temperature before cooking.

CHICKEN NOTES:

1. Buy all chicken at *Limited Selection* or *Boutique* stores only (see PREPARATION ESSENTIALS).
2. Buy upscale brands such as Bell & Evans®, Murray’s®, Harvestland®, or the store brands from these kinds of specialty stores (Whole Foods chicken, for example). Avoid all others. Also, it is not necessary to buy organic if taste is your only consideration. Organic chicken is much more expensive and does not offer an improvement in taste.

3. When the recipe calls for a cut-up whole chicken (whether in 6, 8, or 10 pieces), either purchase cut-up chicken from the store display or have the store butcher prepare it.
4. For certain preparations, it is beneficial to know how much chicken meat can be expected from the entire chicken. A general rule is that about 60% (34 oz.) of a 3 ½ lb. chicken is meat (from the thighs, drumsticks, and breast). The rest is bones, skin, and wings.

SEAFOOD NOTES:

1. Buy seafood at *Limited Selection* or *Boutique* stores only (see PREPARATION ESSENTIALS).
2. When buying swordfish, avoid fish that has a large number of red sections (more than 15% of the entire fish). These areas will not cook up white (the final dish will not have a pleasing appearance) and generally are not as tasty. Also avoid swordfish with a yellow or pale cast, a sign that the fish is not fresh. Buy fish that is mostly white in appearance.

SIDE DISHES (SERVED WITH MAIN ENTRÉE) NOTES:

1. As mentioned in PREPARATION ESSENTIALS, vegetable side dishes should be kept simple if your main entrée is complex or challenging, requiring a lot of your attention, especially as the preparation is nearing completion. We have included recipes for side dishes. But a number of sides, listed below, do not require specific recipes and can be very simple to prepare and work well with the most elegant of dinners.



THE SATURDAY NIGHT CHEF
45 Prospect Street
Yonkers, New York 10701
888-388-2433 (914-274-8051)
www.thesaturdaynightchef.com
Email: info@tsnc.co

©2014 The Saturday Night Chef
All Rights Reserved