

**Cook Noir—Pilot Episode
"The Seduction Dinner"**

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Shooting Draft

PROGRAM INTERFACE NOTE--The video appears in the center of a blacked out screen. The entire screen is 640 x 480, but the video is a centered 320 x 240 inset. Behind the video is a faint image of a relevant food item. The video is sometimes in motion, sometimes a freeze frame, and sometimes a series of stills depending on the requirements of the scene. The visual style of the frame is the same, whether still or moving. The video is black and white predominantly with color inserts.

INT. AL COOK'S OFFICE - EVENING (B&W)

We pan down a pebbled glass door with the words Alan D. Cook, C.C.

AL (V.O.)

San Francisco. It's a real food town, and it all happens here.

Inside, the office is one of the old San Francisco offices reminiscent of a 40s detective movie, except that there are an assortment of COOKING GADGETS on the DESK--egg beaters, whisks, spatulas. COOKBOOKS line the bookshelf. He has a gold CERTIFICATE from Williams-Sonoma on the wall together with DIPLOMAS from the Cordon Bleu and Culinary Institute of America. There is a PHOTO of Al with his arms around a famous enormous chef, a la Paul Prudhomme.

Al is relaxing at his desk finishing a meal. We see the remains of a TAKE-OUT CHINESE MEAL that he has eaten, but only for one.

AL (V.O. CONT.)

Uptown cooks sucking up to the boss.
Downtown cheeseballs trying to impress their lovers. I'm Al Cook, Culinary Consultant, and I've seen it all. Maybe you're hosting a nine-course orgy or searching for the perfect souffle for a group of five year olds. I'm your man. You get in a jam, some culinary emergency, you'll find me. I'll put all the pieces together and save your ass. You get the credit, and a damn fine meal. Me? Well, let's just say I'll take the leftovers.

We see chopsticks hitting the dirty plate.

TITLE CARD - CG (COLOR)

To the strains of our dramatic theme, the title card "The Internet Cooking Show" is displayed while flying raw racks of lamb are flying past, After Dark Toaster style.

The title flies away.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. AL COOK'S OFFICE - DAY (B&W)

Al is eating RUM CAKE at his desk. He gets a phone call.

AL (V.O.)

I was in my office finishing off the last of some rum cake given to me by a Cuban pastry chef when I got the call. Guy named Stewart Potts said he had a hot date that night. It seems he'd promised to make his current flame a smoking meal, forgetting that he barely knew how to light his stove.

AL talks on the phone.

AL

Calm down, Stew. Nothing a little lamb and couscous can't fix. I'll fax over a recipe.

We see Al's hands inserting a PAGE into a FAX MACHINE.

CUT TO

INSERT GRAPHIC - PUZZLE PIECES AND OPTION BUTTONS (COLOR)

The PUZZLE PIECE GRAPHICS fly in to the frame and end up at the top of the screen, where they will remain for the rest of the show. They are labeled "Ingredients" "Artichokes" "Lamb" "Couscous" "Strawberries" "Ambiance."

The video is replaced by two buttons, one which says "Watch the Show" and the other which says "Cook the Meal." A CURSOR appears and selects the option to "Watch the Show."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

If the user had selected the option to cook the meal, we would have branched to SCRIPT 2.

A TUMBLING PUZZLE PIECE with a graphic of ingredients flies into the frame and comes to rest on top of the ingredient puzzle piece at the top of the frame.

These pieces are the navigation elements of the show and will tumble in after each significant segment. If a user clicks on any of the puzzle pieces at any point during the show, they are sent to the appropriate screen and its options. Users will have the choice of returning to where they left off in the main show.

INT. AL COOK'S OFFICE - DAY (CONT.)

Close-up of Al's hand holding the phone away from his ear.

STEWART (V.O.)

(filtered)

Arghhhhh!

AL

You got the fax.

STEWART (V.O.)

(filtered--incomprehensible
excited speech)

AL

Don't burn your biscuits. Meet me at the
butcher's on California and Laurel in 20
minutes.

Al hangs up the phone and gets into his TRENCH COAT and HAT,
closing the blinds, preparing to leave his office.

AL (V.O.)

I reviewed what I knew about this character.
Cooking dinner for a date. He was excitable,
amorous, without a clue. The usual.

INT. BUTCHER'S SHOP - DAY (B&W)

BRIAN the Butcher is standing behind the counter. We meet STEWART, a skinny, nervous man in his early 30s. AL is talking to Brian, obviously telling him a joke.

AL (V.O.)

I was explaining to the kid how important it was to be tight with your butcher. He's all that stands between you and a good piece of meat.

Al, finishing his joke...

AL

...so she said, 'That's where you put the meatballs.'

Al and Brian laugh. Stewart doesn't get it.

AL

So Brian, how's the lamb today?

BRIAN

[Talks about lamb. This will be ad-libbed by a real butcher. Topics will include: the color of the meat which should be fresh and deep bright red with almost a silky sheen to it. The fat should be hard and creamy white. The eye of the meat should be reasonably big and round, the underside bones should be tinged with pink and slightly rounded--they whiten and flatten with age. The purple stamps are from the US Department of Agriculture--the grades are Prime, Choice, Good and Utility and the grade depends on the characteristics of each particular animal--specifically the overall carcass shape, the ratio of fat to lean, the ratio of meat to bones and the color and marbling of the meat.]

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AL

Can you trim the rack so that Stewart can just roast it without doing the prep work?

BRIAN

For you Al? Sure thing.

AL

(aside to Stewart)

Make a friend of your butcher and you'll never have to french a roast again.

STEWART

What the hell are you talking about?

AL

Look what Brian's doing. He's trimming away the fat from the bones. All you have to do is stick the roast in the oven.

STEWART

But it's so expensive!

AL

Think about what this meal would set you back in a restaurant. Here, it's like \$10 a pound. She's not worth that? Besides, the better the cut of meat, the easier it is to cook.

INT. SUPERMARKET PRODUCE SECTION - DAY (B&W)

Al and Stewart are standing by the bins of produce near the artichokes. They have a CART with GROCERIES already.

AL

Know how to pick garlic?

STEWART

You smell it?

(CONTINUED)

AL

Nice try, Julia Child. Squeeze it. Hard-- that's what you're looking for. And big cloves make it easier to peel. Artichokes?

STEWART

(intimidated)

I've never made one.

AL

Hey, it's just a vegetable. You boil it. Look for a big bottom, good color, no worms. Butter, Bread crumbs, mustard, mayonnaise?

STEWART

Got 'em.

AL

Olive oil?

STEWART

Do we have to get this expensive kind?

AL

Don't get cheap on me, Stewart. Look, you're always better off with the best ingredients you can afford. The meal will taste better and there'll be a lot less hassle. Okay, we got couscous and raisins. You said you had rum, right?

STEWART

Uh huh. Why these golden raisins? I like the black ones.

AL

It's an aesthetic thing. You wouldn't understand.

STEWART

What about dessert?

CONTINUED: (2)

AL

Just keep it simple. It's amazing how a few strawberries will turn a simple bowl of ice cream into a really classy dessert. How you fixed for cooking equipment?

STEWART

Uh oh.

INT. SUPERMARKET HARDWARE SECTION - DAY (B&W)

STEWART

Are you gonna tell me I need a whole bunch of special stuff just to make this meal? I'm not starting a restaurant you know.

AL

If you've got the standard gear, we're just talking about a couple of things--all of which you should have anyway. You've got oven mitts, tongs, aluminum foil, a roasting pan?

STEWART

Yeah, yeah. I've got all that. My mom gave that to me when I moved out.

AL

How about a meat thermometer?

STEWART

Why, is it sick?

AL

Funny. Insta-Read. That's what you want.

INSERT GRAPHIC - PUZZLE PIECE TUMBLES IN

The PUZZLE PIECE for artichoke tumbles into frame and comes to rest on top of the artichoke puzzle piece. This graphic forms a

WIPE TO:

INT. STEWART'S KITCHEN - DAY (B&W)

AL arrives carrying an old fashioned DOCTOR'S BAG, crammed with KITCHEN TOOLS. The kitchen is an apartment kitchen. A LARGE POT of water is on the stove. The GROCERIES are arranged on the counter.

AL

You did say you can boil water?

STEWART

(gesturing to pot on stove)

This pot okay?

AL

As long as it is big enough to cover the artichokes with water. Put some salt in the water.

Stewart picks up the salt.

STEWART

How much?

AL

Enough to make it salty.

Stewart puts salt in the water.

AL (CONT.)

All right, let's wash and trim these puppies. You wash 'em in hot water and get the grit out. Now let me show you how to trim 'em.

WEIRD VIDEO TRANSITION WITH MUSIC

INSERT DEMONSTRATION VIDEO - COLOR

We see a close-up of Al's hands preparing the artichoke and matching the dialogue.

STEWART (V.O.)

(frightened by transition)

What's happening?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AL (V.O.)

Stay close and keep your eyes peeled. Cut off the top with a serrated knife, hold the choke by the stem and snip off the thorns at the tip of each leaf. Don't want to end the evening in the emergency room. Then cut off the stem flat to the bottom. You want the artichoke to stand by itself on the plate.

WEIRD VIDEO TRANSITION WITH MUSIC

INT. STEWART'S KITCHEN - DAY (B&W) (CONT.)

STEWART

Whew! That was cool!

Stewart picks up trimmed artichoke holding it stem side up.

STEWART (CONT.)

Okay, what's next?

AL

Drop 'em in the boiling water.

STEWART

Bottoms up?

AL

(pulls flask of bourbon from his bag)

Don't mind if I do. But the chokes go in bottoms down.

Stewart turns over the artichokes, stem side down and puts them in the boiling pot.

AL (CONT.)

Leave 'em in for forty-five minutes.

Al takes a drink.

INSERT GRAPHIC - PUZZLE PIECE TUMBLES IN

The PUZZLE PIECE for lamb tumbles into frame and comes to rest on top of the lamb puzzle piece. This graphic forms a

WIPE TO:

RETURN TO SCENE (CONT.)

AL (CONT.)

Lamb's next. Let's make the mustard coating.
Peel two cloves of garlic.

Stewart holds up PEELED CLOVES.

STEWART

Got 'em.

AL

Now mash half a teaspoon of salt with the
garlic in a bowl.

INSERT DEMONSTRATION VIDEO - COLOR

A WHITE BOWL in close-up with Al's hands mashing the garlic with a PESTLE.

STEWART (V.O.)

Here we go again.

AL (V.O.)

Mash it up good. We put it in a bowl with 2
tablespoons of Dijon mustard...

INSERT DEMONSTRATION VIDEO - COLOR

A TRANSPARENT BOWL with the garlic and the mustard. The hands pour olive oil, grabs a WHISK, and starts to beat the mixture.

AL (V.O. CONT.)

...and put in some olive oil, slowly. It should
end up looking sort of like mayonnaise.

INSERT DEMONSTRATION VIDEO - COLOR

The rack of lamb is on a transparent ROASTING PAN. Al's hands smear the mixture over the rack.

AL (V.O. CONT.)

Lovingly smear the mixture onto the lamb.

STEWART (V.O.)

Lovingly?

AL (V.O.)

Get you ready for your date.

INSERT DEMONSTRATION VIDEO - COLOR

Foil is wrapped onto the bare bones sticking out of the top of the rack.

AL (V.O.)

Gotta protect dem bones. You've got the oven at 500 degrees?

INT. STEWART'S KITCHEN - DAY (B&W) (CONT.)

STEWART

Yeah, do we put it in now?

AL

Away she goes.

Stewart puts the lamb into the oven.

AL (CONT.)

We'll turn the temperature down in fifteen minutes when the lamb is seared.

INSERT GRAPHIC - PUZZLE PIECE TUMBLES IN

The PUZZLE PIECE for couscous tumbles into frame and comes to rest on top of the couscous puzzle piece. This graphic forms a

WIPE TO:

RETURN TO SCENE (CONT.)

STEWART

What's next?

AL

Melt half a stick of butter in a small bowl in the microwave.

Stewart unwraps the butter and sticks it in a bowl and puts it in the microwave.

STEWART

What about cholesterol?

AL

What are you, a commie or something? Soak the raisins in rum for the couscous.

Stewart dumps the raisins in the waiting BOWL of rum.

STEWART

What is couscous, anyway?

AL

Think of it as grits from North Africa, but not sticky.

STEWART

What about a sauce for the artichokes? I got some ketchup.

AL

That's nice. Take four tablespoons of mayo and 1 tablespoon of the Dijon mustard and mix them in a bowl.

Stewart does as he is told.

AL (CONT.)

Great. Stick the bowl in the refrigerator until later. Turn the oven down to four hundred, The lamb's ready for the coating.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STEWART

Wow. Time really flies when you're cooking.

AL

Let's put the butter and the bread crumbs on the lamb.

STEWART

Show me.

CUT TO:

INSERT DEMONSTRATION VIDEO - COLOR

We see Al's hands drizzling the melted butter and then applying bread crumbs to the hot, partially cooked rack of lamb.

AL (V.O.)

All this stuff is really hot. So be careful! By searing the lamb we've trapped the juices inside where they'll do the most good and we crisp the fat.

STEWART (V.O.)

What are the bread crumbs for?

AL (V.O.)

Taste.

INT. STEWART'S KITCHEN - DAY (B&W) (CONT.)

The lamb has been partially cooked and has the mustard coating. It is hot and sitting on a transparent roasting pan. Stewart is holding the lamb and pan with an oven mitt.

AL

Put it back in the oven. It's got at least another fifteen minutes. How are the artichokes?

Stewart peers into the pot of boiling water and artichokes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STEWART

How the hell am I supposed to know? They look fine from here.

AL

(Deep sigh)

Take a pair of tongs and pull out a leaf. If it comes away easy, they're done.

STEWART

I guess they're done.

AL

Put a towel on the counter.

Al lifts the artichokes out of the pot with a pair of tongs.

AL (CONT.)

We'll lift them out and put them upside down to drain. They need to cool a bit before the surgery.

STEWART

Okay, what's next?

AL

It's couscous time. Get a frying pan and put about 2 tablespoons of butter, half a teaspoon of salt and a cup of water in it and turn it on high. When that boils, we're going to put in the drained raisins and the couscous and set it to low heat.

STEWART

How much couscous?

AL

A cup. After you put in the couscous, stir constantly for about two minutes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

STEWART

You know, I don't know how I got into this. Ashley. She's so beautiful, I just never imagined that she'd say yes. And I just started talking. The words flowed all by themselves.

AL

Another guy promising more than he can deliver. It's like a disease.

STEWART

We've got couscous!

AL

Good for you. Let's check the lamb.

INSERT DEMONSTRATION VIDEO - COLOR

A THERMOMETER is put in the rack of lamb and rises quickly to 140 degrees.

AL (V.O.)

Put the thermometer in the thick part of the meat. You don't want it to touch any bones or the bottom of the pan--just the meat.

STEWART (V.O.)

Is it done?

AL (V.O.)

Well, it's pretty rare. Better take it to 150 degrees. That's another five minutes in the oven.

INT. STEWART'S KITCHEN - DAY (B&W) (CONT.)

STEWART

I can touch the artichokes now.

AL

Don't get carried away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Working with the artichokes now, we see Al's hands match his dialogue.

AL (CONT.)

You turn them over and spread the inner leaves. Then pull out these little purple leaves in a bundle. See that furry part in the middle?

STEWART

(turned on)

Uh huh.

AL

You've got to scoop that out with a spoon and leave the heart exposed.

STEWART

Sounds like Edgar Allen Poe.

AL

You'd be better off thinking about Martha Stewart, pal, although actually they're both pretty scary. Presentation counts. You could let her scrape out this stuff herself...

STEWART

No. No. We've come this far.

INSERT GRAPHIC - PUZZLE PIECE TUMBLES IN

The PUZZLE PIECE for ambiance tumbles into frame and comes to rest on top of the ambiance puzzle piece. This graphic forms a

WIPE TO:

INT. STEWART'S KITCHEN - DAY (B&W) (CONT.)

We start close on the fully cooked and prepared artichokes on a plate and pan up as Al enters from another room. Stewart has the lamb out of the oven with the thermometer in place.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AL

By the way, I reprogrammed your VCR. It's hard enough to impress a date without that little clock blinking twelve, twelve, twelve.

STEWART

I really want to know how to record something while I watch something else.

Al reacts with a withering look of scorn.

STEWART

(cowed)

Lamb's ready.

AL

Let it rest now. What kind of wine you got?

Stewart gets a bottle of WINE.

STEWART

You still thirsty?

AL

For the dinner. Red is essential. A California Cabernet would be nice.

STEWART

(looking at bottle)

Well, it's red.

AL

It'll do. The rule is, if it's under twenty dollars, you scrape off the price tag. Otherwise, you "forget" and do it at the table saying, "Oh, how rude of me." With this one, better start scraping.

STEWART

I really don't know much about wine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

AL

Okay, well I can't make you an expert in two minutes, but I can keep you from sounding like an idiot, maybe. Open the wine now, it'll taste better in about twenty minutes. And talk about the wine's color, body, richness and oakiness. Use words like chocolate, inky, intense. Say it has red currant notes. Then steer the conversation away from the wine quickly.

STEWART

What?!

Immediately, we hear the DING DONG of the doorbell.

AL

My work here is done. Just carve up the lamb, put it on the couscous, serve the artichokes with the sauce and don't talk about wine. Talk about her eyes or something. You'll do fine.

STEWART

Thanks Al. I don't know what I would have done without you.

AL

(taking his time)

I do.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREET SCENE - DUSK

In the glare of oncoming headlights and in the shadow of the Bay Bridge, Al is walking away from us down the street in his trench coat and hat, carrying his bag of kitchen tools. He puts his hand over the pocket of his trench coat.

AL

I left Stewart to his gustatory passions, another culinary catastrophe narrowly averted.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AL (cont'd)

In my pocket, my pager was vibrating. There are a million kitchens out there in the big city by the bay and inside each one are four tiny burners.

FADE TO BLACK

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