

Chef's Talk

It is important to know the terminology for various cooking techniques and their effects on the finished product. Boiling instead of simmering a food on top of the stove or beating instead of folding in an ingredient when preparing a batter for a baked good may produce undesirable results!

AL DENTE: Cook until just firm to the bite, usually refers to pasta or vegetables; Italian meaning "to the tooth."

BAKE: Cook in an electric or gas oven.

BASTE: Spoon or brush drippings or other liquid over food during cooking to moisten food and add flavor.

BEAT: Mix ingredients vigorously, usually until smooth, using a spoon, whisk, hand beater or electric mixer.

BLANCH: Plunge food briefly into boiling water (usually followed by quick cooling in cold water) to precook food briefly. This helps to preserve color, flavor, texture, and nutritional value (as for freezing vegetables) or to loosen skin of foods such as tomatoes, peaches, or nuts.

BLEND: Mix two or more ingredients until they are very smooth and uniform, using a spoon, whisk, hand or electric mixer, blender or food processor.

BOIL: Heat until bubbles rise continuously and break on the surface; for rolling boil, bubbles form very rapidly.

BONE: Remove bones from meat, poultry or fish.

BRAISE: Cook food slowly in a minimum of liquid using tightly covered cookware; often done after browning a food.

BREAD: Cover a food with fine bread crumbs before cooking, usually after dipping in an egg or milk mixture.

BROWN: Cook food in a small amount of hot fat on the stove top to enhance flavor and appearance; in the oven by exposing it to dry heat.

CARAMELIZE: Stir sugar over low heat until it melts and becomes golden-brown and develops a distinctive flavor.

CHILL: Refrigerate a food or cool completely in ice or iced water.

CHOP: Cut into small, irregular pieces using a knife, food chopper or food processor.

CLARIFY: Make a liquid clear by skimming the top of the liquid, then straining. *Note:* the old method of adding eggshell to collect particles in a liquid is unsafe.

COAT: Cover a food's surface evenly with seasoned flour, fine crumbs, batter or sauce.

COATS SPOON: Able to cover a metal spoon with a thin, even film of a cooking mixture after the spoon was dipped, removed, and allowed to drain.

COOL: Allow hot food to come to room temperature.

CREAM: Soften or combine one or more ingredients until the mixture is smooth and fluffy.

CRUSH: Grind into fine particles, such as when a clove of garlic is crushed, using a chef's knife or garlic press.

CUBE: Cut a food into uniform squares, usually approximately 1/2-inch in diameter.

CUT IN: Distribute solid fat in dry ingredients by cutting with a pastry blender using a rolling motion or by cutting with two knives using a scissor motion until particles are desired size.

DASH: Add less than 1/8 teaspoon of an ingredient.

DEEP-FAT FRY: Cook in hot fat deep enough to immerse food being prepared.

DICE: Cut in uniform-sized cubes smaller than 1/2-inch across.



DRAIN: Pour off liquid or let it run through a colander (as when draining pasta); or remove pieces of food from a fat (liquid) and set them on paper towels to absorb the extra grease (or moisture).

DUST: Sprinkle lightly with flour or sugar.

FINELY CHOPPED: Cut into very tiny pieces.

FLAKE: Separate into pieces using the tines of a fork, as in flaking fish.

FLUTE: Make a decorative pattern around the edge of pastry.

FOLD IN: Combine a heavier mixture with a delicate substance without loss of air using a series of down-across-up-over motions while rotating bowl 1/4 turn with each series of strokes; such as folding in beaten egg white or whipped cream.

FRY: Sauté or cook in a small amount of fat.

GLAZE: Brush or drizzle syrup, thin icing, or jelly on a food to give it a glossy appearance, hard finish or decoration either during cooking or after the food is cooked.

GRATE: Cut or shred into tiny pieces using the small holes of a hand-held grater or food processor.

GREASE: Rub surface of a dish or pan with solid shortening or margarine to prevent sticking during cooking or baking.

GRIND: Force food through a grinder to produce food particles.

JULIENNE: Cut fruits, vegetables or meats into thin, matchstick-like strips using a knife or food processor.

KNEAD: Manipulate a dough or other mixture using a folding, pushing, and turning motion to produce a smooth, elastic texture.

MARINATE: Let a food stand in a seasoned liquid (a marinade) for several hours to enhance flavor and to tenderize.

MINCE: Cut into very small pieces using a knife or food processor.

MIX: Combine ingredients to distribute them evenly.

PANBROIL: Cook in an uncovered skillet, turning frequently, and pouring off drippings as they accumulate.

PANFRY: Fry food, beginning with a cold skillet, in little or no fat.

PARBOIL: Boil until partially cooked.

PARE: Cut off outer covering from a fruit or vegetable using a knife or vegetable parer.

PEEL: Strip off outer covering using fingers, such as bananas or oranges.

POACH: Cook in hot, simmering liquid that is just below the boiling point.

PREHEAT: Heat a cooking appliance to the desired temperature for approximately 10 minutes before beginning to cook or bake, especially for foods that cook in less than one hour. Roasting or broiling does not require preheating.

PUREE: Convert a food to a liquid or smooth pastelike consistency using a blender or food processor.

REDUCE: Boil liquid uncovered to evaporate liquid and intensify flavor.

ROAST: Cook uncovered in an oven, using dry heat and no added liquid; often done on a rack in a shallow pan.

SAUTE: Cook in a skillet with a small amount of hot oil or margarine over medium-high heat, frequently tossing and turning food until tender or browned.

SAVE DRIPPINGS: Remove meat or poultry juices and fat remaining in pan after cooking; used to make gravies and sauces.

SCALD: Heat liquid just below the boiling point, when tiny bubbles are at the edge of the liquid; or, pour boiling water over a food to blanch; or dip briefly in boiling water to loosen skin for peeling.

SCORE: Cut fat or other food surface with shallow grooves, approximately 1/4-inch deep, before cooking to increase tenderness, prevent fat from curling, or for decorative purposes.



SEAR: Brown surface of meat quickly using high heat to “seal in” meat juices .

SEASON: Add salt, pepper, herbs, spices or other seasonings to a food.

SECTION CITRUS FRUITS: Pare fruit down to the flesh. Cut segments from between walls of membrane.

SEPARATE EGGS: Allow cold eggs to come to room temperature so they will be easier to separate. Crack egg; then, slip egg back and forth between shell halves over a bowl, allowing the white to drop into the bowl. Place yolk in a separate bowl.

SHRED: Cut into long, thin pieces using large holes of a grater, knife, or food processor.

SIMMER: Cook a liquid just below boiling point so that tiny bubbles form on the bottom or sides of the pan. Usually done after reducing heat from boiling point.

SLICE: Cut into uniform flat pieces.

SKIM: Remove fat or scum from liquid using a spoon.

SLIVER: Cut into very thin, elongated pieces.

SOFTENED: Let food such as margarine, butter, or cream cheese stand at room temperature to become soft enough for easy blending; microwave at medium-low power (30%) until soft.

STEAM: Cook food in a rack or wire basket above boiling water.

STEEP: Extract flavor and/or color from a food by allowing it to stand in a hot liquid.

STEW: Simmer a food in liquid in a covered pot long and slowly.

STIR: Mix ingredients with a circular or figure-eight motion until of uniform consistency using a spoon or whisk.

STIR-FRY: Cook sliced or pieces of foods in a small amount of hot oil over high heat, stirring constantly; an Oriental cooking method often done in a wok.

TENDER-CRISP: Cook vegetables only until tender but still crisp in texture.

TOAST NUTS: Sprinkle 1/2 cup nuts in ungreased heavy skillet. Cook over medium heat for 5 to 7 minutes, stirring frequently until nuts begin to brown, then stirring constantly until golden brown.

TOSS: Tumble ingredients lightly with a lifting motion often using two utensils, such as a salad fork and spoon.

WHIP: Beat rapidly with a whisk or electric mixer to incorporate air into a mixture. This lightens and increases the volume of the baked product.