

MODULE 5: PREP & COOKING III | TRANSCRIPT

LESSON 3

# Moist-heat Cooking Methods II

## Let's continue learning about moist-heat cooking methods.

Please know that there's no pressure to master all of these in one week. Simply start with one or two methods you haven't tried before, then try one or two more—have fun with it. And remember, you can always reference the Recipe and Ingredient Indexes for more info about good food cooking methods and what ingredients work well with each particular method.

Ok...

## Blanching

We mentioned blanching when we discussed storing fresh foods in the freezer. This technique partially cooks foods in boiling water (or steam) to intensify and set color and flavor, which is helpful when freezing. It also maximizes flavor for crudité, spring rolls, sushi, and stir fry—giving them that bright color and crisp-tender texture. Blanching also prepares soft-skinned fruits like tomatoes and peaches to be easily peeled.

Something to keep in mind: if blanching a variety of foods, start by blanching the lightest colored ones first, as darker colored ones may tint the water and eventually, your lighter blanched foods.

## Steps

Make an ice bath by filling a large bowl with cold water and ice cubes. Set aside, and have a slotted spoon or tongs and a dish towel nearby, too.

Fill a large pot full of water and bring to a boil. While the pot boils, prepare your veggies, cutting them however you need them—even-sized julienne, chopped, sliced, etc. Optional tip: stir 1–3 teaspoons of sea salt into the water as it can boost veggie color (especially for greens), add a bit of flavor, and help keep foods buoyant as they boil.

Add your food to the boiling water in small amounts or one at a time—if you crowd the pot, it can reduce the heat and the water may stop boiling. After 30 seconds, use tongs or a slotted spoon to remove the food and quickly submerge it into the ice bath to shock and stop the cooking. Remove once the food is cooled completely—this should only take 30 seconds to 1 minute. Don't leave food to float for too long or it can become water logged. Dry food on your kitchen towel and use or freeze according to the steps we've discussed for freezing foods.

For soft-skinned fruits (like tomatoes and peaches), use a knife to slice an "X" into the bottom of the round before you drop in the boiling water, once removed, you can use the intersection there to pull and start peeling.

If you'd like to steam-blanch your foods, you can follow instructions for steaming foods, and utilize the shocking step with the ice bath to halt the cooking.

## Parboiling

Parboiling is partially cooking a food before finishing it with a secondary cooking method. Imagine that you want to roast a combination of mushrooms and potatoes. Well, the soft, spongy mushrooms will cook a lot quicker than the dense potatoes, so you may want to partially cook the potatoes before adding them to the roasting pan. This ensures that both mushrooms and potatoes are done at the same time. You could roast or sauté the potatoes to give them a head start, but you can also parboil them. Parboiling is similar to blanching except we boil the food for a longer amount of time. You also don't have to stop the cooking with a cold-water bath if you'll immediately be using with another cooking technique. But you can if you need a bit of time to prepare between cooking techniques.

You can also season your boiling liquid like you would for poaching to infuse flavor into your parboiled foods. Simple chopped garlic cloves and sea salt added to the water can make a subtle, delicious infusion.

Dense veggies like winter squash, beets, and carrots would also benefit from parboiling before adding to a cooking combination of softer vegetables like green

beans, broccoli, peas, summer squash, or dark greens. But parboiling doesn't have to be a step used only when combining mixed density vegetables. For example, parboiling potatoes then roasting them creates a downright magical fluffy-soft interior with a crispy exterior unlike what they'd be if they were simply roasted without parboiling first. Try this technique often with one ingredient to see how it effects the final result. Parboil before searing, braising, and roasting.

## Steps

Fill a lidded Dutch oven or large pot with liquid so your vegetables will be covered at least with ½" water. You can add a little oil, butter, aromatics, or salt if you like. Bring the liquid to a boil. Add the foods you want to parboil, making sure they are covered entirely by the liquid. These ingredients could be whole, sliced, or chopped. Length of time depends on thickness of ingredient and how long the next cooking technique will take—reference the recipe.

Boil the food uncovered until the food is partially cooked or cooked according to recipe. Drain the food well. If you won't be transferring the food directly to another pot, pan, or parchment package right away, place the food into an ice water bath to stop the heat from continuing to cook your parboiled food. Set aside until ready to use. If using right away, no need to hit the ice-water bath, just move on to the next technique.

## Steaming

A simple, and easy method that cooks foods with steam. Many recipes call for a double boiler or steaming basket to steam, but you can easily kitchen hack your way around adding those tools to the kitchen.

Steaming brightens color, enhances flavor, and softens texture in foods. Pretty much all veggies and fruits can be steamed, and the chop size and/or density of these foods (and their recipes) will dictate how long to steam for. In general, steaming times can take 3–15 minutes, but give denser foods with longer cook times a head start if using veggies in combination—add denser veg to the

steaming basket earlier than quicker-cooking foods so all foods ultimately in the steaming basket finish cooking at the same time.

Have fun and infuse your steaming water for subtle flavor in finished steamed food. Try a bouquet garni, coffee and teas, garlic, onions, and other aromatics, herbs, spices, wine, cider. Play.

## Steps

Fill a lidded Dutch oven, double boiler, or large pot with about 1"–3" water and place a steaming basket into the pot. The water height should be just below the bottom of the steamer basket.

Bring water to a boil and add food to the steaming basket. Reduce heat to a simmer, cover pot, and steam for the cooking time needed. After 2–3 minutes, check on food and taste or press the tip of a knife into the food. If color is bright, and a knife drops easily into the thickest part of the food, but it remains firm, it's done. As with most cooking techniques, the denser the food, the longer the cook time.

Since you're not shocking these foods with an ice-bath (which you could if you wanted to blanch), they will continue to cook once removed from the heat. So, to ensure food is just right when it hits the table, maybe remove from steam 1–2 minutes early. Not a deal-breaker, just a tip.

*If you don't have a double-boiler or steaming basket, try one of these make-it-work alternatives:*

- A Dutch oven or large pot with a colander or sieve (with legs) fixed above the boiling water in the pot works great. Cover with a lid and steam.
- Fill a Dutch oven or large pot with 1"–3" water. Now, place 3 baking stones, or 3 smooth-and-washed rocks from outside, or a ramekin faced down, or any other high-heat-safe object into the bottom of the pot to create an elevated platform. Now, place a heat-safe shallow bowl or plate onto that platform. Place foods in a single layer on the bowl or plate, cover the pot, and steam.

- Place a baked-goods cooling rack over the top of a Dutch oven or large pot filled with 1"–3" water. Place your foods on this rack, cover, and steam.

## En Papillote

An oven-cooking technique where food is packaged in parchment paper with herbs and spices and cooks in its own steam and juices. Flavors and aromas inside the packet harmoniously infuse the food in a rich, yet delicate way. It's a very simple cooking technique with a dramatic reveal when you remove from the oven and tear it open—try serving a dish en papillote to your family or at your next entertaining event. But don't just save this technique for special occasions. There's almost nothing easier than tossing veggies, some garlic, herbs, and oil together and folding it up in parchment to cook. It's a one-pot meal without the pot to clean!

As with other cooking techniques where you're using a variety of veggies with density inconsistency and cook time differences, use parboiling, chop-size, and pre-cooking to get all veggies on the same cooking time before wrapping up in parchment. For example, if cooking beets and broccoli together, maybe keep the broccoli in large, raw florets, and then dice or slice and parboil the beets until they only need 10–15 minutes to finish cooking before wrapping them all up together in parchment.

Asparagus, onions, celery, fennel, leeks, peas, mushrooms, green beans, carrots, beets, potatoes, turnips, radishes, winter and summer squash, dark greens like kale and collards, peppers, eggplant, cabbage, endive, bok choy, tomatoes, butter-nut squash, sweet potatoes, apples, pears, berries, peaches, nectarines, tropical, and citrus fruits are delicious cooked en papillote. Also try adding dried fruit like raisins, prunes, plums, and dates to a savory or sweet combination—the steam will rehydrate them.

## Steps

Preheat the oven to 400°F and set out a baking sheet.

You can do en papillote the traditional way or the no-fuss way—no one is judging either and both are easy.

### **Traditional en papillote** (fun for entertaining)

Each package is 1–2 servings, so however many servings you need, cut out that many 18" x 12" (give or take) sheets of parchment paper. Fold the sheets in half roughly to 9" x 12" and grab a pen or pencil, we're going to make a valentine. Draw a half heart shape on one sheet and use kitchen scissors to cut out the heart—make sure you cut a little inside the outline so you don't incorporate pen or pencil markings into your food. Repeat with the other sheets one at a time, or stack them up and cut all at once.

Toss vegetables in the oil and aromatics you'd like to use, open a heart shaped piece of parchment and place a handful or two of vegetables into the center of one half of the heart, leaving a 2" parchment border around the food. Add a slice or two of lemon if you like, a clove or two of garlic, and any other ingredients. Season with sea salt and pepper if using.

Fold the unfilled heart half on top of the filled so edges line up, we're going to create an airtight seal around the package. Hold the halves inline and starting from the top of the heart, fold over the sheets about ½"–1" down and inwards. Press to make a strong crease. Now, move right, and making sure to overlap with the first fold about ½"–1", fold again. Repeat until you reach the end and the package is sealed with many folds. Twist the tail tightly. Look over the package and make sure all edges are sealed. If you see a loose fold, fold over, or roll over the edge again to ensure it stays put. Paper- or binder-clips also work if you need extra securing power, just be mindful of how hot they'll be when you remove from the oven—use those oven mitts to remove.

**No-fuss en papillote** (perfect for that quick meal after a long day)

No scissors, no pen, or pencil? Skip the valentine heart step and cut the sheets, fold in half and then fold as you would the traditional way, just do your best to secure and incorporate the excess paper with each fold so your package stays secure and air tight.

Now, place papillotes on a baking sheet and place in the oven to steam and cook for 18–45 minutes until veggies are tender. Cooking times vary based on density of vegetable and thickness of cut. You don't necessarily want to tear open a package to check doneness because it will release the steam. Remember, the thicker the cut the longer the cook time and always reference a recipe for specific times.

Remove from oven, slice open with a knife or scissors, and serve immediately. If serving guests, cut at the table for a dramatic reveal.

General tips: Again, you can parboil dense vegetables like beets to reduce cooking time. This is especially helpful when combining dense veggies with softer veggies that have shorter cook times.

If you're starting with ¼"-thick vegetables (a good thickness to start with), add 10–15 additional minutes to the cook time per additional ¼" of veggie thickness. This comes in handy when you are halving or quartering round veggies like beets, potatoes, and radishes.

## Cooking Rice, Grains, Pulses

The method for cooking these ingredients is similar and easier than you may think. For pulses, submerge in water and soak for 8–12 hours in a bowl (while you sleep or are at work is a great time to soak). No need to soak rice or grains, but grains can benefit from a soak if you want to try it. If you do, just follow the cooking steps we outline after grains are soaked and drained well. Once ingredients are soaked, rinse and cook, or store in the fridge until you can cook.

Simple water or stock work great for cooking all of these foods, but have fun with the boiling liquid—infuse it with aromatics like celery, garlic, or shallots, a splash of wine or soy sauce, a piece of seaweed like kombu for tenderizing, herbs, a splash of juice, infused tea, or coffee.

*Here are the steps and general measurements for each:*

## **Brown rice**

Add dry rice to a dry pot with 1 teaspoon of oil and heat to medium. If you want to add some chopped, aromatic vegetables like onion, celery, or garlic, maybe some herbs, do that now. Stir constantly until rice starts to brown and smell nutty—1–2 minutes. You can skip this step entirely, but rice is always game-changing flavorful if you toast it a bit first.

Now fill the pot with enough water or stock to cover the rice by 2", season with a pinch of salt. Bring contents to a boil, then reduce the heat to a simmer. Cover and let cook for the specified time or until the water or stock is absorbed.

Taste the cooked goods; if too firm, add a little more water and cook a little longer. If you taste again and the texture is perfect but there's still some water left, strain out the liquid and return to the pot.

Remove from the heat and allow to sit and finish, covered, for 10 minutes. Keep in mind that up to ¼" of water could absorb during this rest time. Try not to peek, as trapped steam makes for a delicious texture. Fluff rice with a fork, season with salt and maybe pepper to taste and serve warm, or store in an airtight glass container in the fridge or freezer.

1 cup brown rice

3 cups water or stock

Cook time: 20 to 25 minutes

Yields: 2½ to 3 cups cooked

## Grains

Add dry grains like buckwheat, quinoa, or millet to a dry pot with 1 teaspoon of oil and heat to medium. If you want to add some chopped, aromatic vegetables like onion, celery, or garlic, maybe some herbs, do that now. Stir constantly until grains start to brown and smell nutty (about 3-5 minutes). You can skip this step, but it adds nice flavor.

Now fill the pot with enough water or stock to cover the grains by 1", season with a pinch of salt. Bring contents to a boil, then reduce the heat to a simmer. Cover and let cook for the specified time or until the water or stock is absorbed.

Taste the cooked goods; if too firm, add a little more water and cook a little longer. If you taste again and the texture is perfect but there's still some water left, strain out the liquid and return to the pot.

Remove from the heat and allow to sit and finish, covered, for 10 minutes. Keep in mind that up to ¼" of water could absorb during this rest time. Try not to peek, as trapped steam makes for a delicious texture. Fluff grains with a fork, season with salt and maybe pepper to taste and serve warm, or store in an airtight glass container in the fridge or freezer.

1 cup buckwheat

2 cups water or stock

Cook time: 10 to 15 minutes

Yields: 2 cups cooked

1 cup quinoa or millet

2½ cups water or stock

Cook time: 10 to 15 minutes

Yields: 3 cups cooked

## Pulses

Make sure that you pick through your pulses before soaking and cooking to remove any debris, shriveled pulses, or tiny stones. Then, rinse the pulses under cold water to remove any dust or dirt. Soak completely submerged in a bowl of water for 8–12 hours, then drain and rinse.

Add soaked pulses to a large pot and fill with enough water or stock to cover the pulses by 2–3", season with a pinch of salt. Bring contents to a boil, then reduce the heat to a simmer. Cover pot and let cook for the specified time for the particular pulse you're cooking with or until the water or stock is absorbed. See the Ingredient Index for more details.

Sample pulses as you cook them to find the right firmness to suit your tastes and recipe. If too firm, add more water or stock if needed, and cook a little longer. If you taste again and the texture is perfect but there's still some water left, strain out the liquid and return to the pot.

Season to taste with salt and maybe pepper, and serve warm, or store in an airtight glass container in the fridge or freezer.

1 cup beans  
4 cups water or stock  
Cook time: 45 to 120 minutes  
Yields: 3+ cups cooked

1 cup chickpeas  
4 cups water or stock  
Cook time: 45 to 60 minutes  
Yields: 3+ cups cooked

1 cup lentils (red, green, brown, French, beluga)  
2 cups water or stock  
Cook time: 10 to 20 minutes except red, which take 7 to 10 minutes  
Yields: 3+ cups cooked

## Tips for cooking pasta

Now, follow the instructions on a package of pasta, but here are a few tips to keep in mind as you do for excellent noodles every time.

If you remember nothing else, remember this: boil water, then add pasta. Adding noodles before boiling makes for soggy, poorly cooked noodles because the starches will suck up too much water, and at various temperatures.

Also, when cooking pasta, once the water is boiling, add 1–3 teaspoons of sea salt (not iodized salt) per quart of water—not a splash of oil. Sea salt is known to increase the boiling temp a smidge (really, like only 1 degree), but like with grains and rice, it also enhances the flavor of the pasta from the inside out. Adding oil to boiling water is known to keep the water from boiling over the pot, but it hangs out on top of the pot instead of infusing or preventing sticking of the pasta at all. Plus, you strain through all of this oil, it coats the pasta and keep yummy sauce from sticking to your noodles. It's a bit of a waste and can make for an oily plate.

Make sure you have a lot of water in a big pot so the noodles can move around in all that bubbly churning action—this space and vigorous activity prevents the pasta from sticking together. Roughly 12 cups of water per every 3½ cups of pasta is a good ratio.

Gently stir noodles as soon as you drop them into the boiling water to encourage them to ride the churn instead of sticking together.

If you'll be using your pasta for a cold recipe like pasta salad or for a stir-fry, rinse with cold water when you drain to remove starch and halt the cooking process. If you'll be tossing cooked noodles with a warm tomato, mushroom, cream, or pesto sauce after draining, don't rinse the pasta—leave that starchy exterior intact because it helps sauce stick to the noodles.

## Lesson Actions

Think of your future self while practicing new techniques. Prep some single ingredients for the next few days. Braise, poach, stew, blanch, and/or cook some grains, rice, or pulses.

Think of versatile ingredients that could work in many ways: served in a wrap; over rice or grains; chilled and tossed with a salad; or enjoyed solo.

For example, poach some beets (for lunches/dinners) or pears (for breakfasts/desserts), braise some carrots, stew some hearty greens and mushrooms, and/or cook some lentils and quinoa.

Store these items in airtight containers in the fridge or freezer to throw together quick meals when you need them.

Think creatively. If you have cooked lentils, poached beets, and braised carrots, could you mix them up with some garlic and lemon for a quick en papillote for dinner?

Try out these techniques so you fall in love with how they will change your cooking routine for the better.