

COOKING PARTY CARDS

THE GAME FOR AMATEUR CHEFS



RULE BOOK

v4.01 - September 27, 2012

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1. INTRODUCTION

Cooking Party Cards is a light social game for food lovers, child cooks, aspiring chefs, and fans of kitchen disasters. Players will be creating unique dishes, sitting in judgment on your fellow players, and maybe even preparing the winning meals to eat.

Number of Players: 1-20 (team play for more than 5 or 6 players, one and two-player games use non-standard rules). **Best With:** 3-6 players;

Ages: 7 and up. **Time:** 10 minutes per player (basic game).

Equipment: 16 Assignment cards, 140 full-color Ingredient cards, 5 judging point chips (5,10,25,50,100).

Overview

Cooking Party Cards is a very simple game where players take turns as judges and chefs.

In each round one player will be the judge. When playing as a judge, a player chooses one “Assignment card” and reads the cooking assignment to the other players, who take on the role of “Chefs”.

When playing as a Chef, a player follows any special rules of the assignment to assemble a hand of “Ingredient” cards and then uses these cards to invent a food dish to present to the judge.

Some example assignments:

- “Chef’s Choice”: Chefs prepare a single dish of their choice. Judge deals each Chef 7 cards; they may trade in up to 3; they must use at least 4.
- “Sabotage”: Judge deals each chef 7 cards and instructs each Chef to pass one card to the player clockwise. Chefs must use the card passed to them in their final dish. After exchanging cards with their neighbors, Chefs may trade in up to 3 and must use at least 4.
- “Special Ingredient”: Judge chooses a Special Ingredient of their choice from the Ingredient deck and places it face up on the table, and deals each Chef 7 cards; they may trade in up to 3; they must use at least 3, in addition to the Special Ingredient.
- “Distasteful Dish”: Judge deal each Chef 7 cards; they may trade in up to 3; they must use exactly 4 cards to create the worst tasting dish they can think of.

After the Chefs create their dishes, they take turn describing them to the judge, who chooses how to divide up points to the chefs based on the quality of their creations.

The role of judge then rotates for the next round. After all players have had a chance to play the role of judge, scores from each round are tallied up; the winner is the player with the most total points over all rounds.

Target Audience

Young children: No actual cooking skills are required to enjoy the game; they just need to bring their taste buds. The game is a great way to introduce kids to new ingredients.

Serious cooks: Perfect for those who want to show off their culinary knowledge and be creatively inspired to create new dishes and flavor combination..

Perfect for social gatherings and parties – have your guests compete to come up with and then prepare and present never-seen-before dishes.

2. BOX CONTENTS

Your **Cooking Party Cards** game box should come with the following pieces*:

- This Rule Book
- Ingredient Guide Book and Cooking Glossary
- Over 150 Full Color Ingredient Cards
- Over 25 Chef Assignment Cards
- Common Pantry Ingredient Sheet [Salt, Pepper, Oil, Butter, Flour, Sugar, Soy Sauce, Vanilla]
- Judges Award Chips (denominations: 5,10,25,50,100)
- Shopping List Sheet

*See our website for expansions and free downloadable content.



3. THE BASIC GAME

3.1. Overview and Objective

Play will proceed in rounds; on each round one player will be the judge and the other players will create dishes. At the end of each round, the judge will award points based on what dishes they prefer. After every player has had an opportunity to be a judge, the game ends and whoever has received the most points wins.

Note: This is only the basic game – you'll find more advanced variations later in the rule book.

Note: In the basic game you will ignore the category symbols and numbers on the bottom left of each card.

3.2. Setup

- Shuffle all ingredient cards and place them in a face down Ingredient draw deck.
- Shuffle the Chef Assignment cards and place them in a face up Assignment deck.
- Place the Common Pantry Ingredient Sheet (or cards) and the Ingredient Glossary booklet on the table for all players to consult.
- You will also need a sheet of paper and a pen to keep track of scores.
- Choose one player to be the judge for the first round (whoever has the most experience with the game).

3.3. Play a Round

At the start of a round, the judge takes control of the Ingredient and Assignment card decks and all judging award chips. All other players are chefs for this round.

3.3.1. Judge Chooses an Assignment card and Announces Criteria for the Round

The judge looks through the deck of Assignment cards and chooses one of their choice. The judge then reads the assignment to the other players, known as Chef Players for the remainder of the round. The judge explains what their criteria for judging will be, and any special instructions or rule modifications. Some sample Chef Assignment cards are:

- "Chef's Choice": Chefs prepare a single dish of their choice. Judge deals each Chef 7 cards; they may trade in up to 3; they must use at least 4.
- "Sabotage": Judge deals each chef 7 cards and instructs each Chef to pass one card to the player clockwise. Chefs must use the card passed to them in their final dish. After exchanging cards with their neighbors, Chefs may trade in up to 3 and must use at least 4.
- "Special Ingredient": Judge chooses a Special Ingredient of their choice from the Ingredient deck and places it face up on the table, and deals each Chef 7 cards; they may trade in up to 3; they must use at least 3, in addition to the Special Ingredient.
- "Distasteful Dish": Judge deal each Chef 7 cards; they may trade in up to 3; they must use exactly 4 cards to create the worst tasting dish they can think of.

In addition to the text on the Assignment card, the judge may specify additional criteria such as:

“I will reward unique flavors” or “Taste matters most to me.”

An Assignment card usually specifies:

- What kind of dish(es) the chef players must create.
- How many Ingredient cards will be initially dealt to each chef player.
- How many Ingredient cards the chef players may trade in.
- The minimum and maximum Ingredient cards the chef players must use when creating their dish.

But Assignment cards may occasionally specify more elaborate assignments that change the nature of the round. Some Assignment cards are specialized for team play or different kinds of groups.

NOTE: Once you become familiar with the game you may choose not to play with the Assignment cards, and simply allow each judge to invent their own rules for each round.

3.3.2. Judge Deals Initial Cards

The judge follows the instructions on the Assignment card and deals out initial cards face down to each chef player from the ingredient draw deck. The chef players take the cards into their hands without showing them to other players. If the judge runs out of ingredient cards, the judge should reshuffle the discarded ingredient cards from previous rounds as the new ingredient draw deck and continue dealing.

For a typical Assignment, each chef player will be dealt **[7]** initial cards.

3.3.3. Players Exchange Cards

Each chef player may now be allowed to trade in Ingredients, based on the Assignment card rules. Typically, they are allowed to choose up to 3 cards to trade in to the judge. They do so by handing them to the judge face down, and are given replacement cards (face down) from the judge. Cards received in this way by the judge are placed in a DISCARD pile, face down.

3.3.4. Players Plan Dishes and Discard Ingredients

Each chef player should now plan out their dish in their mind, taking into consideration the judge's previously announced criteria.

The Assignment card will specify the minimum and maximum number of Ingredients that must be used in the dishes – a typical requirement would be that every dish must include at least **[4]** ingredient cards, but may include more.

Ingredients that a chef player will not use must now be discarded face down to the judge.

There are certain basic ingredients that are considered available to all players at all times; these ingredients can be found on the Common Ingredient Pantry sheet/cards, which should be left on the table during game play. These include things like [Salt, Pepper, Oil, Butter, Flour, Sugar, etc.]. Note that the use of these ingredients does not count toward the 4 card minimum.

3.3.5. Players Present Dishes

After all chef players have discarded any ingredients they will not be using, the judge will call on each chef, one at a time, to present their dishes. The judge decides in what order to call players.

When a player is called on by the judge to present their dish, they should do so in a manner that will win over the judge. That is, they should present their dishes with confidence, placing one card on the table at a time, face up, and describing how the ingredient will be integrated into the dish. They may even give their dish a name.

Chef players should try to paint a compelling picture of the dish as they unveil each ingredient, and make the case for why their dish would taste and look good. This stage is the heart of the game.

Chef players are free to make any ingredient more specific than an ingredient card, so for example if an ingredient card says simply “Cheese”, the chef can (and should) specify a specific cheese when they play the card; if the ingredient card says “Chicken” the chef player should describe how the chicken is cooked and plated (presented).

If the judge feels that a player is taking too long to describe their dish, the judge may tell the chef to speed it up. The judge may allow a certain amount of critiquing or negative comments from the other chefs. The judge is always the final decider and boss during presentations. The judge may also ask questions of clarification from the chef, such as:

“How would you prepare the chicken?”

or “How would you present the plate?”

However, the judge should refrain from commenting on how much they like or dislike the dish at this point.

After a player has presented their dish and unveiled their ingredients, the judge will call on the next chef player of their choice to present their dish, until all chef players have presented their dishes.

3.3.6. Judging of Dishes and Awarding of Points

After all chef players have presented their dishes, it's time for the judge to critique them and award points to the players.

The judge should, in any order they want, discuss each chef player's dish – describing what they liked and didn't like.

After the judge has finished critiquing each chef player's dish, the judge assigns the Judging Award Chips to players as they see fit. All award chips must be distributed – but the judge can give them out in any combination. They can give all chips to one chef, or give every chef a few chips. Note that different chips are worth different points, as indicated on the chips.

3.3.7. End of Round

After the judge has distributed the Judge Award Chips, record these points on the score sheet so that you keep a running total for each player over the course of the game. Note that only chef players receive points in a round.

After points are recorded, discard all used ingredient cards from the round to the discard pile (do not shuffle them back into the ingredient draw deck!).

The role of judge rotates clockwise. The Judge from the previous round should pass the unused ingredient draw deck to the next judge, who should also collect all Judge Award Chips in preparation for judging.

Continue playing rounds until all players have had a chance at playing the role of judge (go around the table multiple times for a longer game).

3.4. End of Game

After all players have played the role of judge the same number of times, sum up each player's score; whoever has the most total points wins.

4. SAMPLE ROUND

Let's walk through a sample round of a 3-player game, so you can get the feel for how the game is played. Our three players are: **Cody**, **Lisa**, and **Ellen**.

Cody is chosen as the first Judge. To begin the first round, he takes the complete deck of Ingredient Cards, the Assignment Deck, and all five Judge Award Chips (marked with point values of 5,10,25,50,and 100).

Cody looks through the Chef Assignment deck, chooses a card he likes, and reads the judging assignment on that card:

“For this round, each chef must create a single dish of their choice. Each chef will receive 7 cards, may trade in up to 3, and must include at least 4 in their dish.”

Cody then adds some personal guidance to chefs:

“I am especially interested in seeing some unique flavor combinations. I'd also like you to impress me with your presentation. And I will penalize dishes that are overly complicated and have too many ingredients.”

Cody then deals 7 ingredient cards face down to each other player (**Lisa** and **Ellen**, the Chefs for this round), who take the cards into their hands and examine them.

Lisa receives the following cards: **Lobster, Lavender, Cucumber, Popcorn, Chocolate, Parsley, Tofu**.

Ellen receives the following cards: **Chicken, Mushrooms, Thyme, Coffee, Pickles, Potatoes, Steak**.

Lisa decides that she will probably be making a main course with **Lobster** and **Lavender**; she's not particularly interested in her other 5 ingredients, but she cannot trade in more than 3 cards, so she trades in the **Popcorn, Chocolate**, and **Tofu** cards, face down, to **Cody**, who gives her 3 new cards in return (face down as always). She receives the following new cards: **Peaches, Apples, Juice**.

Ellen isn't sure what she's going to make, but knows that she doesn't want to use the **Pickles, Potatoes**, or **Steak**, so she trades in those cards and receives three replacements: **Carrots, Pasta**, and **Cheese**.

The chef players now have their final hand of cards, and must each make a dish with them, using no fewer than 4 ingredient cards.

After some minutes spent cogitating, **Lisa** decides what she will make for her dish, and discards the cards that she will not be using, face down, to the judge. She discards: **Apples, Parsley, Juice**, leaving her with the following ingredients she must use in her dish: **Lobster, Lavender, Cucumber, Peaches**.

Ellen comes up with a dish in her mind, and discards: **Carrots** and **Coffee**, leaving her with: **Chicken, Mushrooms, Thyme, Pasta, Cheese**.

With all Chef players having discarded the ingredients they will not be using in their dishes, **Cody** is ready for the Chef's to describe their dishes. **Cody** asks **Lisa** to describe her dish first.

Lisa describes her dish as follows:

*“My dish is an elegant main course. I begin by lightly sauteing some shelled **Lobster** pieces in Butter, Salt and Pepper”. She places the Lobster card on the table face up. Note: She can use the Butter, Salt, and Pepper from the common ingredients sheet available to all players.*

"In a separate pan, I fry up some thinly sliced **Peaches** in a little bit of Butter and sugar, with just a hint of **Lavender** which will add a subtle exotic fragrance." With that, she plays the **Peaches** and **Lavender** cards face up in front of her.

"To present (plate) the dish, I will arrange a circle of very thinly sliced (cold) **Cucumbers** around the plate, seasoned only with Salt and Pepper, and place the lobster in the center, covered with the sliced peaches as a kind of sauce." With that she places the **Cucumber** card as her final dish ingredient.

"This is a very elegant and subtle dish – combining the rich flavor of the Lobster and Peaches, with the simple refreshment of the cold and barely seasoned Cucumber slices."

Cody, the judge, has no questions about **Lisa's** dish, and so asks **Ellen** to describe her dish next.

Ellen describes her dish as follows:

"I am preparing an appetizer. I begin with some roasted **Chicken** breast, and then cut the chicken into thin strips." She places the **Chicken** card face up in front of her.

"I will fry up some sliced Portabella **Mushrooms** with Salt and Pepper and lots of **Thyme**, to give it a kind of earthy flavor and bring out the natural flavor of the Mushrooms", she places the **Mushroom** and **Thyme** cards face up in front of her.

"I will cook some wide Lasagne **noodles**", she places the **Pasta** card face up in front of her.

"Then I will prepare little appetizer rolls, by combining a spoonful of mushrooms and some sliced chicken, and wrapping it up inside a Lasagne noodle, and topping it with some **Parmesan Cheese**, and then baking that lightly in the oven until the cheese turns brown." And with that places her last ingredient card, the **Cheese** card, face up on the table.

Cody has a question about **Ellen's** dish before he is ready to score the dishes:

"Very interesting.. But won't the chicken and pasta noodles over cook in the oven?"

Ellen replies: "No, not at all, because I'm only really going to put them under the broiler for a minute to brown the cheese on tops and give them a little crispiness."

Cody considers the dishes and gives his critiques:

"I'm going to start with **Ellen's** dish. I love the surprise idea of presenting the chicken and mushrooms as a roll, wrapped up in Lasagne Noodles. I think the Mushrooms and Chicken would go really well together. However, I think it would have been really amazing if you had made a kind of cheese sauce for the mushrooms and chicken, instead of just having the grated Parmesan cheese on top.. I'm afraid the actual mushroom and chicken might taste a little bland, and I wouldn't say it was the truly unique flavor combination that I was hoping for."

"Now for **Lisa's** dish: I'm not sure how the lavender and peach flavorings would work with the lobster, but I'm dying to taste it and find out! I said I was interested in unique flavors and a great presentation, and you delivered! The idea of the simple elegant cucumber slices around the plate sounds beautiful, and the contrast between the cold plain cucumbers and the buttery scented lobster sounds amazing."

"I'm giving the **5,10,50, and 100** point chips to **Lisa** – for a total of **165** points. I'm giving the **25** point chip to **Ellen**, for a good effort." **Cody** gives out the Judging Award Chips to the Chef players, who add their points from this round to their score sheet.

Cody then collects the Ingredient cards used in the dishes and places them in the discard pile. He then passes the unused Ingredient Deck and the Assignment deck clockwise to Lisa, who will be the next judge. **Lisa** collects the Judging Award Chips and begins the next round by choosing and Assignment card and describing her judging criteria.



Photo of Sample Game being played.

5. VARIATIONS

5.1. Two-player (and Solitaire) Variation

When playing with 3 or more players, the job of the Judge player at the end of each round is to divide up all of the Award Chips between the Chef players. With only 2 players, this doesn't work, so two-player and solitaire games must be handled differently.

For a two-player game, both players will always be playing the role both of Chef and Judge during each round. For each round, turn over the top Chef Assignment card, and both players will construct their dishes, and then present them to the other player. In turn, each player will choose one, and only one, Judging Award chip to give to the other player. The second judge in a round must award a different chip from that chosen by first judge. Alternate which player judges first for each round.

For Solitaire play, simply judge your own dishes as objectively as you can; see the Real Food Variations section for a more elaborate Solitaire play variation.

5.2. Team Play for More than 5 Players

If you have a lot of players [say more than 5] you may want to play in teams – otherwise each round will involve too many dishes and too much downtime between player turns.

Form up to 5 groups of approximately equally-sized groups of players. Rotate judges and chef roles as in basic game except that teammates play as one. Each player will receive the round score given to the team.

Alternatively, you may find it easier to have one designated permanent Judge player for team games. For a longer game, rotate a single judge player clockwise and re-form teams on each round by grouping the remaining players clockwise into approximately equally-sized groups each round.

An especially fun way to play at parties is to have each team prepare a multi-course meal so that teammates must coordinate their different dishes.

NOTE: There are some Chef Assignment cards specifically designed for team play.

5.1. Chef Assignment Cards

Once players are comfortable with the game, and familiar with different Assignment possibilities, they may decide to forgo the use of the Assignment deck, and simply allow Judge players to invent their own assignments for each round.

Tip: If you are acting as the judge and creating your own assignment, and you request a specific dish (for example a Cake), players may have a harder time coming up with a suitable dish if they get unlucky cards. If you do assign a very specific dish as your assignment, consider giving players a larger hand size [10 cards] or the ability to trade in more cards [up to 5], and let them assume the availability of certain ingredients (e.g. eggs).

Alternatively: On each round have Judge players draw the top Assignment card and read that one, rather than letting them choose one of their choice.

5.2. Card Purchasing

At the start of each round, each player receives one “token”, which may be accumulated over rounds. At any time the player made discard one of their “tokens” in order to exchange an *additional* Ingredient card (beyond the number allowed on the assignment card). Such actions can be performed an unlimited number of times per round. At the end of the game, any unused “Buyer Chips” are worth [10] points each. NOTE: This variation requires the use of additional tokens not supplied with the core game.

6. REAL FOOD VARIATIONS

If you are really serious about playing Cooking Party Cards, then you should try preparing and tasting some of the creations invented by players. This section suggests some possible ways you might do that.

6.1. Judge the Best on Taste

Play a game as normal, but have each player keep track of the favorite dish that they have invented during the game. After the normal game, each player will create their favorite dish (that they created during the normal rounds) and sit in judgment of each of the other player's prepared dishes. Judging is done with Judge Award Chips as normal – the player with the highest total score on the **tasting** round wins.

If there are too many chef players to fit into the kitchen, only let the highest scoring players from the normal rounds should proceed into the kitchen – the other players will be the dedicated judges.

6.2. Available Ingredients vs. Shopping

The main question you have to answer when you plan to actually prepare and taste the dishes created during game play is: Are you going to go shopping **after** you play the main rounds, or are you going to restrict game play to ingredients available in the house **before** the game starts?

If you are not going to go shopping after playing, you should remove all ingredient cards for ingredients that you do not have on hand, before starting the game.

6.3. Using Recipes and Cookbooks

If you are playing with professional or very experienced cooks, challenge players to prepare their dishes without consulting any cookbooks, recipes, or reference material.

Less experienced cooks should be allowed to consult cookbooks or the internet for basic cooking guidelines and sample recipes. This will help them determine temperatures, cooking times, etc.

Some basic generic recipes and cooking guidelines are included in the Ingredient Guide/Glossary booklet.

6.4. Judge of Honor

This is a great variation for celebrating someone's birthday or other special day. That person will be the only judge for the game, and the other players will be trying to create dishes to please them. If you want to play as a competition, you can play one round and have the chef players prepare their dishes for the person of honor, who will then judge the other player's dishes using the Judge Award Chips as normal.

Alternatively, you can play one or more round and let the judge decide which dishes should be prepared and tasted, without any final scoring. This works especially well when you play 3 rounds, one for each course of a full course meal, where the judge must choose a single winning dish to prepare for each course (appetizer, main course, desert).

6.5. Pressed for Time

If you are playing by yourself or with casual friends, you may not want to put a time limit on your food preparation/cooking time. But if you're in the mood for a real competition, nothing adds suspense like a ticking countdown clock.

Agree on how much total preparation time each player will have to prepare their dishes, either before playing the game or after. Players who cannot complete in time will lose half their points at the time of final scoring.

7. TIPS

This section describes general tips and suggestions.

7.1. General Tips

- Judges should punish chefs who use ingredients that do not improve the dish, and discourage chefs from just throwing all ingredients into every dish – sometimes less is more.
- Invent your own game play variations – if you come up with something good, share it with others on our website. If we like your idea we might add it to the next official rulebook.
- Remember, you can always be more specific than the ingredient card. If the card says “Nuts” then you should specify what kind of nut you are using in your dish when you play that card.

7.2. Dealing with Dietary Restrictions or Unavailable Ingredients

There are various ways to deal with dietary restrictions when playing Cooking Party Cards:

- If dishes are not actually being prepared, players may agree to simply ignore any dietary restrictions they may have in real life.
- A judge may announce certain dietary restrictions and allow players to immediately exchange any ingredient cards that violate the dietary restriction (for example, a vegetarian judge may allow players to immediately trade in any meat ingredient card).
- A judge may announce that they will allow cards and treat them as replacements (for example a vegetarian judge may simply treat a chicken card as if it were a soy-based chicken substitute).
- If players are planning on preparing dishes with only ingredients already present in the house, players should remove all cards not available for cooking prior to beginning the game.

7.3. Tips for Playing With Young Children and Novices

Young children and those without much familiarity with food ingredients should have no problem playing the game without modifications – especially those who are interested in cooking shows – but you may want to make a few modifications to normal game play:

- Let players trade in cards whose ingredients they don't understand (an ingredient guide/glossary booklet is also provided to help players learn about ingredients they aren't familiar with). Or allow them to ask other players to trade with them or explain the ingredient.
- Some children may have a hard time coming up with dishes but may enjoy judging; you can always play a game where they are the permanent judge.
- You can still play variations where cooking of real food is involved; just have the adults do the actual preparation and cooking, with the children as helpers.