

THE PUDDING

If you only make one pudding, it has to be... **Tiramisù**

If there's one dinner party dish to fall back on time and time again, it's tiramisù. Franco's on Jermyn Street is one of the oldest Italian restaurants in London, and it's been serving tiramisù since 1945. Its Head Chef Stefano Turconi shares his recipe.

Ingredients: 400g mascarpone, 52g egg yolk, 160g whipped double cream, 80g sugar, 24ml water, 16ml fortified wine, Savoiardi biscuits soaked in espresso

Method: Boil the sugar in the water until it reaches 121 degrees. Whisk together the egg yolk, slowly adding the sugar water. Add the mascarpone and the wine, and gently fold in the double cream. Layer the soaked Savoiardi biscuits with half the mousse, and repeat. Finish with a sprinkle of cocoa powder on top.

Tips: Try not to over whip the mascarpone or it will become flat; you want a light, airy mix. Ensure the biscuits are soaked all the way through, but not disintegrated. And always prepare the tiramisù a day in advance – it tastes better the next day.



THE ATMOSPHERE

Create a killer playlist

Mikey Vettraino, founder of MAV Music, has been creating playlists for years. Here's his seven top tips



1. Testing, one, two. If you're taking the music seriously, check all your speakers are working beforehand. Now we all play music through Bluetooth speakers, it's wise to make sure everything works so the music doesn't crash out. Your home is no different to a nightclub, and you can have different playlists in different rooms.

2. The more the merrier. One playlist can't cover all the moods for a dinner party. You need an arrival playlist to help people loosen up and relax; a dinner playlist where the volume's at a level where people can converse; an after-dinner playlist for when the espresso martinis are out; and a late-night playlist for the after-party.

3. Keep things fresh. Where your dinner party is and who it's for both have an impact on the music you choose. A barbecue on your terrace needs something different to a formal meal in the dining room, and entertaining your parents is different to hosting friends. In summer you want an upbeat playlist, with lyrics and sounds that feel appropriate, whereas at Christmas the vibe is different. Take the time to create something bespoke every time.

4. Positive energy. Whenever we're creating soundtracks, we avoid aggressive music; we stick to the clean versions of songs, and, of course, skip out anything with negative lyrics towards women or minority groups.

5. Conversation starters. Classic songs that have been remixed or covered in an interesting way often get an 'Oh my God, I love this' reaction. So play rare grooves like the Diana Ross song *My House*. Dusting off an old jam sometimes gets people really excited in a 'I haven't heard this song in 20 years' kind of way, which can get the conversation flowing.

6. Be original, be you. Don't default to a Hôtel Costes compilation because it's safe. If people come in and hear a boring old Café Del Mar compilation, their mind is off the music. But if they get hit with a good one sipping a cocktail at arrival time, they're more tuned in. And don't be afraid to put your own records on – if you like them, your friends probably will, too.

7. All killer, no filler. Cherry-pick every song and don't be tempted to put any fillers in there. If you don't have enough songs, look harder. Don't just play it safe. Your playlist should have some tracks your guests know, but also you want them Shazaming songs so that they go home full of great food, and with the gift of a new track to add to their own catalogue.

Mikey Vettraino makes unforgettable music experiences for hotels, bars, members' clubs and restaurants

THE TABLE



Cutlery or clutter?

Patrick Powell, Head Chef at Allegra, doesn't see the need for a fish fork or a soup spoon

Essentially, I like it when you pick up an object and it feels nice. At Allegra, that means paying attention to little things, like how a glass of water feels, or a napkin, and having well-balanced cutlery. You want it to feel nice but not to distract you from the food.

In the restaurant we've got starter- and mains-sized knives and forks – nothing else. We use the same spoons for dessert as we do for soup, and that's pretty much it. We use the same glasses, whether we're drinking white or red wine, and we have flutes for serving champagne.

But when I'm entertaining at home, I don't bother. The main thing is good conversation and good food. I like a table to be full of dishes and if you have lots of other stuff – cutlery, glasses, extra plates – there's less space for food and more room for worrying about what you're meant to eat and how.

At Allegra we kept the restaurant's colours neutral because it's people who bring the colour with their clothes. Fancy plates and glasses aren't important to us. Cutlery and crockery are just a vessel for what's on them, to be honest. Lots of cutlery on a table can seem too formal, and it makes people feel nervous about eating – 'am I doing it right?' – rather than focusing on the food. I hate any kind of mad cutlery, like black or gold handles, I hate anything square on a table, and I hate chunky glasses. The colour and the conversation should be about the food and the drink. Everything else is a distraction.

THE COFFEE

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Ratio Eight
Walnut coffee maker
£625, selfridges.com



BI.DU.HAEV
Oblik pour-over coffee stand
£950, selfridges.com



Alessi
Ossidiana espresso coffee maker
£68, alessi.com



Sage
Barista Express coffee machine
£455, johnlewis.com