



Culinary Prep Essentials

The secret of culinary success lies not in the amazing, creative recipes of the great chefs, but in the fairly consistent and fundamental processes and techniques every successful cook and chef executes. Professionals understand that the creativity – the fun, amazing part of cooking – must follow the basic techniques! So, with that in mind, here are some tips and basic procedures to help you become a pro at home! Are you serious about your cooking? Want to eat better, healthier and more quickly? [Contact us](#) about some professional, hands-on training.

Mise en Place

A French culinary term that translates to “everything in its place” is the primary foundation of all cooking – make sure everything you need is ready and waiting BEFORE you turn on that burner! Like most things in life, a little prep will save you a great deal of time, and result in much better food!

- Make sure all of the equipment required is ready, set-up and in place: this includes small electrics; cookware; bowls; hand-tools.
- Make sure all ingredients have been prepared, including cutting, seasoning, pre-cooking, etc.
- If you have a fairly complex menu, it helps to use masking tape or sticky notes to mark containers with ingredients by dish. This is especially important if you have prepped items ahead of time.
- Make sure all of your seasonings, spices, flavorings and other ingredients are measured, and placed next to your cooktop in the approximate order of use.
- Make sure you have plates, platters, racks or whatever is appropriate for your cooked product. It is usually easier to plate away from your cooking area.
- For multi course meals, plan the cooking process by working backwards: look at the process required from finish to start for each dish so you can begin each dish at the appropriate time.
- Here is the primary rule – if, while cooking, you need to walk or turn away from the cooktop, you have not done your mise!



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Fundamental Cooking Techniques

While there are thousands of amazing dishes to prepare and eat, there are really only a handful of cooking techniques utilized to prepare most of these dishes! Let's stick to a few fundamental techniques that provide the most bang and breadth.

- The [sauté and pan sauce technique](#) is so easy, and so flexible, that if that is all you master, you would have an infinite number of dishes available to you – limited only by available ingredients and imagination. The link above provides an solid overview of the technique, allowing you to cook an entire course in a single pan!
- Want quick healthy food? [Stir frying](#) can be used for any cuisine, and is quick and easy. Check out the link!
- Eat your vegetables! Most people love vegetables, but only if they have pleasant taste and texture! Here is the “secret” cooking technique used by every decent chef out there. And the great part – this technique allows you to cook your vegetables ahead of time! So here is the blanching technique:
 1. Wash and trim your vegetable (green bean, broccoli, carrot, other firm vegetables.)
 2. Fill the largest pot you have with water (to about 2 inches below the top) and bring to a roiling boil. Salt the boiling water (take care – the salt causes displacement and possible overflow).
 3. Add the vegetables. Bring back to a boil. Cook until just before “al dente” (with a bite). This can take anywhere from 2 to 10 minutes. The goal is to UNDERCOOK!
 4. If you are NOT immediately serving the vegetables, “shock” the vegetables. Drain and soak under iced or very cold running water until they are cool – they must be cool inside (bite to test). This stops the cooking, maintaining flavor and texture.
 5. Dry the cold vegetables. These can be stored in the refrigerator for a few days. To serve, reheat in a sauté pan with some oil or butter, and whatever flavoring you like. Serve.