

Lesson Nine - Casseroles

Casseroles are usually quick to assemble and easy to transport making them a favorite at the family dinner table and at potluck dinners. They are also a great way for girls to learn to cook the main dish for dinner. While girls love to bake brownies, cookies and other goodies, it's vital that they learn how to make nutritious meals. Remember, what they learn today will equip them to cook for their own families in the future.

There are many great casserole recipes to choose from. No doubt you have some family favorites of your own. Feel free to use them with the girls, or choose from the recipes I've included in this chapter. I selected recipes that use only a few ingredients and are easy to assemble.

In this lesson, the girls will learn to:

- Prepare a casserole
- Plan a well-balanced dinner menu
- Identify dietary guidelines
- Set the table and use good manners

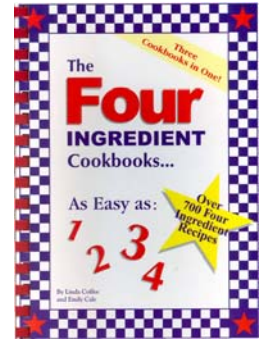
Review:

- Safe handling of raw meat (Lessons 6 & 7)

Give each girl a copy of:

- Before I Cook Casseroles
- Food Guide Pyramid
- Casserole Recipe(s)
- Table Setting Skill Page

For this lesson, you may want to make just one casserole if you have a small group, and give additional recipes to the girls to try later at home. If you have more than 2 or 3 girls, then consider trying several casserole recipes. I divided my class into three groups and each made a different casserole. Then we enjoyed a feast when everyone sampled each casserole!



The Four Ingredient Cookbooks are a great source of simple recipes. Some of the recipes in this section come from these books. Visit www.FourIngredientCookbook.com



The girls pat raw ground beef into a pan for Tater Tot Casserole.

Review the “Kitchen Safety” page. This should be in the girls’ notebooks (from Lesson One). Have extra copies on hand for anyone who needs one.

Consider using latex or plastic disposable **gloves** when handling **raw meat**. You can purchase them inexpensively in the first aid section of Wal-Mart and other stores. Many girls have never worked with raw meat and don’t want to touch it with their bare hands! Gloves help overcome their squeamishness and, at the same time, keep raw meat from getting under their fingernails. Used gloves should be immediately thrown away to prevent spreading bacteria to other kitchen surfaces. Wash hands before, and after, handling raw meat.

Some casseroles, like a potpie, are **complete meals**. But many casseroles do not include vegetables and do not meet all the family’s nutritional needs. In either case, it’s nice to add something to round out the meal. It could be an easy salad or some canned fruit, or it could be something that takes a little planning like a gelatin mold, or fresh coleslaw. Since most casseroles are quick to assemble, they free up time to prepare other additions to the meal.

Meal planning is essential to good health and nutrition. It’s a sad fact that in our fast-food world, high cholesterol, Type II diabetes, high blood pressure and the incidence of many other ills is soaring. Most can be prevented or controlled with proper nutrition. While we are often willing to invest money on our health, we don’t invest much time. Time spent planning healthy family meals is time well spent!

Special Touches

Simple things can turn plain dishes into something special. Mix a few herbs into soft butter or margarine & add that to veggies.

Whip some honey or jam into butter or margarine. It’s good on bread, fresh fruit and many veggies.

Add a light sprinkling of nuts, sunflower seeds or Parmesan cheese to veggies.

The **student page**, “**Before I Cook Casseroles**”, introduces meal planning basics. The **Food Guide Pyramid** gives more details and is used by dieticians to help people plan their meals. Anyone with a special medical condition should consult their doctor. It’s important to know the girls in your group and whether any have diabetes, food allergies or any other condition. If so, consult with their mother and make the necessary adjustments.

An **updated Food Guide Pyramid** (2005) is now available. You will find it in the FCH Lessons Index page. I find the older version included here on page 7 to be easier to read, but the new version is more colorful. Print both and decide which works best for you.

Get creative; meal planning can be fun! Go for lots of colors and a variety of textures in the foods you choose for each meal. In the chapters on vegetables and fruit, you’ll find ideas for cute “critters” to make and pretty garnishes. Kids love to play with their food, and here’s a way to channel that creativity.

After reading “Before I Cook Casseroles”, the girls are asked to **write their own menu**. Two sample menus are given to illustrate well-balanced meals. Give the girls some paper. Ask them to list as many of their favorite foods as they can. Besides main dishes, have them include individual foods. They can make one long list, or categorize them – fruit, veggies, dairy products, and so on.

On another sheet of paper, have them write down one favorite main dish and then, from their list, add vegetables, fruit or whatever else they need to make a complete meal. Mix and match. If you want spaghetti this week with salad and bread sticks, write a different menu to go with spaghetti the next time you serve it. Ask each girl to share one of her menus with the group. It’s a great way to get inspiration for new meal ideas!

What you’ll need for this lesson:

BBQ Cups (per recipe)
1 pound lean ground beef
½ Cup BBQ sauce
1 can refrigerator biscuits (10-12 count)
¾ Cup grated cheddar cheese
Muffin Pan with 12 holes
Frying Pan
Large Spoon to cook meat
Measuring Cup

For all recipes:
Latex or plastic disposable gloves
Hot Pads
Trivets or folded towels for hot dishes
Kitchen Timer

For Serving:
Serving utensils
Plates
Knives, forks, spoons
Napkins
Salt & pepper

Busy Day Chicken (per recipe)
2-3 pounds of chicken pieces (favorite pieces or one cut-up chicken)
1 Cup white long-grain rice, uncooked
1 pkg. Dry onion soup mix (1 envelope from a 2 oz. box)
1 can cream of celery soup (regular or reduced fat)
Shortening or cooking spray to grease pan
9” x 13” pan or large casserole dish
Foil or lid to cover pan
Measuring Cup
Whisk

Cheeseburger Pie (per recipe)

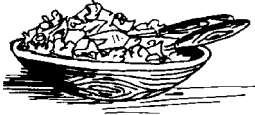
1 pound ground beef
1 onion
1 Cup shredded Cheddar cheese (4 ozs.)
½ Cup Bisquick ® Baking Mix
1 Cup milk
2 eggs
Salt
Shortening or cooking spray to grease pie plate
9” pie plate
Frying Pan
Cutting Board
Sharp Knife to chop onion
Large Spoon to cook meat
Measuring Spoons
Liquid Measuring Cup
Dry Measuring Cups
Mixing Bowl
Small Bowl to crack eggs

Tater Tot Casserole (per recipe)

2 pounds extra lean ground beef
1 can cream of mushroom soup (regular or reduced fat)
1 Cup grated cheddar cheese
1 (2 pound) package frozen tater tots
Shortening or cooking spray to grease pan
9” x 13” pan
Large Spoon or rubber spatula to spread soup
Measuring Cup
Foil or cover for pan

Let's plan a menu using **Busy Day Chicken** for our main dish. Look at the recipe. Imagine how it will look and taste once you've cooked it. There will be pieces of chicken on top of rice, baked with a creamy soup mixture. You have: rice as a starch, chicken as your protein, and the soup provides fats. Everything is hot, fairly soft in texture, and all light in color.

What's missing? There are no vegetables or fruit. The meal needs some variety in texture, temperature and color. Vegetables and fruit can add all three!



A **colorful salad** would be a great accompaniment to this casserole. It can be cold, crispy and loaded with different colors. Plain iceberg lettuce with dressing isn't quite enough here. Try Romaine and other types of lettuce. Think of all the other things you see at a restaurant salad bar. Add sliced carrots, or arrange baby carrots around the edge of the bowl. Add sliced celery, green, red or yellow bell peppers, broccoli or cauliflower florets, raisins or sunflower seeds.

Perhaps you'd prefer a **cooked vegetable**. Green beans, peas, carrots or broccoli would add color to the meal. You can buy frozen mixed vegetables, or create a combination of your own favorites. If you choose cooked vegetables, everything in the meal so far, is hot. You could add some crispy apple slices, or cold canned fruit.

Let's not forget a **beverage**. Milk is a good choice because it provides calcium your bones need to grow strong. Avoid soda and sweetened drinks at meals as these fill you up with sugar without giving you any nutrients. That's why they are called "empty calories". If you can't drink milk, fruit juice could be an alternative.

A yummy **dessert** is a nice ending to your meal, but it is not essential. Keep it simple so you have time, and money, to prepare the main dish.

Here are two possible menus. On another sheet of paper, write your own that you think your family would enjoy.

Dinner Menu I

Busy Day Chicken

Cooked Green Beans with
Butter and Sliced Almonds

Orange Jello mold with
Mandarin Oranges

Milk

Oatmeal Cookies

Dinner Menu II

Busy Day Chicken

Cooked Mixed Vegetables

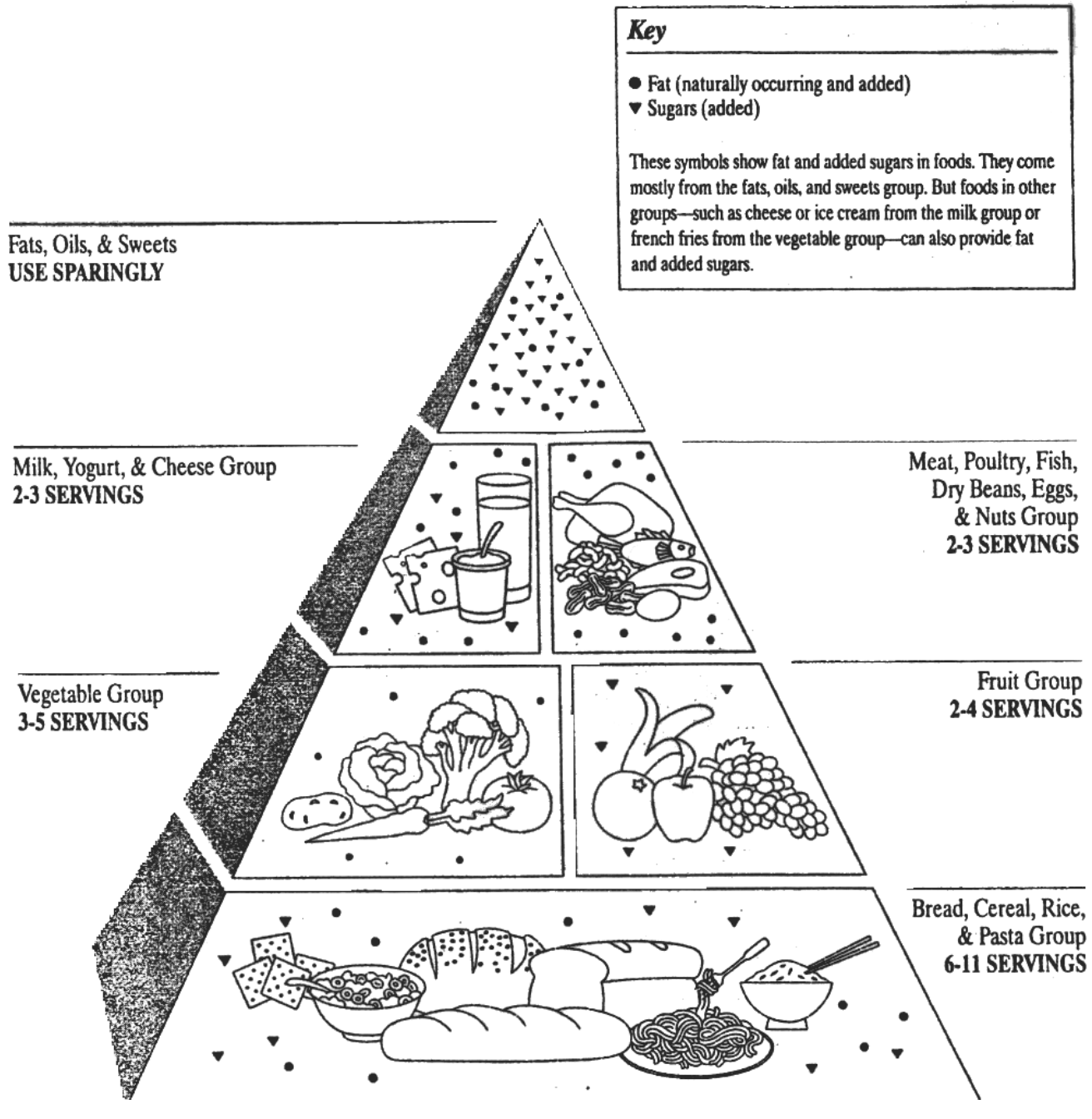
Tossed Salad

Milk

Cinnamon Applesauce

Name:

The Food Guide Pyramid: A Guide to Daily Food Choices



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture,
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

The Food Guide Pyramid is an outline of what to eat each day based on dietary guidelines. It's not a rigid prescription, but a general guide that lets you choose a healthful diet that's right for you.

The Pyramid calls for eating a variety of foods to get the nutrients you need each day and, at the same time, the right amount of calories to maintain healthy weight. It shows a range of servings for each major food group. The number of servings that are right for you depends on your age, size, sex and how active you are. Almost everyone should have at least the lowest number of servings in each range. For example, the bread group range is 6 – 11 servings. Many women and older adults would only need 6 servings. Children, teen girls, active women and most men need 9 servings, while teen boys and active men need 11 servings.

What equals one serving?

Bread, Cereal,

Rice & Pasta

1 slice of bread
1 ounce ready-to-eat cereal
1/2 Cup cooked cereal, rice or pasta

Vegetables

1 Cup raw leafy vegetables
1/2 Cup of cooked veggies,
or raw, chopped veggies
3/4 Cup of vegetable juice

Fruit

1 medium piece of fruit or melon wedge
1/2 Cup chopped, cooked or canned fruit
1/4 Cup dried fruit
3/4 Cup of fruit juice (100% juice)

Meat, Poultry, Fish

Dry Beans, Eggs, Nuts

1 egg
2 1/2 -3 ounces of cooked lean meat,
poultry, or fish
1/2 Cup cooked dry beans

Milk, Yogurt, Cheese

1 Cup of milk or yogurt
1 1/2 ounces of natural cheese
2 ounces of processed cheese

Fats, Oils & Sweets

Eat sparingly from this group

When you **plan meals** include a variety of foods from all five of the major food groups. For good health, you need them all – every day!

Name:

BBQ Cups

Ingredients:

- 1 pound lean ground beef
- 1/2 Cup barbeque sauce
- 1 can refrigerator biscuits (10 – 12 count)
- 3/4 Cup grated cheddar cheese



Sprinkle with cheese and bake.

Method:

Yield: Serves 4 – 5

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Brown the **ground beef**, stirring to break up the meat. Cook meat thoroughly and then drain it in a colander set in the sink (or in another pan to catch the juices). Discard the juices.
3. Return the drained meat to the pan. Add **barbeque sauce**. Stir and set aside.
4. Place each **biscuit** in an ungreased muffin cup, pressing dough up the sides of the cups.
5. Spoon meat mixture into cups. Sprinkle with **cheese**.
6. Bake 12 minutes or until biscuits are golden brown.

Variation: Pizza cups: Substitute 1/2 Cup of pizza sauce for the barbecue sauce.

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We prepare Busy Day
Chicken together.

Busy Day Chicken

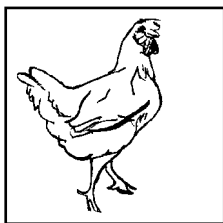
Ingredients:

- 2 – 3 pounds of chicken pieces
- 1 Cup white long-grain rice, uncooked
- 1 pkg. dry onion soup mix (1 envelope from 2 oz. box)
- 1 can cream of celery soup (regular or reduced fat)

Method:

Yield: Serves 4

1. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Grease a 9” x 13” pan or a large casserole dish.
2. Spread **uncooked rice** in casserole or pan.
3. Place **chicken** on top in a single layer.
4. Sprinkle with **dry onion soup**.
5. Mix **cream of celery soup** with 2 cans of **water**. Whisk to combine. Pour over all.
6. Cover and bake 1 – 1 ½ hours, until rice has absorbed the liquid and chicken is done.



Bone-in chicken pieces are done when the temperature, in the thickest part of the meat, reaches **170 degrees**.

If you do not have a meat thermometer, be sure juices run clear when the thickest chicken piece is cut.

Notes:

Avoid quick-cooking rice as it is not needed in this type of recipe, and may turn “mushy” when it bakes this long.

Cream of chicken or cream of mushroom soup may be substituted for cream of celery, if desired.

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Name:

Impossibly Easy Cheeseburger Pie

Ingredients:

1 pound ground beef
1 large onion, chopped (1 Cup)
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 Cup shredded Cheddar cheese (4 ounces)
½ Cup Original Bisquick® baking mix
1 Cup milk
2 eggs



Method:

Yield: Serves 6

1. Heat oven to 400 degrees. Grease a 9-inch pie plate. Cook **beef** and **onion** until beef is brown; drain. Spread in pie plate; sprinkle with **salt** and **cheese**.
2. Stir **remaining ingredients** until blended. Pour into pie plate.
3. Bake about 25 minutes or until knife inserted in center comes out clean. Cool 5 minutes.

Note: Some people do not like onion. The amount can be decreased, or you may omit it.

High Altitude Directions (3500 – 6500 ft.): Bake 30-35 minutes.

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Recipe reprinted from www.bisquick.com. For more great recipes, visit www.bettycrocker.com.



The girls spread the soup over the meat as they prepare Tater Tot Casserole.

Tater Tot Casserole

Ingredients:

- 2 pounds extra lean ground beef
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup (regular or reduced-fat)
- 1 Cup grated cheddar cheese
- 1 (2 pound) package frozen tater tots

Method:

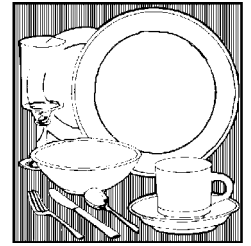
Yield: Serves 8

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 9" x 13" pan.
2. Pat the **ground beef** evenly in the bottom of the pan.
3. Spread **soup** (undiluted) over meat.
4. Sprinkle with **grated cheese**.
5. Top with **tater tots**.
6. Cover and bake 45 minutes. Uncover and bake 15 minutes longer.

Note: Any cream soup may be used instead of cream of mushroom. Cream of chicken soup is a delicious alternative.

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Extending the Lesson ... Table Setting and Table Manners



A nicely set table enhances any meal. It need not be fancy, and expensive dishes are not required. Today meals are too often eaten on the run from fast food bags! Is it any wonder that children sometimes lack basic table manners and don't know how to set the table?

Give the girls a copy of "Table Setting Tips" Skill Page (next page) and read it together. Put out silverware and dishes and have the girls practice a basic table setting. If you have cloth napkins, napkin rings, china or fine silver, show it to the girls. It will help them feel more at ease when they encounter these things in a restaurant.

Talk to the girls about good table manners or etiquette. Ask them to describe some manners they already know. It is not necessary to memorize a long list of Do's and Don'ts. The best way to learn good manners is to practice them until they are second nature.

When you get right down to it, the basis for all good manners is love. In I Corinthians 13:4 & 5 we read: "Love is patient, love is kind. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking." (NIV) We show love for others by being polite to them and using good manners.

We all eat every day. Most of the time, we eat with other people. Explain to the girls that our behavior at the table should never draw attention to ourselves. It is difficult to enjoy a meal when someone is smacking their lips as they eat, or chewing food with their mouth open, or stuffing their mouth with food until they resemble a chipmunk! Swinging our leg, kicking the table, rocking back in our chair, or making noises – all of these things are distracting. We should be careful to avoid these annoying habits.

A good way to avoid bad habits is to be aware of how we look to others at the table. Girls need not be self-conscious, but it is helpful to pay attention to these basics:

Hands and nails should be clean and washed just prior to eating.
Speak softly and do not monopolize the conversation.
Keep mealtime conversation as pleasant as possible; don't argue!
Be courteous. Say "please" and "thank you".
Chew with your mouth closed. Talk only after you have swallowed.
Dress appropriately and wear clean clothes to the table.
Learn to use utensils and serving pieces correctly.
Be sure to thank the person who prepared the meal.

Mealtime can be pleasurable with an attractive table and manners to match!

Learn more about good manners in all types of settings from ~

**"A Little Book of
Manners: Courtesy &
Kindness for Young
Ladies"
by Emilie Barnes.**

Check your bookstore or go to:
www.emiliebarnes.com

Table Setting Tips

When you take the time to prepare a meal, you will want to serve it attractively. For most family meals, a simple, informal table setting is fine: A plate, glass, knife, fork, spoon and a napkin are all that is needed. For special occasions however, or when the various foods to be served cannot all fit on one plate, you may need to set out other dishes and utensils.

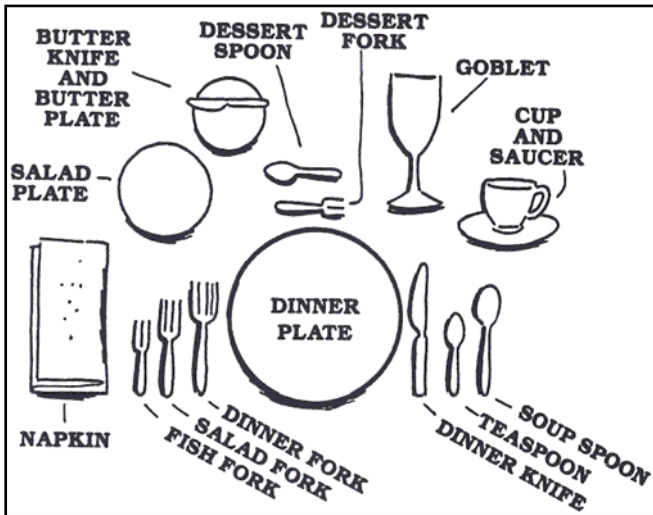
Restaurants often use more extensive table settings, so it's helpful to know how to use the various dishes and utensils. Study the two diagrams below and you will understand table settings whether at home or a restaurant.

A Basic Table Setting

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| A. Salad Plate | F. Knife |
| B. Napkin | G. Teaspoon |
| C. Salad Fork | H. Soup Spoon |
| D. Dinner Fork | I. Water Glass |
| E. Dinner Plate | J. Cup and Saucer |



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A Formal Table Setting

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What Do I Use First?

Silverware is used from the outside in. Start with the fork or spoon farthest from the plate. Any time you're not sure what to do, watch the hostess and follow her example. Oops! If you use the wrong utensil, just continue using it for that course.

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