
Basic Cooking Terms and Tools

Cooking at home is a great way to eat healthier! Knowing a few common terms and having basic tools can help you get started.

Benefits of Cooking at Home

- Enjoy more plant-based foods including fruits, vegetables, beans, and whole grains.
- Exploring new foods or ingredients.
- Discovering ways to spruce up recipes to fit your health needs such as lowering sodium and adding fiber.

Common Abbreviations

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| • C = Cup | • pt = Pint |
| • tbsp or T = Tablespoon | • fl oz = Fluid Ounce |
| • tsp or t = Teaspoon | • lb = Pound |
| • oz = ounce | • g = Gram |
| • qt = Quart | • mg = Milligram |

Measurement Conversions

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| • 3 teaspoons = 1 Tablespoon | • 1 pint = 2 Cups |
| • 4 Tablespoons = $\frac{1}{4}$ Cup | • 1 quart = 2 pints/4 cups |
| • 8 fluid ounces = 1 Cup* | • 1 gallon = 4 quarts/16 cup |

*Note: Fluid measures like water, oil, and dry measures such as flour require different tools to measure.

Basic Cooking Tools



Chef knife: A large knife, 8 or 10 inches long for cutting vegetables and meats.

Paring knife: A small knife 6 inches for controlled cuts and small items like garlic.

Cutting board: Used for cutting vegetables and meat, for safety have several in different colors to keep raw meat, vegetables, and cooked foods separate.

Liquid measuring cup: Used for measuring liquid ingredients such as water or broth, more accurate for measuring liquid ingredients than measuring cups. Needs to be made of glass or clear plastic for accurate measurements.

Dry measuring cups: Used for measuring dry ingredients such as flour, sugar, chopped vegetables, and grains.

Measuring spoons: Used for measuring dry ingredients needed in small amounts such as herbs and spices.

Paring knife: A small knife 6 inches for controlled cuts and small items like garlic.

Common Food Preparation Terms

Mince: To cut or chop food into extremely small pieces.

Dice: To cut food in small cubes of uniform size and shape.

Chop: To cut solids into pieces with a sharp knife or other chopping device without focusing on size or shape.

Grate: To create small, shredded pieces by rubbing food against a jagged surface such as a cheese grater.

Zest: To scrape the outer rind piece of a citrus fruit.

Slice: To cut through or across into slices, generally of uniform size

Terms Used for Different Cooking Methods

Bake: type of dry heat cooking —food is cooked using the hot air surrounding it, usually in an oven

Blanch: To cover food in rapidly boiling water and cooked for a short time.

Braise: To cook food, tightly covered, in a small amount of liquid at low heat for a long time. Long, slow cooking tenderizes meats by gently breaking down the protein. The braising liquid keeps meats moist and later can be used as a base for sauce. Water or broth is a common braising liquid.

Boil: To heat a liquid until bubbles break continually on the surface.

Caramelize: Heat cooks proteins and sugars on a foods' surface browning the food and adding flavor.

Poach: To cook very gently in hot liquid kept just below the boiling point.

Roast: To cook by dry heat in an oven.

Sauté: To cook and/or brown food in a small amount of hot fat.

Simmer: To cook slowly in a small amount of liquid over low heat at a temperature of about 180°F. The surface of the liquid should be barely moving, broken from time to time by slowly rising bubbles.

Steam: A small amount of water is brought to a boil and food is kept above the water on a rack in the pot.