

MODULE 3: PREP & COOKING I | TRANSCRIPT

LESSON 2

Cooking Lingo

Little things can make all the difference. The way you prepare one ingredient can change the flavor and texture of a finished dish so dramatically that something as simple as misunderstanding the difference between “chop” and “dice” can be enough to make someone abandon a home-cooked meal and pick up the phone for takeout instead.

Becoming fluent in basic kitchen-speak will help you understand recipe instructions so you can confidently get to work. Let's dig into some common cooking terms and a little about why these techniques are important for good food cooking:

Al dente

The texture of well-cooked pasta, a bit firm, not too soft. A recipe may call for al dente pasta because it's simply the desired texture for the finished dish or because you'll be cooking or baking it with sauce and you need to allow the pasta to soak up additional liquid without becoming mushy.

Bake

To cook food (covered or uncovered) in an oven.

Beat

To make a mixture smooth by whipping or stirring vigorously with a fork, spoon, whisk, or mixer.

Bias

To slice on a 45-degree angle.

Blanch

To partially cook foods in boiling water (or to steam them) to intensify and set color and flavor. After 30 seconds in boiling water or over steam, remove the fruit or vegetable and immediately plunge into ice water to stop the cooking action. This is an important step in prepping certain foods for freezing, as well as loosening the skins on nuts or produce like peaches and tomatoes.

Blend

To mix or fold two or more ingredients together, oftentimes with a blender, so that they're evenly distributed throughout the mixture.

Boil

To cook food in liquid (like water or stock) at a temperature that causes bubbles to form in the liquid and rise in a steady pattern, breaking at the surface.

Broil

A quick oven-cooking method where high temperature, in close proximity to the food, is used to brown it. Most broilers are at the top of the oven, but some are in the bottom in a drawer compartment.

Brown

To cook a food in a skillet, broiler, or oven to add flavor and aroma. Browning develops a rich color on the outside and moistness on the inside.

Chiffonade

A fun-to-say French word meaning "made of rags." Chiffonade refers to thin strips of fresh herbs or leaves. Usually leaves are stacked on top of each other, rolled, then sliced to achieve strips.

Chop

To cut foods into smaller pieces with a knife, cleaver, or food processor. “Large chop” means that each piece is roughly a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch cube, similar to the size of a nickel. A “medium chop” is about half that size; think kidney bean-sized. A “small chop” is also known as “diced”— $\frac{1}{4}$ " on all sides is your goal here.

An even chop ensures that food cooks evenly. And the larger the chop, the longer your cooking time—so if you’re in a hurry at mealtime, chop smaller pieces for faster cooking. A smaller chop also provides more opportunity for an ingredient to absorb flavor. If you were to soak an entire Portobello mushroom in a marinade, that marinade would take longer to fully season than if you chopped the mushroom first. Chopping gives the marinade more entry points for the flavor to seep in.

Core

To remove the tough, center part (aka core) and seeds from fruit.

Crumble

To break apart into smaller pieces, usually by hand.

Dice

To cut food with a knife into small cubes roughly $\frac{1}{4}$ inch on all sides. It’s also known as a “small chop.” Like with chopped foods, dicing also helps add texture to recipes and ensures consistent, quick cooking for a dish.

Fold

A method of gently mixing delicate ingredients (usually after they’ve been whipped and aerated) without decreasing their volume. To fold, use a silicone spatula to cut down vertically through the mixture from the back of the bowl. Move the spatula across the bottom of the bowl, and bring it back up the front

side, carrying some of the mixture from the bottom up over the surface. Repeat these steps, rotating the bowl one-fourth of a turn each time you complete the process.

Grate/shred

To rub foods like vegetables, or whole nutmeg or ginger root, back and forth across a grating surface to make small slivers or powder. A food processor also may be used to speed up grating and shredding.

Grease

To coat a baking pan or skillet with a thin layer of oil. A pastry brush works well or you can use your fingers.

Juice

To extract the liquid from fruits and vegetables.

Julienne

To slice into short, thin strips, like matchsticks.

Line

To place parchment paper or a silicone baking mat over the surface of a dish, pan, or baking sheet.

Marinate

To coat or immerse foods in a liquid ingredient to add flavor before cooking. Usually you marinate for an extended period of time prior to cooking.

Mince

To chop food (like garlic) into teeny-tiny pieces—the smallest dice possible—to evenly distribute and infuse color, texture, and flavor to a dish. Pro Tip: When mincing garlic, try sprinkling the clove with a pinch of fine-ground sea salt to help prevent the sugars from sticking to your knife.

Mix

To stir or beat two or more foods together until they are thoroughly combined. May be done with an electric mixer, a rotary beater, or by hand.

Peel

To remove the outer covering or skin of a fruit or vegetable with your fingers, a peeler, or a knife.

Pinch

A small amount of a dry ingredient—the amount that can be pinched between the pointer finger and the thumb—roughly $\frac{1}{8}$ – $\frac{1}{16}$ of a teaspoon. When a recipe calls for “a pinch” of an ingredient, it’s like saying “to taste.” It’s vague on purpose. The goal is to train the taste buds so that you become the ultimate judge of what the right amount is, tasting as you go, rather than the recipe itself.

Pipe

To squeeze a semisoft food, such as frosting, through a pastry bag. Piping is a way of adding an ingredient as a decoration.

Pit

To remove the seed from fruit like dates or peaches.

Preheat

To heat an oven or a utensil to a specific temperature before using it.

Purée

To process or mash a food until it's as smooth as possible. This can be done using a blender, food processor, masher, or sieve. Purée also refers to the resulting mixture texture. Purées add moisture and natural sweetness to baked goods, and they add creamy flavor to cereals and soups.

Reduce

To decrease the volume of a liquid by boiling it rapidly or simmering to cause evaporation. Reducing thickens and intensifies flavor. And, if you reduce a liquid until it becomes almost syrupy or gravy-like in texture, with an intense, concentrated flavor, it becomes a "reduction," which can be used as a sauce, as a dressing, or as the base of a sauce.

Roast

A cooking method using high heat (oven or open flame), to enhance flavor and texture through browning.

Roll/roll out

These terms refer to forming food into shapes. Dough, for instance, can be rolled into ropes or balls, while dough or pastry can be "rolled out" into a thin, flat sheet (usually with a rolling pin).

Sauté

To cook food in a small amount of oil or stock over medium to high heat in an open, shallow pan or skillet. When you sauté you'll want to cut food into uniform sizes for best results and even cooking time.

Score

To lightly cut shallow, narrow slits just into the outer surface of a food to make it more flexible, to decorate it, or to help it absorb more flavor so oil, marinade, or sauce can seep into it as it cooks.

Sift

To put one or more dry ingredients, usually flour, through a sifter or sieve to remove lumps and to incorporate air in the ingredient(s) for a smoother texture and more even consistency.

Simmer

To cook food in a liquid that is almost—but not quite—boiling. A liquid has reached a simmer when you can see tiny bubbles forming slowly and rising to the surface.

Slurry

A mixture of arrowroot, flour, or cornstarch and liquid (usually water or stock) used to thicken a sauce or soup. A slurry should be mixed together first, then added to a sauce to thicken without lumps.

Steam

To cook food in the vapor given off by boiling water, tea, stock, juice, or other liquid.

Stir

To mix ingredients with a spoon or other utensil to combine them, to prevent ingredients from sticking during cooking or to cool them after cooking.

To taste

Seasoning a recipe to your liking. To add salt, pepper, or other seasoning “to taste,” start with roughly ¼ teaspoon, stir well, give it a taste, and then add more if needed.

Whip

To use a wire whisk, rotary beater, or electric mixer to beat food lightly, but rapidly to incorporate air into the mixture and increase its volume.

Zest

The colorful outer layer of citrus fruit peel. It's rich in fruit oils and very fragrant, so it's often used as a seasoning to brighten flavor. To remove the zest, scrape a grater or fruit zester across the peel, run the citrus over a microplane zester, or use a sharp chef's knife to slice it off and mince into tiny pieces. Try to get only the brightly colored part of the citrus peel, avoiding the bitter white membrane underneath (aka the pith).

Lesson Actions

Try one new technique this week in the kitchen.

Share with friends, family, or the course community what you tried and how it went.

Make sure to write it all down in your cooking journal.