



Closer Inspection



A hand-held **heated paint stripper** makes cheese bubble “like crazy,” Cherkasky says. “I use it on pizza, ... the top of a macaroni and cheese.”



Cherkasky says these handmade **acrylic ice cubes**, which she has used for more than 20 years, are “super predictable. ... If you put them in a glass and arrange them, they stay there.”



Nontoxic **ice powder** instantly becomes a slushy substance by adding water. “You can stick it to the outside of a cold cup so it looks like it has little bits of ice on it,” Cherkasky says. With food coloring, it can double as a slushie or frozen drink prop.



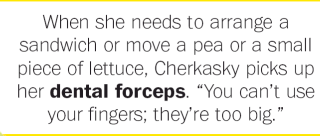
A **jeweler's torch** can burn the edges of tortillas and touch up foods that need more heat. “You can brown the edge of a piece of meat if it doesn't look cooked enough,” she says.



Cherkasky uses a **nasal aspirator** to add liquid to food or to remove it. “If something is weeping, and there's a lot of liquid on the edge, you can get it,” she says.



Cherkasky uses a **electric grill starter** to create grill marks on food, such as salmon or “a product that already has [marks] but they're not very dark, and I can enhance them.”



When she needs to arrange a sandwich or move a pea or a small piece of lettuce, Cherkasky picks up her **dental forceps**. “You can't use your fingers; they're too big.”

Looks good enough to eat

Food stylist dishes on her trade

BY KRIS CORONADO

When asked how she would make a burrito, Lisa Cherkasky pauses for a moment in her Arlington kitchen. “First, I would roll it and glue it with Super Glue,” she says. “Then, I would stuff it with instant mashed potatoes. Then, I would burn the edges with my jewelry torch, and then I would spray it with Armor All.”

Who's hungry?

Not to worry: Cherkasky isn't a chef gone mad. For the past 25 years, the 55-year-old has run her own food styling business (Lisacherkasky.com). Her mission is to make edible arrangements look irresistibly appetizing in photographs for cookbooks and ads. Clients have included Cakelove's Warren Brown, the National Museum of the American Indian and The Washington Post.

“It really is their food,” Cherkasky says. “I'm just preserving it, basically. It's not that it's fake; I'm trying to keep it from deteriorating too fast.”

Here, she shares some tricks of her trade.



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