

FAQ's  
Fine Dining Solutions  
The Epicurean Solution to DC Metro Chef Services  
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- Do you serve our neighborhood?
- What is the difference between a Personal Chef and a Private Chef?
- You offer Private Chef Services and Personal Chef Services. What is the difference?
- What makes your Chef Services different from the other 200+ Personal Chefs in the DC Metro Area?
- Do you cook in my kitchen?
- Do you deliver meals?
- How long will you be here?
- I'll be home that day. Is it okay if I watch - or help?
- Will you give me the recipes?
- Do I heat the food?
- How much room in the fridge will you need?
- Can you use my storage containers?
- What does the typical Fine Dining Solutions "entrée" consist of?
- Can we add on extra sides, sauces, salads, etc. ?
- What type of dishes do you prepare?
- Why do you charge a service fee + Groceries – Can't I just pay you a flat fee?
- What does your service fee include?
- How often will we need your service?
- How long will the food last us?
- Are you currently hiring?
- I am a personal chef and really like your business model and website – Can I copy and paste everything from your website and put it on mine?

Do you serve our neighborhood?  
Please go to the Service Area to see a map of our service area.

What is the difference between a Personal Chef and a Private Chef?  
A "typical" personal chef is usually a self-taught cook, serving several clients, usually one per day. A personal chef grocery shops and brings all the cooking utensils they'll need to provide multiple meals in one several-hour "cook date," preparing recipes that are customized to their client's particular requests and dietary requirements. These meals are packaged and stored in the fridge and freezer with heating directions so that the client may heat and enjoy them at their leisure in the near future.  
A "traditional" private chef is usually professionally trained and employed by one individual or family full-time, preparing any meals their client enjoys at home (or travels with them to prepare their away from home meals). A private chef will customize their client's menu and dietary preferences and may have the 'run the kitchen' keeping the refrigerator and pantry well stocked, working with other house staff to keep it in order. A private chef may cater dinner parties and personally provide "pan-to-plate" service at each designated meal time. A private chef may live on premises and is usually compensated by salary.

You offer Private Chef Services and Personal Chef Services. What is the difference?  
Fine Dining Solutions Personal Chef Services: Our personal chef services provide personalized customer service with customized menu research and development utilizing a convenient process that respects a client's limited time while catering to a client's preferences. Our chefs are professionally trained and

provide service to 2-3 clients per day, contracting by the meal rather than on salary or an hourly rate as is customary for a private chef.

Each client contracts for a specific time on a particular day every week (or semi-monthly) where our chefs will grocery shop and proceed immediately to the client's home with all necessary cooking utensils to prepare multiple meals to store and package in the fridge so that the client may heat and enjoy the dishes at their leisure in the next 2-5 days. Heating instructions are provided based on their client's cooking and food temperature preferences. Our chefs shop exclusively at the best grocery and small market purveyors in the DC metro area – Balducci's, Whole Foods, Mom's: My Organic Market and a few select small markets. Our services are intended for clients that will enjoy their dishes in the next few days after their cook date--- therefore dishes are NOT intended to be frozen. We produce meals with only the freshest and finest ingredients available and to regularly freeze those meals greatly diminishes their flavor, quality and intended creative purpose.

Fine Dining Solutions Private Chef Services: Our private chef services are for (1) clients on a particular diet (Atkins, South Beach, etc.) (2) clients in need of a part-time "traditional" private chef to join their home staff (3) clients in need of a full-time "traditional" (as described above) private chef for vacation or business travel. Compensation is based on an hourly rate with a weekly minimum based on your preferred service needs. See our private chef page for more information.

What makes your Chef Services different from the other 200+ Personal Chefs in the DC Metro Area?

Fine Dining Solutions is unlike 99% of other personal chef services in the DC Metro area, boasting several essential pillars that form our "Epicurean Solution to Personal Chef Services". Many chefs and chef services have tried to mimic or copy our service style and customer service materials and website - but they will NEVER be able to emulate and implement our Fine Dining Solution Pillars:

- **Best Dishes Possible:** We provide fine dining, restaurant quality meals for you to enjoy at your leisure. We are professionally trained and have developed cooking techniques to maximize the ease and enjoyment of your meals. We set our goals high to compete with local area fine dining establishments – so our clients can enjoy the same quality, style and even presentation – while checking their email on their coach at home.
- **Best Ingredients Available:** We shop exclusively at only the best grocery and small market purveyors in the DC metro area – Balducci's, Whole Foods, Mom's: My Organic Market and a few select small markets.
- **Organic & Local Importance:** Our dishes are (as much as possible or requested) local and organic.
- **Convenience:** We have combined and provide our clients with the detailed research and professional training of a "traditional" full-time private chef with the extreme convenience of personal chef services.
- **Quality Business:** Fine Dining Solutions is woman-owned and operated for the health and safety of our customers in accordance with the laws and recommendations of the City of Alexandria Personal Service Business License; We are insured and food manager certified with the National Restaurant Association (which educates and tests on the local health department codes of each county and state that we serve in the DC metro area; We are also members in good standing of The Metro Chefs, Women Chef & Restaurateurs", The American Personal Chef Association, The Personal Chef Code of Ethics and regularly auction pro bono chef services to raise funds for low-incomes families or schools charities.
- **Customer Service:** We are available to our clients 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We provide personalized Fine Dining Solutions Menu Proposals which begin with 40 different entrees to choose from for your first cook date and 20 new entrees are added semi-monthly. The menu proposal is also cleansed as needed, based on seasonality and local market availability.

Do you cook in my kitchen?

We only prepare food in the safety of your kitchen. On our agreed-upon cooking date and time, our chefs will arrive bringing all the groceries and cooking utensils to prepare your entrees from scratch on-site in your home. After a few hours, we leave your kitchen as clean as we found it with the aroma of a great restaurant. If you require a meal delivery service, please contact us ([info@finediningsolutions.com](mailto:info@finediningsolutions.com)) as we

would be more than happy to recommend quality insured colleagues. Fine Dining Solutions wants to provide you with the best chef service possible – even if it is NOT our own chef services.

Do you deliver meals?

We DO NOT deliver meals. Fine Dining Solution is licensed and insured for on-site chef services only. We do not transport food items from our home offices or gardens to our clients' homes - and it is illegal to do so (City of Alexandria). Any business that may transport food items (like a restaurant, hotel or catering company) must prepare the food in a health department-inspected, catering-licensed and catering-insured industrial kitchen utilizing approved heated and cooled storage containers (like hot boxes and refrigerated delivery vans). Since Fine Dining Solutions prepares everything from scratch there is no need to transport any food items at all. If you are considering a chef service that is not properly licensed and insured for this type of service – be wary – they are not operating their business in a safe, healthy or possibly legal manner.

How long will you be here?

It depends on the number of dishes we'll be preparing and the complexity of the dishes you selected for that day. Generally we'll be in your kitchen from 2 hours (3 meals for a family of 4) to 4 hours (1 week of meals for 1 person). We are very happy to work with your schedule and home situation so that our cooking fits into your schedule comfortably.

I'll be home that day. Is it okay if I watch - or help?

In order to provide you with the best chef service possible we ask you to limit your access to the kitchen while we are cooking. A break of complete concentration can have a detrimental effect on the preparation and execution of your dishes and we want to provide you with the best meals possible. Fine Dining Solutions Chef & Owner Shanna Follansbee would be happy to schedule an appointment to talk further about your chef service, recipes, etc. or even to just stop by and chat. If you are interested in learning about the cooking techniques used on your cook date, we'd be happy to set up private one-on-one cooking lessons for you at another time or share with you a schedule of Chef Shanna's upcoming public cooking classes.

Will you give me the recipes?

Sure – we can leave a list of ingredients on the day we prepare something or email you the recipe shortly afterward.

Do I heat the food?

We prepare, package and leave the food in your refrigerator with labels. Look in your Fine Dining Solutions client folder and You'll find heating directions based on your cooking preferences – be it oven, microwave or toaster oven. We insure your entire meal is prepared in less than 15 minutes.

How much room in the fridge will you need?

It depends on the number of meals that you are selecting for your service. We can investigate your refrigerator together to discuss a better way to organize everything if you feel the meals will make will take up too much room. We would also like to keep a little pantry space in your home – just to put salt, pepper, flour, etc., anything that we may buy to use over several cook dates.

Can you use my storage containers?

No. We will purchase "disposable re-useable" containers at the beginning of your service and replace the containers as needed (based on normal wear and tear) throughout your service. We would be happy to explain to you our experience in dealing with specific containers and our logic and reasoning in selecting and purchasing specific container brands, types and styles.

What does the typical Fine Dining Solutions "entrée" consist of?

A meal designed around a protein (be it beef or beans) with two sides (generally a green veggie and starch or non-green veggie) and a sauce (complementing the dish). If you would like to enjoy an appetizer before dinner (like most of our clients), we would be happy to limit your entrée sides to 1 and provide the

appetizer at no additional service charge. Our entrees are portioned similar to a fine dining restaurant – but if you would like us to exercise "portion-control" in your meals, we'd be happy to do so.

Can we add on extra sides, sauces, salads, etc. ?

Or breakfasts, lunches, desserts, snacks.....of course – we'd be happy to share with you all that our services can offer.

What type of dishes do you prepare?

We can prepare any type of cuisines, regional or national, local or international, etc., etc. – we are sure you get the picture! Go ahead and challenge us. Our only restriction is finding the best ingredients available on your cook date.

But then again – if we know your selection sufficiently far in advance (7 days or more), we'll order hard-to-find ingredients online and have them shipped to your home to arrive on (or the day prior to) your cook date for use in your dishes. We do this with lobster from Maine and seasonal heirloom fruit and veggies all the time.

How do we pay you?

Fine Dining Solutions bills by mail or email, semi-monthly on the 1st and 15th of the month. You'll receive an invoice outlining your services, grocery expenses and copies of your grocery receipts.

Why do you charge a service fee + Groceries – Can't I just pay you a flat fee?

Accountability.

Fine Dining Solutions wants our customers to know how much \$\$ is going into their dishes – and more importantly WHERE and WHEN it was purchased. We want you to know where your dish's ingredients are coming from, that they were purchased on the way to your home on your cook date, and that they were purchased from the purveyor that we told you it was going to come from. One of the pillars of our business is the importance of fresh, high-quality ingredients in every dish that we prepare.

By virtue of simple supply and demand, some all-inclusive personal chefs will advertise dishes prepared from local or organic ingredients but really stock up from Costco in order to cut their food cost and make more \$\$ on the dish they prepared for you. A few personal chefs have tainted the all-inclusive chef pricing model for everyone and therefore we are happy to distinguish ourselves from the "hype" and make our shopping and billing statements crystal-clear and transparent to our customers and make ourselves accountable to the highest business and cooking standards.

What does your service fee include?

- A personal assessment
- Kitchen inspection
- Personalized menu research and development based on your preferences for the length of your service
- Menu Proposal, updated semi-monthly
- Grocery shopping
- Travel
- Chef to prepare and package your food
- Labels and heating directions for your meals
- Plating instructions
- Kitchen clean up (as we found the kitchen)
- Client review sheet (optional)

How often will we need your service?

This depends on the number of nights you plan on enjoying our meals.

We are happy to work with you and discuss some service options be it semi-weekly, weekly, semi-monthly, monthly or just when you need us.

How long will the food last us?

This depends on the number of entrees that you select.

We recommend that you order the amount of meals you plan to eat in the next 3-5 days after your cook date. If you usually eat out or order in every night, we recommend that you order 1-2 less entrees than you think you will need for a period of 5-7 days. Are you shocked we that are trying to sell you less than you are willing purchase? If you are eating out or ordering in all the time - we don't want you to feel obligated to stay in 7 nights a week to eat our meals. The idea of our service is provide a great fine dining experience "at home" when you want or need one – not to "keep you home" every night away from other things you like to do. Many other personal chefs try to sell you as many servings and entrees as possible – loaded straight into the freezer – stocking you up with food that you just don't need and only coming back if the freezer is empty.

For many people the chef service they hired is just throwing out their store-bought "TV dinners" and replacing them with personal chef prepared "TV dinners". We really, really prefer to NOT have you freeze our dishes. We pride ourselves on the fact that we do NOT create dishes that are intended to be frozen. This highlights our competition with fine dining restaurants and our pillar to only use the highest quality and freshest ingredients available. To freeze these meals not only diminishes their flavor for you but may reduce the quality, integrity and intended creative purpose of the dish. We want to work with you to provide as many dishes as you need – and come back as often as it takes – to make sure everything is fresh in the fridge.

Are you currently hiring?

If you are interested in joining the team at Fine Dining Solutions chef services, please email your resume and cover note to [info@finediningsolutions.com](mailto:info@finediningsolutions.com). We will contact you with any currently available positions (weekend and/or evening wait staff, day, weekend and/or evening prep cook/assistant, daytime chef or weekend and/or night chef).

I am a personal chef and really like your business model and website – Can I copy and paste everything from your website and put it on mine?

No. Fine Dining Solutions has a trademark pending with the Patent & Trademark Office of the United States government and to copy or distribute our materials, food photos, etc. without permission is a violation of copyright. If you are interested in our services and are looking to emulate them, please just make an appointment to meet or discuss your business plans and questions with our Chef & Owner, Shanna Follansbee, as she would be happy to help you venture into the personal chef industry in your own creative way.

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*Fine Dining Solutions is licensed, insured, food safety management certified.*

*Chef Shanna Follansbee member in good standing of the Women Chefs' & Restaurateurs' (WCR – [www.womenchefs.org](http://www.womenchefs.org)), the American Personal Chef Association (APCA – [www.personalchef.com](http://www.personalchef.com)) as well as a member of the APCA Mid-Atlantic Chapter and a volunteer local exchange coordinator for WCR. Chef Shanna teaches cooking classes at several locations including the beautiful HADCO ([www.hadco.net](http://www.hadco.net)) kitchen (Dulles, VA) for The Cooking Experience ([www.cookingexperience.com](http://www.cookingexperience.com)), Sur La Table ([www.surlatable.com](http://www.surlatable.com)) Pentagon City and the culinary school L'Academie de Cuisine ([www.lacademie.com](http://www.lacademie.com)) in Bethesda and Gaithersburg, MD.*

*All pictures on this site are actual dishes Chef Shanna Follansbee has prepared for clients.*

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