HOST THOUGHTFULLY 010

Shop Ahead. Check the Pantry.



PLAN FOR RIPENESS AND AVOID SURPRISES.

Shopping for a plated dinner means having ingredients ready to use on the day you serve them. Check the ingredients your presentation depends on while there is still time to replace them.

1 Open and inspect ingredients

Review the menu several days ahead. Open packages you already own, inspect the contents and check that you have enough, especially specialty ingredients that may be difficult to replace.

Why: Seeing a bag in the pantry does not tell you whether its contents are suitable to use.

2 Buy fruit for dinner day

A mango or avocado may need buying several days ahead to ripen. Check its condition as dinner approaches rather than assuming it will be ready on schedule.

Why: An unusable fruit changes both the flavor and the appearance of the planned plate.

3 Have a targeted backup

Buy a backup mango or avocado, ideally at a slightly different stage of ripeness, in case the chosen fruit is under- or overripe when cut.

Why: A spare of a critical ingredient gives you an option without preparing a second dinner.

A LESSON FROM MY KITCHEN

The paella I had not made in a year

I once planned to make paella after not making it for a year. When I opened the rice bag, there were moths inside.

The ingredient was not easily replaced

Paella rice is not something you can count on finding at the last minute. Having rice in the pantry had made me assume that part of the meal was covered.

What I should have done

I should have bought a fresh bag as backup, or better yet, opened and checked the rice days before dinner.

Apply the lesson to plating

If mango slices, avocado or a specialty ingredient are essential to the finished dish, check them early. Give yourself time to replace the ingredient or deliberately adjust the presentation.

THE PLATING MINDSET

Check what you have, buy for the required ripeness and keep a practical backup for the ingredients the plate depends on.