



Ticket Sales Guidebook

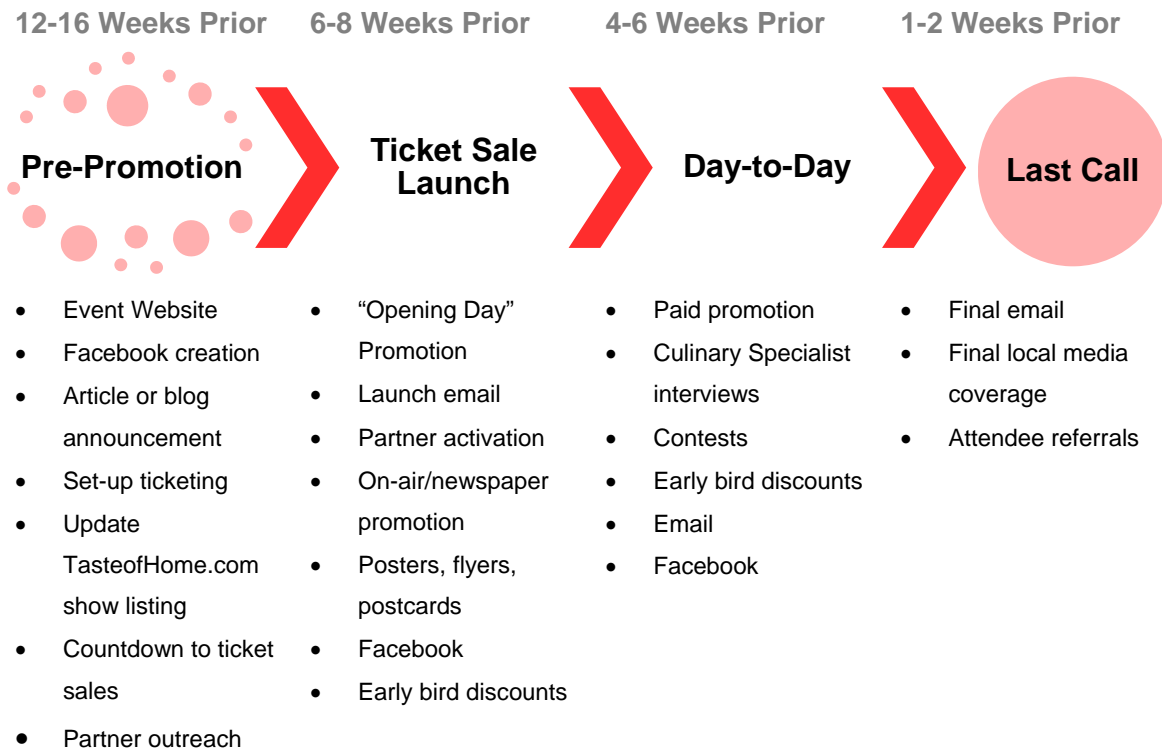
Overview

As an event organizer, you know that no matter how amazing your Cooking School show is, it won't just "sell itself" in your community. In order to sell tickets, you need to be armed with an event marketing strategy that effectively promotes your Cooking School to your target audience.

While it's good to have an idea on how to use social media, email and word-of-mouth to drive your ticket sales, the **best Cooking School marketing strategies follow a timeline and a logical sequence with each promotion reinforcing the last.**

There is no universal Cooking School marketing plan—every market is different, as is every lead time and budget—but there are common tactics that will help guide you to create a successful plan.

In the follow pages, we've outlined the marketing activities we've found most successful for shows. The tactics all follow the same general timeline:

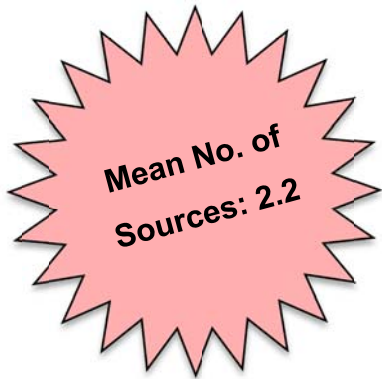


Promoting to Taste of Home Fans (and Future Fans)

Before we dive into tactics for selling out your show, it's critical to understand how *Taste of Home* fans make their purchasing decisions.

The "Rule of Seven" is an old marketing adage. It says that a prospect needs to see or hear your marketing message **at least seven times** before they take action and buy from you. Now the number seven isn't set in stone; in fact, for *Taste of Home* Cooking School attendees, it's more like the "Rule of 2.2," meaning that attendees need to hear about a Cooking School from an average of 2.2 sources before they buy tickets.

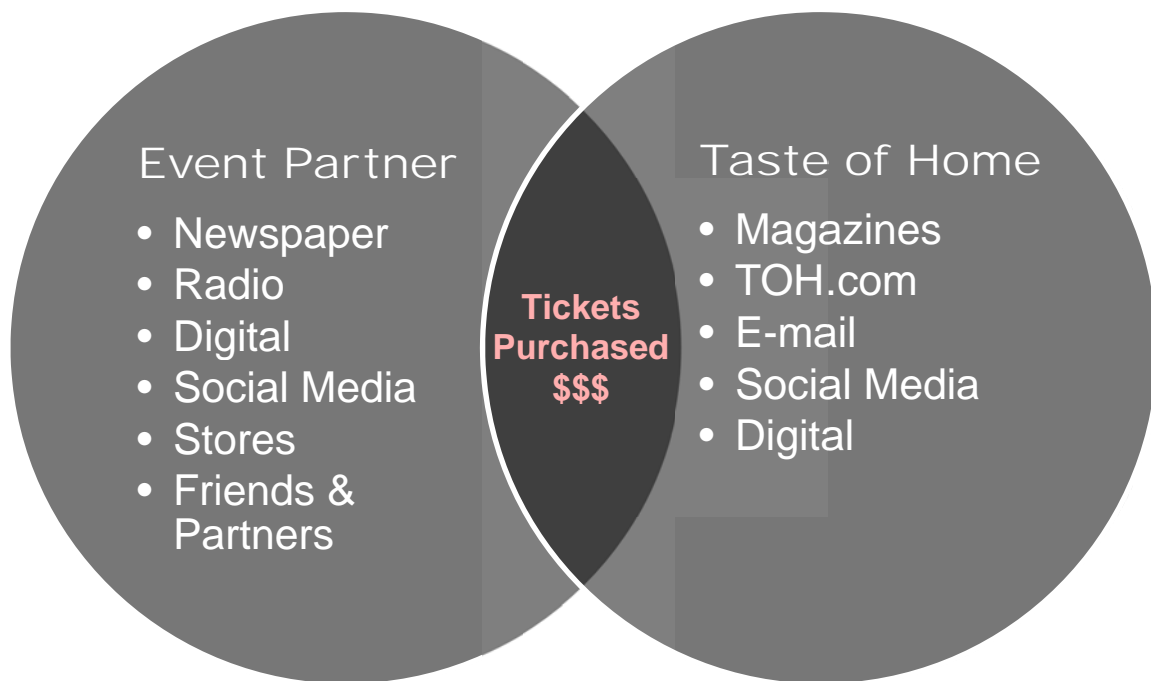
Regardless of the exact number of sources or messages, the truth of the "Rule of Seven" is that you can't just engage in a marketing activity once and then be done. **Marketing your *Taste of Home* Cooking School must be an on-going process through multiple channels in order for it to be successful.**



Sources of Awareness for Cooking School	
Local Newspaper	48%
<i>Taste of Home</i> Magazine	36%
Invited by a Relative or Friend	34%
Local Radio	27%
TasteofHome.com	24%
<i>Taste of Home</i> E-mail	16%
Local Social Media	11%
Local Retail Store	7%
Local Television	7%
Local Website	5%
Local Blog	1%
Other	5%

As you review the following pages and start to create your marketing plan, we recommend two approaches:

1. **Never rely on only one type of marketing method.** Even if you are getting stellar results today, that might change in the future. Factors outside of your control may change how easily you can reach your prospects to sell tickets. Even if you've discovered a method that is helping you sell out your show right now, we recommending adding a couple of other tools to your marketing toolbox to ensure you don't get blindsided by unexpected changes.



2. **Simplify the process and stick with it.** Many partners only market sporadically because they are too busy to consistently market their show; then they wonder why they don't have more attendees. Set aside regular times to engage in show promotion activities, even when you're busy. If you continue marketing even when you're swamped, you'll avoid needing to do a last-minute ticket blitz to try to bring in more attendees.



Pre-Promotion

Recommended Timeline: 12-16 Weeks Prior to Show

We encourage you to begin promoting your *Taste of Home* Cooking School event **12-16 weeks prior to your show date**. You'll want to use several marketing channels to target as wide of an audience as possible. Following are some ideas on where to start promoting your show:

1. **Event Website:** Even if you don't have all the details ironed out for your Cooking School show, we recommend you create an event website (or web page within your existing website) and make it live to capture early interest.

By launching your website, you will have a central place to drive people to, use it to capture leads and early interest (who can then be contacted later) and it will help build up your SEO authority with Google.

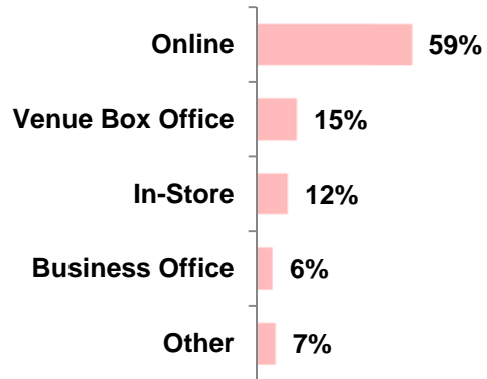
Finally, an event website is a great tool to secure additional sponsors or vendors. A website can be easily shared with prospects, or by posting your contact information or a contact form, prospective businesses can request additional information to participate in your show.

2. **Blog Post or Article:** The next totem in your pre-promotion marketing strategy is to tell people why you're hosting a *Taste of Home* Cooking School show. Build interest for the show by posting photos from your previous shows or using photos and recipes from *Taste of Home*. You may even bring in some additional sponsors or vendors through this early promotion.
3. **Facebook:** Getting on social media early is important to create momentum for your show and build a community of followers. Start building excitement for a ticket sales kick-off event or invite conversation with topics like "What is your favorite *Taste of Home* recipe?"

- 4. Set-Up Ticket Outlets:** Plan to sell tickets online as well as through a physical location. The preferred ticket vendor for the *Taste of Home* Cooking School is Brown Paper Tickets, which offers online and paper ticketing, the ability to process ticket sales at physical satellite locations. You can even create an event webpage. [Brown Paper Tickets](#) offers ticketing solutions at no cost to the event organizer.

We recommend creating your online ticket page early and setting a date for ticket sales to go live automatically. That way if you get busy and don't have time to set it up closer to your "on sale" date, your ticket sales won't suffer as a result.

Preference for Purchasing Tickets



- 5. Community Calendar:** Add your Cooking School event to any community calendars, both print and online versions, as well as calendars for school facilities, senior activity centers, festival and events boards, etc. Make sure to include a link back to your event website so that you don't need to update your community listings when your tickets go on sale.
- 6. TasteofHome.com Information:** Along with community calendars, make sure [you update your show information on our website](#) with highlights about your show and when tickets will go on sale.
- 7. Partner Outreach:** Partnerships can be crucial to your show's success, so you need to start reaching out to potential collaborators, media partners, vendors and sponsors early. You will want to make sure they are onboard to help spread the word about your show from the very beginning.



Ticket Sales Launch

Recommended Timeline: 6-8 Weeks Prior to Show

We recommend putting your tickets on sale **at least 6 weeks before your event**. Many of our most successful event partners put tickets on sale as early as 2-3 months before their event.

Once your tickets are on sale, we recommend implementing the below tactics. It's good for all this activity to hit more or less at the same time, because even if the same people are being targeted more than once, it will give them a sense of buzz about the Cooking School. And remember, people need to hear about the Cooking School from at least two sources before they make a purchase.

- 1. Email:** Sending emails to your database (or a partner's database) is one of the most effective tactics for event partners, so it should be a central part of your ticket sales campaign. Six to eight weeks before your event is a prime time to get your first major email blast out to your potential attendees. If you don't have an email marketing system, we recommend using [MailChimp](#), which is free for up to 2,000 subscribers.
- 2. Partners:** Now is the time to ask your partners, sponsors and vendors for their marketing support. Don't make them work too hard for you though! We recommend writing a sample email and some social updates you want them to send so that all they need to do is copy and paste.
- 3. Opening Day Contest:** We also recommend running a contest on your ticket sales start date. Fans who purchase their tickets on "opening day" are entered into an exciting door prize drawing to be awarded at the show. Or you could offer a special discount or two-for-one deal on opening day.
- 4. Cookbook Sales Promotion:** Another special promotion is creating an opportunity to purchase the newest *Taste of Home* cookbook with a ticket at remote location like a grocery or appliance store. You could also set up this type of promotion at an existing event in your community.
- 5. TasteofHome.com Information:** Make sure you [update your show information](#) on our website with new and exciting details about the event.

6. **On-Air and Newspaper Promotion:** If you're a radio or newspaper partner, begin your in-house advertising strategy. Initiate a local contest and ticket giveaway opportunities, schedule live interviews with your Culinary Specialist or publish an interview with your Culinary Specialist.
7. **Submit your *Taste of Home* E-mail Request:** We are able to send one geo-targeted email to *Taste of Home* subscribers. We recommend [submitting your request](#) 5-6 weeks before your show.
8. **Facebook:** It's important to post to Facebook 3+ times a week starting 6 weeks before your show. We have a [recommended schedule, examples and other content](#) for you to use.
9. **Flyers, Posters & Postcards:** We recommend preparing printed promotional materials to hand out at athletic events, grocery stores or place on windshields at shopping centers (with approval). Arm your staff and partners with materials to pass out as they interact with clients or have a contest to see who can distribute the most. Additional locations to distribute materials include Wal-Mart or other large retailers, dentist and doctor offices, event venues, schools, appliance dealers and hotels. Ask local stores that sell cooking-related items to distribute materials in exchange for complimentary tickets or minor sponsorship recognition.
10. **Reuse Old Magazines:** If you have extra Cooking School magazines from your last show, attach a promotional flyer to old magazines and distribute them to doctor's offices, beauty shops, laundry mats, retail stores and rotary meetings.
11. **Press Release:** We recommend creating a [Taste of Home Cooking School Press Release](#) to distribute to radio, TV and newspaper contacts.
12. **Chamber and Civic Clubs:** Visit local meetings to share event details about your Cooking School, like pre-show activities, vendor participation and door prizes.
13. **Offer Group Packages:** Group ticket sales are a great way to boost sales, plus they're a great way to expose your show to new audiences. Groups to target include: Women's Groups, Church Groups, Red Hat Lady Groups, Teachers, Corporations, Chamber/Civic Clubs, Culinary Schools/Programs, Military Bases, Girl Scout Troops or Day Care Centers.



14. Marquees: Drive through the community and note information marquees at banks, schools and churches and contact them to see if you can add information about your upcoming Cooking School.

15. Grocery Weekly Circular: Work with your local grocery sponsor to place an informational bubble in their weekly advertisement. You could also offer a special in-store cookbook sales event to drive traffic. Offer free *Taste of Home* recipe content to add to circular in conjunction with weekly specials.

Day-to-Day

Recommended Timeline: 4-6 Weeks Prior to Show

You're now into a tough stage of event marketing. With the initial excitement of the ticket sales launch behind you, it's time to buckle down and find ways to keep the momentum going. The best way to achieve this is through a cycle of content creation, social promotion and engagement, on-air time and email support.

If you continuously send out sales messages, these will get old very quickly and turn your audience off. **You therefore need to balance them out with high value, interesting content that your target attendees will appreciate.**

The lucky thing is, we're talking about food! [We've got tons of great recipes and content to share](#) with your audience to keep them interested and your upcoming Cooking School show top of mind.

In addition to continuing the activities already discussed in the previous section, we recommend the following:

- 1. Paid promotion:** Four to six weeks before your show is the best time to invest in paid advertising. There's no point doing it too early when you're tickets aren't on sale, but don't wait until two weeks before your event because you won't give it the time to have a meaningful effect on results. Whether its digital or social media ads, print ads, billboards or air-time, 4-6 weeks before your event is the best time to put cash behind your campaign.

2. **Culinary Specialist Interviews:** Many successful partners do 5+ interviews with their Culinary Specialist leading up to their show. If you're not a radio partner, try partnering with a local station in exchange for a giveaway or media sponsor visibility at your show.
3. **Promotional Contests:** This is a great time to launch promotional contests, like a children's apron design contest or a "find the spoon" contest in the local paper.
4. **Early Bird Discount(s):** Now that you're past the initial launch excitement for your show, you'll need to engineer more reasons to encourage people to register (and register now rather than later). This is where you can utilize the 'early bird discount.' Early bird discounts work by staggering your ticket sales to go up in price the closer to the event it gets.
5. **Host "drive-thru" ticket sales:** Set up shop in a local sponsor's parking lot or restaurant. Consumers can purchase tickets without leaving their cars, plus you can live broadcast from location while enticing consumers with free doughnuts and coffee.
6. **Regular email, social and blogging or articles:** Be sure to continue your email marketing strategy by sending information to your audience regularly. Email is a great support tool, putting your content directly in front of your audience, but be sure to offer them something of value (like quick dinner recipes from *Taste of Home*) beyond asking them to purchase tickets to your show.

You should also communicate to registered attendees, encouraging them to invite or bring friends or family to the show and building excitement leading up to show day. Your existing attendees are a great source of word-of-mouth advertising! Make sure they know that purchasing a ticket to your show is the best decision they've made in a long time!

With your social media strategy, be sure to invite followers to comment or create their own posts to keep a conversation going about your event.

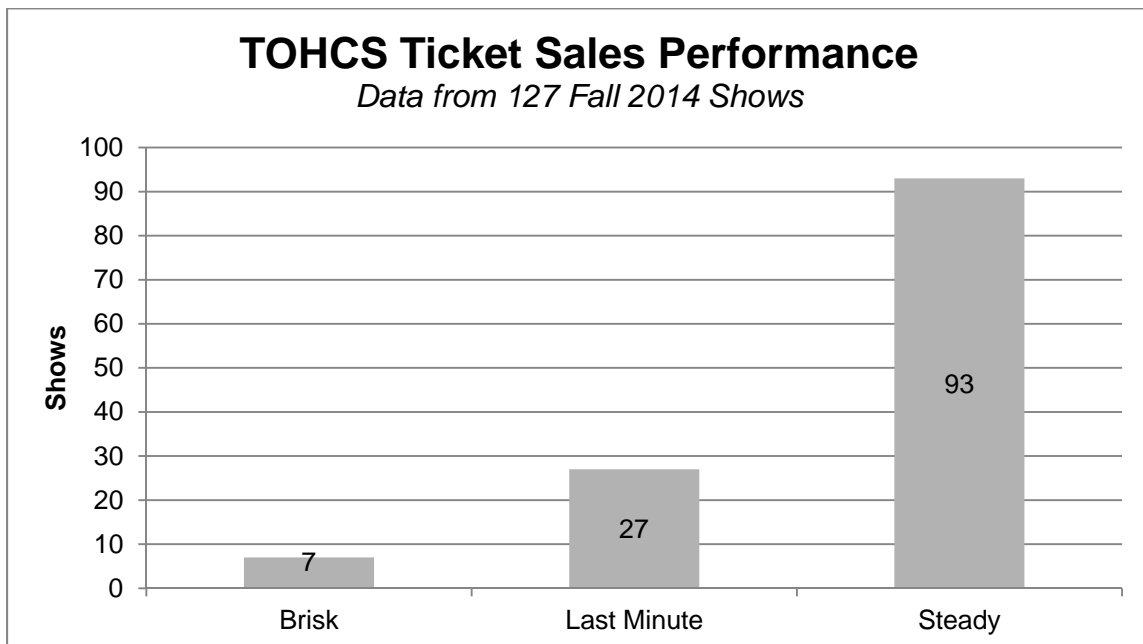
The rest of your marketing activity 4-6 weeks before your show should be geared towards building interest and promoting the expiration dates of any early bird discounts or promotions.

Last Call

Recommended Timeline: 1-2 Weeks Prior to Show

Whether you've been marketing for months or weeks, your event will eventually loom large in front of you, and with just a couple of days to go, it's time for your last-push marketing.

Many of our *Taste of Home* Cooking School event partners claim that they are "last minute" ticket sales markets. **However, our research indicates that *Taste of Home* Cooking School attendees purchase their tickets at a steady pace leading up to a show.**



Only 27 shows, or 21.25%, were "last minute" ticket sales markets in Fall 2014. The majority of shows, 73.23%, had steady ticket sales and only seven shows (5.5%) sold out quickly.

In addition, **62% of event partners sold 1-5% of tickets at the door**, meaning same-day ticket sales were a very small portion of their overall ticket sales performance.

Following are several "last push" components to consider as a part of your *Taste of Home* Cooking School marketing strategy. If you find yourself needing to sell more tickets 1-2 weeks before you show, we recommend implementing as many of these tactics as possible.

1. **Final email blast, social & blog/article:** Your final blog posts, social media updates and emails should now take on a more urgent, sales-focused message as you've spent the past few weeks or months building up a relationship with followers and subscribers. Now is the time to include direct calls to action and convert that long-term strategy into ticket sales.

2. **Attendee Referrals:** A frequently missed opportunity is focusing solely on bringing in new attendees and forgetting that you already have a great marketing tactic at your disposal: people who have already been convinced of your Cooking School's value.

Why not reach out to your existing attendees and incentivize them to promote the event on your behalf? Word-of-mouth is consistently ranked as one of the most powerful and effective marketing tactics you can utilize.

3. **Let people bring a friend free:** Along the same lines as referrals, consider telling existing attendees they can invite a guest for free. We only recommend this approach if you care more about having a packed house than the extra ticket revenue. Also be sure to track the additional registrations so that you have enough seats and gift bags.

4. **Phone:** We don't recommend employing a telesales team, which is expensive and requires a great inbound marketing program, however you might be surprised at the value of picking up the phone and making a few strategic calls to influential people (women's group leaders, for example), or people you know traditionally attend every year. It's a very time-intensive tactic, but an effective way of securing a few more sales.

5. **Get visual:** Pictures are worth a thousand words! Change your Facebook profile, cover image or Twitter background to the [Taste of Home Cooking School logo](#) or another graphic promoting your show.

6. **Solve a problem:** If your show is close to a holiday like Mother's Day or Christmas, help attendees solve the problem of what to get their mother or grandmother by offering a special gift package or promotion.

7. **Offer something exclusive:** If you are selling tickets online, create a special promo code for a discount at checkout.

8. **Give a behind-the-scenes peek:** Use social channels and your website to share photos of your team getting ready for the show, like stuffing gift bags, doing a walk-through of the venue or meeting with your grocery sponsor. Share your excitement for the upcoming show!



9. **Sponsor a social contest giveaway:** Everyone loves getting something for free. Host a “Show Countdown” contest and announce a different giveaway each day, like free show tickets, cookbooks or upgrades to VIP tickets.
10. **Add cooking cheer to your site:** [Post banner ads, recipes, photos and videos](#) on your homepage.
11. **Run Facebook ads:** If you don’t already have a strong Facebook fan base, implementing a social strategy last minute will likely result in a poor response. So, if you don’t have time to engage an organic audience, [jump on ads](#).

Conclusion

If you take the suggestions in the previous pages as a roadmap to help shape your *Taste of Home* Cooking School marketing strategy, you will be in a much stronger position to build momentum and ultimately achieve more ticket sales.

Whatever tools and tactics you decide to implement for your show, we recommend plotting them out in a calendar and sticking with it. To help you get started, we’ve put together a [handy excel sheet that plots many of these marketing tactics](#) into a sample 12-week event marketing template that you can adapt to your specific needs.



Appendix: Promotional Ideas by Channel

Following are promotional tactics for your *Taste of Home* Cooking School show sorted by channel. As you develop your own marketing strategy, be sure to review this complete list and incorporate as many channels and tactics as possible. **Keep in mind consumers need to hear about a *Taste of Home* Cooking School from 2+ sources before they decide to make a purchase.**

Print

Newspaper

- Ads
- Special Section
- Promotional articles and interviews
- *Taste of Home* recipe content
- Onsert for newspapers (sticky note on cover or loose piece in polybag)
- Insert in newspaper
- Arrange for editorial content about the event in a community magazine

Other Print

- Marquee ads
- Billboards
- Posters around the community, including sponsor, vendor and partner locations
- Distribute flyers in the grocery bags or cash registers of a local supermarket sponsor
- Mail postcard invitations to previous attendees and subscribers
- Design banners to have around town to advertise the event
- Prepare buttons for staff to wear as conversation starters at other events
- Print Cooking School rack cards for local newsstands, hotels and event locations
- Print colorful recipe cards with a *Taste of Home* Recipe on one side and show info on the other and distribute in stores, hotels, medical offices and retail locations
- Consider including a coupon advertisement in your community Valpak



Digital

Your Website

- Create a Cooking School website or a separate webpage within your website to share more information about the Cooking School.
 - Pick a simple URL, such as “www.TasteofHomeMilwaukee.com or www.Z100.com/TasteofHome”
 - Include info on how to purchase tickets (if possible, embed your ticket sales widget)
 - Add videos, photos, national sponsor logos, links to local sponsors’ websites/Facebook pages, links to your Culinary Specialist’s Facebook page and Cooking School blog page, etc.
- Offer tickets on your “deals” page if you have one
- Add your Cooking School to your event listings page
- Add an ad or banner to your homepage
- Add *Taste of Home* recipes, articles or blog content to your website frequently, making sure to always include a plug for your show and ticket purchase information

Email Marketing

- Send an email to previous Cooking School attendees with an offer to have first access to ticket sales or a special door prize drawing
- Send a special email about the Cooking School to subscribers and include advertisements in daily/weekly emails you may already send
- Supply vendors, sponsors and partners with email content and ask them to include it in their newsletters or send a separate email
- Request for show information be shared in other emails to Women’s Groups, Church Groups, Red Hat Lady Groups, Teachers, etc. Be sure to provide them with graphics and copy. Consider offering a group discount to the groups that participate.

TasteofHome.com

- Be sure you always have updated information on TasteofHome.com by using this form:
<http://www.tasteofhome.com/Cooking-School-Secure/showdetailadd.aspx>
 - Add compelling show highlights
 - Add information on VIP and general admission ticket pricing



- Give instructions on how to purchase tickets and provide a single ticket sales link so that consumers do not need to “hunt” for where to find ticket purchase information

Facebook

- Conduct a Cooking School ticket contest on your Facebook Page
 - Have fans post their favorite *Taste of Home* recipe, provide a kitchen tip or trick, or share a cooking blooper
 - Award a pair of tickets to a fan and encourage others to purchase tickets
- Post 3+ times a week at least 6 weeks before your show. Ask open-ended questions that invite interaction.
- Post show photos, *Taste of Home* recipes (with a photo) and other enticing graphics frequently.

Other Websites

- Arrange for editorial about the event in a consumer advertising newspaper product like Value News.
- Community Website: Post a vibrant marquee ad on your community webpage
- Groupon/Living Social Sites: consider offering a special promotion through these daily deal sites. Consider adding a cookbook to the ticket to increase the value of the package.

Broadcast

Radio

- Commercials
- On-air interviews with your Culinary Specialist
- Deejay "chatter"
- Partner with sponsor to host live radio remote on-location
 - Offer special deal for customers who purchase on-site
- E-blast to "loyal listeners" or listeners clubs
- Trade deals with local newspaper & TV stations
- Give away pairs of tickets on the local radio station

TV

- TV Spots: Contact local stations to add event to community spotlight and determine if time slot is available for live interview prior to the show.

Events & Other Ideas

- Run a ticket sales kick-off promotion. Secure gift certificates and contributions from local businesses and combine them into an exciting prize package. Everyone who purchases tickets on the first day of sales is entered into a drawing to win the prize package.
- Run an “opening day” contest on your ticket sales start date. Fans who purchase their tickets that day will be entered into an exciting door prize drawing to be awarded at the show. Be sure to advertise your opening day contest several days or weeks before the date so that people participate in the promotion.
- Sell tickets and cookbooks at other local events including your events, festivals, fairs or any opportunity your company has to participate in events.
- Contact businesses, schools, churches and banks that have electronic marquees and ask to display event information.
- Contact area hospitality sources to determine if your event can be added to calendar or a poster displayed in the elevator, entryway, etc.
- Create a company vehicle wrap or magnetic sign with the *Taste of Home* logo and local business logos to advertise show.
- Contact a local food truck or concession vendor to schedule a remote, attention-grabbing ticket sales extravaganza. Hire a live musician or DJ to provide music. Ideas include kettle corn maker, BBQ, funnel cakes, snow cones, or ice cream in front of a large retailer like Sam's Club.
- Distribute removable bumper stickers with show details to staff members.
- Promote the *Taste of Home* “Cooks Who Care” program by advertising that your tickets will help a local food pantry. Collect non-perishables at the door or at a central ticket location for entry into a special door prize drawing.
- Host “Drive-Thru” ticket sales in a local sponsor parking lot. Consumers can purchase tickets without leaving their cars. Consider enticing consumers with free doughnuts and coffee, and offering every 50th/100th consumer 2 free tickets! Broadcast live from the parking lot.
- Organize a one-day ticket sales event where tickets can be purchased at a local drive-through (ex. Sonic, McDonald's, etc.), offering a food discount with ticket purchase.



- Work with local stores that carry *Taste of Home* magazines to create a display for your show and possibly a cookbook sales opportunity.
- Structure a contest that would culminate at your Cooking School, such as best pie, apron or oldest cookbook contest to stir new enthusiasm.

Group Packages

- Approach large companies and offer large group discounts for tickets purchased in bulk for employee activity or incentive.
- Attend local chamber or civic club meetings to share event details and conduct a ticket sales kick-off. Use ticket give-away or cookbooks as door prizes to build excitement.
- Offer group tickets at discounted student rates to high schools and technical schools that offer culinary classes.
- Work with military base personnel to distribute show information. Provide special discount to military to receive members and their families.