

# Jr. Chef University Basic Cooking Skills



## Food and Kitchen Safety

There are basic rules that need to be followed for a safe cooking experience. Dressing appropriately, using proper food handling and storage procedures, understanding heat/fire safety and how to clean and sanitize before, during and after cooking are important skills to learn.

### Dress Like a Chef:

- Dress in an apron to protect clothing from stains, splashes, and heat.
- Tie back long hair to prevent hair from getting into food.
- Roll up sleeves to prevent loose sleeves from catching fire on the stove or getting contaminated by food and bacteria.
- Remove jewelry such as rings, bracelets, and watches. These have crevices where bacteria, and food particles can accumulate which can transfer to food and are not removed through normal handwashing.

### Handwashing:

Washing hands before cooking is one of the most important food hygiene rules. Although there are good types of bacteria, there are some germs that can make people very sick. This is why hands should be clean before handling food to make sure everyone stays healthy. Hands should be washed thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Tip: Sing the alphabet song or Happy Birthday twice!

Always wash your hands:

- Before you start preparing or eating food.
- After handling raw meat, poultry, seafood, or eggs.
- After using the restroom.
- After touching garbage or dirty dishes.
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- After touching pets or their food.
- Whenever you change tasks during food preparation

### Separate! Don't Cross-Contaminate:

The simple act of keeping raw and cooked foods separate, especially raw meat, during food preparation and storage is a critical step in food safety that helps prevent the spread of illness-causing germs.

- Use separate plates, cutting boards and utensils for raw and cooked foods.
- Wash the countertops and used dishes with hot, soapy water after handling raw meat, poultry, seafood, or eggs.
- Basic food hygiene in the fridge is important to avoid food contamination. Raw meat goes on the bottom shelf, vegetables in the salad drawers and dairy products at the top

### **Cook Food to the Right Temperature:**

It is important to maintain the temperature of foods to avoid germs that cause sickness:

- Use a food thermometer to ensure foods are cooked to a safe internal temperature.
- Whole cuts of beef, veal, lamb, and pork, including fresh ham: 145°F (then allow the meat to rest for 3 minutes before carving or eating)
- Fish with fins: 145°F or cook until the flesh is opaque and separates easily with a fork
- Ground meats, such as beef and pork: 160°F
- All poultry, including ground chicken and turkey: 165°F
- Leftovers and casseroles: 165°F

### **Chill! Refrigerate Promptly:**

Bacteria can multiply rapidly if left at room temperature or in the "Danger Zone" between 40°F and 140°F. Never leave perishable food out for more than 2 hours (or 1 hour if exposed to temperatures above 90°F). Thaw frozen food safely in the refrigerator, in cold water, or in the microwave. Never thaw food on the counter because bacteria multiply quickly in the parts of the food that reach room temperature.

### **Heat and Fire Safety:**

There are potential hazards related to stovetops and ovens, including burns and fire. Stoves, ovens, pans and dishes can be very hot and cause burns.

- -Turn handles of saucepans inwards on the stove when cooking.
- -Use oven mitts and potholders to handle hot items safely.
- -Keep a fire extinguisher close by.
- -Never leave cooking unattended.
- -Make sure stove area is clear of any paper, cleaning products, cloths – anything that is flammable.

### **Keep Preparation and Cooking Area Clean:**

It is important to maintain a clean and sanitary kitchen environment: Countertops, utensils, cooking equipment. Always “Clean as you go”

- Food that has dropped on the floor needs to be thrown away.
- Never taste test with the cooking spoon. To taste food, use a tasting spoon instead.

- Never lick fingers.

### **Knife Safety/Skills:**

Proper knife use in the kitchen is essential for safety, efficiency, and achieving consistent results.

- Use a cutting board. Cutting requires a stable surface so make sure the board is firmly in place.
- -Always cut with the blade of the knife angled down and away from you.
- -Hold the knife properly with the fingers of their dominant hand securely gripping the knife handle and the fingers of the other hand are curled under as they hold the food.
- -Never, ever grab a falling knife.
- -Keep knives on the prep table and never carry them around the room.
- -Cut round things in half, then place the flat edge down to cut more.
- Avoid distractions and focus to prevent mistakes and accidents.

## **Cooking Tools/Cookware and Use**

Being familiar with various kitchen tools/cookware and their uses enhances safety and efficiency in the kitchen. Knowing also improves the overall cooking experience, and the quality of the food prepared.

### **Basic Cooking Tools and Cookware used in the Kitchen while Preparing and Cooking Food:**

#### **Measuring Tools**

- Dry measuring cups: Used for measuring dry ingredients like flour, rice and sugar. Standard sizes are  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup,  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup, and 1 cup.
- Liquid measuring cup: Used to measure liquid ingredients like water, milk, and oil.
- Measuring spoons: Used to measure small amounts of dry and liquid ingredients. There are teaspoons (TSP) and tablespoons (TBSP).

#### **Cutting Tools**

- Chef's knife: This is the most common type of knife for cooking. This knife can be used for just about all your cutting needs.
- Paring knife: This small knife is best used for jobs where you must be more precise, like mincing and peeling.

#### **Mixing and Stirring Tools**

- Rubber spatula: used for mixing, stirring and spreading. The flexible end makes it good for scraping the sides of a bowl or dish.

- Wooden spoon: Used for mixing and stirring. It can also be used for stirring food on stove.
- Whisk: Used to blend and mix ingredients until they are smooth. The shape brings air into the mixture. Example: cake batter

### Cookware

- Pans: There are a few different kinds of pans, the types we would use most often are frying and sauté pans.
- Baking sheet: These are used for cooking in the oven, when you are baking and roasting.
- Pots: Used for boiling and steaming and come in many shapes and sizes. Big stock pots are good for soups and stews. Smaller pots are good for making rice and pasta.
- Thermometer: Used to gauge the temperature of foods.

### Other Useful Tools

- Cutting board: Used as a surface when you are cutting ingredients. They are usually made of plastic, wood or marble.
- Colander/Strainer: A bowl that has small holes in it, that is used to wash off fruits and vegetables or to drain water.
- Slotted spatula: Used to lift and flip food while it is cooking. This type of spatula can be metal or plastic.
- Vegetable peeler: Used to remove the outer skin or peel from fruits and veggies.
- Box grater: Used to grate or shred foods. Each side has different sized holes for bigger or smaller pieces.

## Prep Skills/Reading Recipes/Ingredient Measurement

The ability to properly read a recipe, accurately measure ingredients, and execute preparatory steps are fundamental to cooking successfully. These skills ensure safety and consistency, prevent food and ingredient waste, and build the confidence necessary to try new techniques and dishes.

### Mise en place

Mise en place is a French culinary phrase that translates to "everything in its place". It refers to the essential practice of organizing and preparing all necessary ingredients, tools, and equipment for a recipe before the actual cooking process begins. This method ensures ingredients are pre-measured, chopped, and arranged, streamlining the cooking process, preventing mistakes, and allowing the cook to focus on executing the dish.

- Read the Recipe: Read the entire recipe thoroughly, noting ingredients, quantities, and any special instructions.

- Gather tools and equipment: Collect all necessary tools and equipment, including knives, cutting boards, bowls, measuring cups, and utensils.
- Gather and prepare ingredients: Measure and prepare ingredients (e.g., washing, chopping, slicing).
- Set up - Organize ingredients in a logical order, making them readily accessible.

### Reading a Recipe

- Read through the recipe completely: This helps understand the entire process and identify any specific equipment or preparation steps needed.
- Understand recipe terminology: Know common cooking terms and abbreviations.
- Pay attention to commas: Commas in the ingredients list often indicate that the ingredient should be prepared before measuring it.
- Use the right tools: Use measuring cups and spoons specifically designed for cooking.
- Level dry ingredients: When measuring dry ingredients, level them off using a straight edge, unless recipe states otherwise.
- Be mindful of temperature: Follow the recipe's instructions regarding temperature, especially when baking.

### Why Accurate Measurement Matters:

- Consistency: Precise measurements, especially in baking, are essential for consistent results. Variations in ingredient amounts can significantly impact a dish's texture, taste, and appearance.
- Taste and Texture: Accurate measurements ensure the right balance of flavors and textures. For example, too much salt can make a dish unpalatable, while too little can leave it bland.
- Yield and Servings: Correct measurements help determine the final yield of the recipe, ensuring you have enough for your desired number of servings.
- Time: Knowing the recipe's timing and knowing how to properly measure ingredients can increase the ease and efficiency of the cooking experience.

## Seasonal Meal Preparation/Using Florida Agricultural Products

Eating with the seasons in Florida means incorporating produce, seafood, and livestock that are at their peak of freshness and availability into meal preparation. With 44,400 farms and ranches spread over 9.7 million acres, Florida produces a wide variety of fresh and tasty food available year-round. Incorporating Fresh from Florida ingredients into recipes offers a wide range of benefits, including superior flavor, better nutrition, and a positive environmental and economic

impact. By cooking with Florida's seasonal bounty, you can create more vibrant and healthy meals while supporting local growers and producers.

### **Buying in Season Matters**

- **Freshness:** Food imported from faraway states and countries is often older, has traveled and sits in distribution centers, reducing freshness and quality.
- **Flavor:** Fresh food tastes better and has a richer, more complex flavor.
- **Nutrition:** Eating with the seasons naturally exposes you to a wider variety of foods throughout the year, ensuring a broader spectrum of essential nutrients of vitamins and minerals.
- **Lower Cost:** When a food is in season, there is a higher supply, leading to lower prices due to less need for expensive, long-distance transportation and refrigeration.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Growing and transporting product out of season can have a greater negative impact on the environment. Seasonal eating reduces the "food miles" and associated carbon footprint.

### **The Importance of Buying Local**

- Purchasing local food keeps money in the community, as opposed to it going to large corporations in other cities or countries.
- Building personal connections with farmers and producers fosters a stronger sense of community by connecting people to their food sources and fostering greater food security.
- Supporting local food systems helps sustain local farms and small businesses, which in turn supports jobs and the livelihoods in neighborhoods.
- Keeping the economic viability of local farming helps preserve farmland from being developed into other uses.