

Menu

[Smoked Salmon on Potato Chips](#)

[Filet Mignon](#)

[Broccoli with Pecans and Lemon Butter](#)

[Chocolate Cherry Cake](#)

The Game Plan

The day before, or early in the day (at least 6 hours before dinner):

(1 hour hands-on, plus baking, cooling and chilling time; total elapsed time about 5 hours)

- Make the cherry pie filling, and chill it for one hour.
- During the last 15 minutes of chilling time, heat the oven and start mixing the cake batter for the Chocolate Cherry Cake. Bake the cake, and let it cool.
- Make the ganache frosting, and frost the cake.

Early in the day (at least 3 hours before dinner):

(30 minutes)

- Trim, blanch, and shock the broccoli, and lay it out on paper towels to dry.
- While broccoli is blanching, toast the pecans.
- Mix together then chill the sauce for the smoked salmon appetizer.
- Salt the steak.
- Run the dishwasher and clean up the kitchen.

2 hours before dinner:

(15 to 20 minutes of work time, before and after eating the first course)

- Assemble the smoked salmon, potato chips and sauce on a platter. Enjoy the appetizer with a glass of wine.
- Empty the dishwasher, then fill it with the appetizer dishes, and clean up the kitchen.

40 minutes hours before dinner:

(30 minutes)

- Heat the oven and the cast iron skillet for the steak.
- While the oven and skillet are heating, set the table and open the dinner wine.
- Cook the steak.

10 minutes before dinner:

(10 minutes)

- Let the steak rest.
- Finish the broccoli dish.
- While the broccoli is heating through, light the candles and start the dinner music.

After dinner:

- While your partner does the dishes and cleans up the kitchen, slice and plate the cake.

Notes:

- We like to have an appetizer about 2 hours before dinner, then relax for a while before getting on with meal prep. If you prefer to have the appetizer closer to the rest of dinner, adjust the timeline accordingly.
- The hands-on work time estimates (in parentheses below the start times) are for one person doing it all, but some of these tasks can be shared or delegated.