



become quite complicated and more difficult to execute. The recipes are lengthier and the kitchen timer in the advanced levels moves faster, adding more pressure to the gamer to finish on time just to get a passing grade.

What I really like and appreciate about this game is that it stays true to how we cook in reality. Although an animation (I must say, the graphics are impressive!), Cooking Academy has a very realistic feel to it because a lot of the cooking and ingredient preparations are done "manually" and in a very precise manner. The level of concentration and coordination it demands from the player makes him/her feel like he/she is really in a kitchen preparing food. You literally have to watch and adjust temperatures, carefully crack an

egg, torch the top of a crème brulee, and patiently wait until food turns golden brown (and that's just to name a few!). For some dishes like sushi, crepes and fondue, players are even given the freedom to arrange their own food on a plate; the game even mentions the importance of presentation.

Although the game loses some of its appeal once you graduate (as all finished games do), opting to retake the exams and re-cook the dishes to improve your grades, will leave you happily engaged again. I think that, especially for those who know how to cook, this game will give you a different sense of amusement. It's just fun to momentarily get lost in a virtual world, cooking or even baking, without having to worry about

cleaning up any mess after you're done. You may even learn a thing or two about making certain dishes by listing down the procedures prompted by the game for a specific recipe (although you will have to experiment with the measurements of the ingredients as these aren't provided by the game). And of course, what better way of sparking children's interest in food and cooking than by getting them to play this video game? This virtual kitchen's safe!

Like I said earlier, I had a lot of fun cooking...er... playing Cooking Academy. This game can be finished in a week or so of irregular game playing (or in a day if you have a lot of free time), and as you progress in the game, you get more comfortable with the mechanics, making the game easier and more captivating. So if you've been looking for a computer game where you can really take charge and do the cooking, then I guess the search is finally over.

(Authors note: You can download Cooking Academy online or buy it from your favorite CD dealers.)

