Chapter 11
Potatoes and Grains
Case Study  **Want to Try?**

Summer is over, and fall is here, a season for warm dishes, hearty soups, and somewhat heavier fare. Chef Jean is in the process of adjusting his menu to reflect the change in temperature and appetite. He has decided to offer an increased variety of pasta dishes and focus on grains and potatoes as side selections.

Linda has noticed that even though diners are increasingly conscious of healthy choices, potatoes are a real comfort food, especially as the weather becomes cooler. She agrees that they need to offer a varied selection of potatoes and an interesting choice of grains. However, Linda would also like to see increased use of legumes.

Chef Jean and Linda are working together to find a variety of dishes that vary in heartiness. They plan to offer a different selection of side dishes at lunch and dinner, as well as some main course vegetarian options at both services.

As you read this chapter, think about the following questions:

1. What types of potatoes would work best at lunch and dinner?
2. What types of grains should be used? How can you encourage patrons to try new grain dishes?
3. How might you incorporate legumes into lunch and dinner selections?
4. How much variety can you offer without impacting your budget?
Stephanie Izard, Restaurateur

The Drunken Goat/Stephanie Izard, Inc.

Although I didn’t know it at the time, by the age of ten I had already figured out what I wanted to be when I grew up. At home, my favorite activity was to play “restaurant,” offering friends and family a menu that I created from scratch. I was influenced by my parent’s global cooking and the gourmet club they hosted each month, and my love affair with food took off.

As I grew older, I enjoyed cooking, but somehow thought my career should be business related.

In pursuit of a nonfood career, I attended the University of Michigan. But, there was no denying my interest in food, so after earning my degree in sociology, I entertained the idea of culinary school. I graduated in 1998 and left Michigan, heading west where I went on to earn my culinary degree at the Scottsdale Culinary Institute.

My culinary career began with a stint as a line cook at the French-inspired Christopher’s Farmier Brasserie. Two years later, I left Arizona and returned to the Midwest, thrusting myself into the culinary capital of the region, Chicago. I again worked as a line cook for my first job in the Windy City, this time at Jean Georges’ restaurant, Vong’s Thai Kitchen. I next moved to the position of roundsman at Shawn McClain’s award-winning new American/Asian restaurant Spring, and afterward became sous chef at the critically acclaimed French bistro La Tache.

In 2004, I took a tremendous risk and opened my own restaurant, Scylla. Three years later, Scylla was named one of the 10 finest small restaurants in the country by Bon Appetit magazine. Soon after that, I did an extremely difficult thing: in order to allow time for travel, and a chance to give serious thought to my next venture, I closed Scylla.

In the fall of 2007, when I returned from my travels, I received a call from the producers of Bravo’s Top Chef; they wanted me. An avid fan of the show although I had to record and watch the program on my own schedule due to the nature of the long hours of a restaurant chef, I entered the competition telling myself, about the food; to “just make it taste good,” and about the drama, to just avoid it. In the end, it worked, and I was not only named the Top Chef, but also voted fan favorite by the show’s audience.

I love food! I love the people in this industry. I love the challenges. I love the excitement. And I really just love feeding people delicious food.

You have to really love food and cooking to last in this industry. You have to be ready to work harder than you ever have before. There’s nothing easy about it. But at the end of the day (or rather, some time after midnight) you have the satisfaction...
that you just made a serious amount of people very, very happy. You'll most likely be working longer, harder hours than most of your friends, but you'll be going to work and doing what you love every day, which is a lot more than most people can say. And have fun in the kitchen because in the end, that's what it's all about. Excite the entire palate with every bite.

Remember:

"Make it happen."

**About Potatoes and Grains**

I grew up loving potatoes in any shape or form... baked, twice baked, French fries, tater tots, hash browns, mashed... the list goes on. I still love all potatoes, and lately I've begun to explore all varieties from fingerlings to new potatoes to purple potatoes and others at the farmers' markets. It is important to know the difference in the starch content and flavor of each. I think that Idaho potatoes are best for fries: Yukons work better for mashed because they are creamier and less starchy; and new potatoes are perfect with the skins on because the skin is thin, beautiful, and delicious.

Grains have wonderful health benefits, as do potatoes. In vegetarian cooking, grains can be an essential way to get nutrients. I love "fun grains" like quinoa—they make great healthy salads.