Basic Cooking Terms and Tools

Cooking at home is a great way to eat healthier!

Benefits of cooking at home include:

- Eating more fruits, vegetables, beans and whole grains
- Trying new foods or ingredients
- Being able to modify a recipe to fit your health needs such as lowering sodium or adding fiber

Knowing a few common terms and having a few basic tools can help you get started cooking

**Common Measurements**

- C = Cup
- Tbsp. or T. = Tablespoon
- Tsp. or t. = Teaspoon
- oz. = Ounce
- qt. = Quart
- pt. = Pint
- fl. Oz. = Fluid Ounce
- lb. = Pound
- g = Gram
- Mg = Milligram

**Measurement conversions**

- 3 teaspoons (tsp.) = 1 Tablespoon (T.)
- 4 Tablespoons = ¼ Cup (C)
- 8 fl. oz = 1 Cup (C)
- 1 pint (pt.) = 2 Cups (C)
- 1 quart (qt.) = 2 pints or 4 cups
- 1 gallon = 4 quarts or 16 cups

**Terms used for cutting foods**

- **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.
Terms used for different cooking methods

**Blanch:** To cover food in rapidly boiling water and cooked just a little bit.

**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 food’s 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:** To cook in steam. A small amount of water is brought to a boil and food is kept above the water on a rack in the pot.

**Basic Cooking Tools:**

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

**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.

**Measuring Cups:** Used for measuring ingredients needed in larger amounts such as flour, 1 C., ½ C., ⅛ C., ¼ C. are common.

**Measuring Spoons:** Used for measuring ingredients needed in small amounts such as herbs and spices, 1T., ½ T., 1 t., ½ t., ¼ t., ⅛ t. are common.

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