

Food Preparation Techniques

Food Preparation Techniques – Study Notes

1. Overview

Food preparation techniques are the methods used to transform raw ingredients into edible dishes. Mastery of these techniques improves flavor, texture, safety, and presentation. The techniques can be grouped into three main categories:

Category	Primary Goal	Typical Tools
Heat-Based	Cook, brown, melt, or caramelize foods	Stoves, ovens, grills, fryers, microwaves
Cold/No-Heat	Preserve freshness, combine flavors, create structure	Knives, mandolines, mixers, bowls
Finishing/Finishing Touches	Add final flavor, texture, or visual appeal	Saucepans, blenders, whisks, garnishing tools

2. Heat-Based Techniques

Technique	Definition	Key Steps	Common Uses	Tips for Success
Boiling	Cooking food in rapidly moving water (100°C/212°F at sea level)	- Bring water to a rolling boil. - Add food; maintain boil. - Cook until desired doneness.	Pasta, potatoes, eggs, vegetables	Salt water for flavor; use a large pot to avoid overflow.
Simmering	Gentle cooking just below boiling (85-95°C)	- Heat liquid to a low boil. - Reduce heat; bubbles rise slowly. - Cook for longer periods.	Soups, stews, sauces, braised meats	Prevents toughening; ideal for delicate proteins.

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Steaming	Cooking food by hot vapor (100°C)	1. Fill pot with water; bring to boil. 2. Place food in a perforated basket above water. 3. Cover tightly.	Vegetables, fish, dumplings	Keep lid tight; avoid overcooking to retain color and nutrients.
Poaching	Gentle cooking in liquid below simmer (70-80°C)	1. Heat broth or water to target temperature. 2. Add food; maintain temperature. 3. Cook until set.	Eggs, delicate fish, fruits	Use a thermometer; low temperature keeps texture tender.
Sautéing	Quick cooking in a small amount of fat over medium-high heat	1. Heat pan; add oil/butter. 2. Add food in a single layer. 3. Toss or stir constantly.	Vegetables, thin meats, aromatics	Do not overcrowd pan; preheat for a good sear.
Stir-Frying	High-heat, rapid cooking while constantly moving food	1. Heat wok; add oil. 2. Add ingredients in order of cooking time. 3. Toss continuously.	Asian-style dishes, thin-cut meats, veggies	Use a high smoke-point oil; keep ingredients dry.
Grilling/Barbecuing	Direct radiant heat (charcoal, gas, electric)	1. Preheat grill; oil grates. 2. Place food; close lid if needed. 3. Turn to achieve even char.	Steaks, burgers, vegetables, seafood	Let meat rest 5-10 min after grilling for juices to redistribute.

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Roasting	Cooking by hot, dry air in an oven (usually 180?230? °C)	1. Preheat oven. 2. Place food on a rack or pan. 3. Roast until		