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Public Release Date: November 4, 2011

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Despite Planning Ahead for Holiday Meals, Many Hosts Worry about Getting All of Their Dishes onto the Table on Time

Cooking Multiple Dishes – Especially Side Dishes – At the Same Time Seen as Top Challenge of Holiday Meal Preparation

New York, NY – According to the seven in ten U.S. adults (71%) who consider themselves holiday cooks – those who plan to do the holiday cooking and meal preparation in their home this year or have done so in the past five years – there are a number of challenges that arise when preparing holiday meals, according to a new survey of over 1,000 U.S. adults conducted by Ipsos on behalf of Samsung.

On average, these hosts typically serve 10 people for their holiday meal, though many tend to cook for even larger parties. A third (33%) cook for over 10 guests, including 9% who serve 20 or more. At the same time, a quarter (23%) report that they serve five or fewer people.

When hosting past holiday gatherings, the most common worry has been cooking multiple dishes all at once, selected by over a quarter of holiday cooks (27%). Other stressors include serving dishes that their guests will like (12%); wondering if they will be able to get it all done (11%); serving new, interesting, and creative dishes (9%); and being more efficient (8%). However, a third (32%) report that, in the past, they have not had any worries about holiday meal planning.

Looking ahead to this coming holiday season, many of their meal planning concerns are the same, with cooking multiple dishes at the same time being the top concern (22%). Others are most worried about serving dishes that their guests will like (14%); wondering if they will be able to get it all done (12%); being more efficient this time around (10%); and serving new, interesting and creative dishes (10%), while 33% say that they have no worries about holiday meal planning.

A majority of holiday cooks (62%) find side dishes to be the hardest to prepare at the same time, as these require different temperatures and can get cold quickly. One in five say that the trickiest dishes to cook at the same time are meat and seafood, as the smells and aromas (22%) may mix, or desserts, which can't go in the oven until dinner is done (19%). Fewer find appetizers to be the most difficult, though they can be hard to keep warm (14%).

With so many dishes to think about, nearly half of holiday cooks (45%) begin their meal preparations more than a day in advance, while the same proportion (45%) starts preparing their holiday meal at least 5 hours before “dinner is served.” Just one in ten (10%) wait until the few hours before the meal is served to begin their preparations.

Despite this advance planning, some problems still come up in the midst of the cooking frenzy. The biggest holiday headache for these hosts is timing the meal and all of their dishes so it's all done and ready to be served at the same time, according to over half of respondents (56%). Fewer report that the biggest pain point is keeping dishes warm while others are still cooking (18%), feeling overwhelmed as the cooking and dishes pile up (11%), or trying to decide which dishes to cook now as time runs out and it all needs to get done (8%). Seven percent mention some other holiday headache.

Getting all of their dishes onto the table is a real concern for these cooks, with a third (31%) saying that their most heart-stopping holiday cooking moment would be having too many dishes



to make and not enough time to make them. Other situations that would worry these holiday hosts include scrambling in the kitchen due to last-minute, unexpected guests (21%); dealing with guests with unexpected dietary needs, such as vegetarian, low/no fat, etc. (18%); running out of oven space and needing to borrow their neighbor's oven (12%); and some other heart-stopping holiday moment (17%).

For many cooks, double ovens could help reduce holiday headaches. Seven in ten cooks who have a double oven (71%) believe that it is essential for ensuring a successful holiday meal, while just 29% feel that they could manage with a single oven. Similarly, a majority of those with a single oven at home (58%) think that they could make a more successful holiday meal with a double oven, while 42% believe a single oven is enough.

Despite these worries and headaches, many holiday cooks enjoy hosting over the holidays. Six in ten (61%) report that holiday cooking is worth all of the trials and tribulations because they love bringing family and friends together for a wonderful evening. One in five (21%) say it's all worth it because they love cooking and entertaining, and making sure their guests are well-fed. One in ten find it worthwhile because they love being in the kitchen - cooking, preparing dishes, using their appliances (10%) or because they get to open the oven to see, smell, and taste for themselves all of the delicious foods they've created (9%).

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted October 4-7, 2011. For the survey, national samples of 1,013 adults aged 18 and older from Ipsos' U.S. online panel were interviewed online. This sample includes 712 "holiday cooks" – those who plan to do holiday cooking and meal preparation this year or have done so within the past five years. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics and ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the U.S. adult population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. A survey with an unweighted probability sample of this size, the results are considered accurate within ± 3.1 percentage points when it comes to the entire sample, and ± 3.7 when referring to "holiday cooks," 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire population of adults aged 18 and older in the United States had been polled. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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