

[fast fact]

Did You Know...?

Garlic belongs to the onion family. Its strong odor comes from the oils found in the bulb. To get rid of the smell of garlic from your hands, place your hands under cold running water while rubbing a stainless steel object.

Essential Skills*Peeling and Dicing an Onion*

One of the most common tasks in a kitchen is preparing onions. Peeling and dicing an onion can be laborious work, but it is simplified by using the following steps. See Figure 5.22.

- ① Holding the onion on its side, slice off its top and bottom, taking care not to remove too much of the root end, otherwise, the onion will fall apart.
- ② Stand the onion upright (root end down) and slice it in half vertically.
- ③ Peel each half, discarding the peels.
- ④ With the curved side of the onion half half up, carefully make a number of horizontal cuts in the onion, taking care not to slice completely through the onion's root end; the number of cuts depends upon the size of the dice required.
- ⑤ Make a number of vertical cuts through the onion at right angles to the original cuts, again depending on the size of the dice required and without cutting through the onion's root end.
- ⑥ Slice across the onion to form dice.

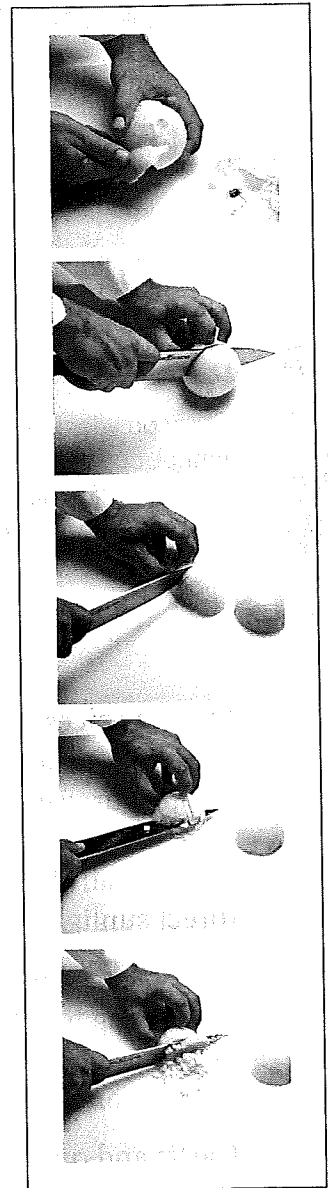


Figure 5.22: Peeling and dicing an onion.

There are herbs and spices that must be used carefully because their dominant flavors can overpower the flavor of the dish. Rosemary, cinnamon, cardamom, and paprika are examples of herbs and spices that must be used with caution.

The key to using herbs and spices well is to build layers of flavor by adding items at various stages of cooking so that they are at their peak when the dish is served. Seasoning should always be checked and adjusted as the final step in completing the dish.

Use salt and pepper at the beginning of the cooking process. This will ensure that sauces, butter, or other liquids will not wash off the seasoning. It will also ensure that if a cook uses the sauté technique for a dish and **deglazes** the pan with a liquid to dissolve the remaining bits of sautéed food, the salt used will be incorporated into the sauce, and the cook won't need to add more.

[ServSafe Connection]

Preserving Herbs

Raw herbs are not TCS food. However, fresh herbs such as tarragon, basil, chervil, etc., may deteriorate very quickly. Keep them under refrigeration to preserve quality and flavor, especially because they're expensive and can be very labor intensive to prepare.

Pre-preparation Techniques

Mise en place also involves pre-preparing certain ingredients that need to be refined before they are ready for use at the time of preparation. Basic cooking techniques in pre-preparation include separating eggs, whipping egg whites, setting up a bain-marie, and making parchment liners for pans.

Essential Skills

Separating Eggs

Note: It is necessary to separate eggs when a recipe calls for only raw egg yolks or egg whites.

- 1 Use two containers and a small bowl.
- 2 Crack open the egg over the bowl.
- 3 Transfer the egg back and forth between the halves of the shell, letting the white drop into the bowl. See Figure 5.23.
- 4 Place the yolk in one of the containers.
- 5 Inspect the egg white. If there are any traces of yolk present, reserve it for use in other preparations. If the white is clean, transfer it to the container for egg whites.

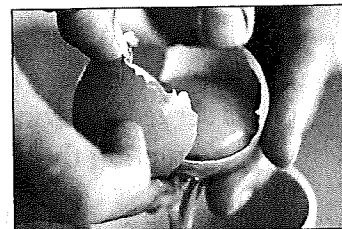


Figure 5.23: Step 3—Transfer the egg back and forth between the shells.

Essential Skills

Whipping Egg Whites

- 1 Thoroughly clean the mixing bowl and whisk. Oil residue will reduce the volume of the whipped egg white.
 - 2 For the greatest volume in whipped egg whites, start with the egg whites at room temperature.
 - 3 Begin whipping the egg whites by hand or machine at a moderate speed. Tilt the bowl to make whipping by hand easier, resting the bowl on a folded towel to prevent it from slipping. To add more volume and give the foam greater stability, add a small amount of lemon juice or cream of tartar. See Figure 5.24.
- When the whites are quite foamy, increase the speed of the mixer.

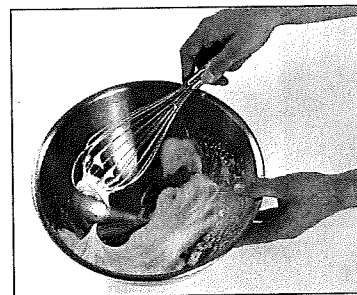


Figure 5.24: Step 3—Tilt the bowl to whip the egg whites.

- ④ Whip to the appropriate stage. Never overbeat egg whites. Overbeaten egg whites may still resemble those at the stiff peak stage, but their surface looks dry.
 - Soft peak has a droopy, rounded peak.
 - Medium peak has a moist surface and forms a rounded, but fairly stable, peak.
 - Stiff peak has stiff, stable peaks. Stop beating while the surface is still moist and glossy.

Note: The method for whipping cream is the same as that for whipping egg whites. The cream should be cold when whipped. Clean and chill both the bowl and beaters in advance to give the whipped cream more volume.

Essential Skills

Setting Up a Bain-Marie

A **bain-marie** is a hot-water bath used to hold hot food and keep it at safe temperatures.

- ① Set up a deep pan large enough to hold containers of food comfortably.
- ② Carefully add enough hot water to fill one-half to two-thirds of the pan.
- ③ Add food containers. See Figure 5.25.



Figure 5.25:
Step 3—Add food containers.

Essential Skills

Making a Parchment Liner for a Round Pan

Parchment paper is often used to line pans to prevent food from sticking to them. In addition, it is also used to make a cartouche, which covers the surface of a stew, soup, stock, or sauce to reduce evaporation, to prevent a skin from forming, and/or to keep components submerged.

- ❶ Cut a square of parchment paper a little larger than the pan's diameter.
- ❷ Fold the square in half to form a triangle.
- ❸ Continue folding in half until a long, thin triangle is formed. See Figure 5.26.
- ❹ Position the triangle's narrow end above the pan's center and cut away the part that extends beyond the edge of the pan.
- ❺ Unfold the triangle and flatten it into the pan.

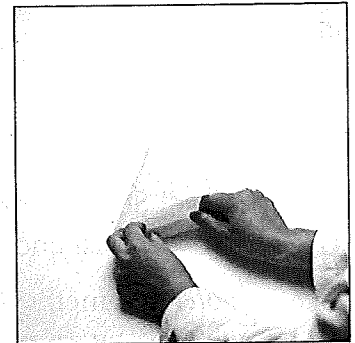


Figure 5.26: Step 3—Fold the square until a long triangle is formed.

Blanching is another pre-preparation technique that will be discussed in greater detail in Section 5.3. This is the moist-heat method of cooking that involves cooking in a liquid or with steam just long enough to cook the outer portion of the food. The food is immediately placed in ice water to stop carryover cooking, also referred to as shocking.

Summary

In this section, you learned the following:

- *Mise en place* is French for “to put in place.” It refers to the preparation and assembly of ingredients, pans, utensils, equipment, and serving pieces needed for a particular dish or service.
- To use knives properly, hold the food on the cutting board with one hand and hold the knife by its handle with the other. In every grip, the hand that is not holding the knife prevents slippage and helps to control the size of the cut. The fingers of the guiding hand are bent inward toward the palm, and the thumb is held well back. One finger should be the farthest forward, with the other fingers and thumb behind that finger. This allows a clear view when cutting.
- A seasoning is something that enhances the flavor of an item without changing the primary flavor of the dish. Flavor refers to the way a food tastes, as well as its texture, appearance, doneness, and temperature.
- Basic cooking techniques in pre-preparation include separating eggs, whipping egg whites, setting up a bain-marie, making parchment liners for pans, and blanching and shocking.

Section 5.2 Review Questions

- 1 Name and explain three types of basic cooking techniques.
- 2 Explain *mise en place*.
- 3 Describe how to use a knife properly.
- 4 What is the difference between seasoning and flavoring?
- 5 Why does Benny Gordon say that *mise en place* is the most important element of cooking?
- 6 Why is it important for Alex to execute basic *mise en place* skills properly?
- 7 Give an example of a dish in which many different flavorings are used. How does the cook make sure that one flavor does not overwhelm the others?
- 8 Explain how creating time lines can streamline your work.

Section 5.2 Activities

1. Study Skills/Group Activity: Planning Ahead

A popular menu item at your bistro is a seared duck breast, served with roasted potatoes and sautéed carrots. Work with two other students to follow the “Planning Ahead” rules on p. 303 to determine what steps are involved in creating and serving this dish. What work can be done in advance? In what order should the work be done?

2. Activity: Practice Basic Knife Cuts

Practice the basic knife cuts on p. 305, using a ruler to check sizes. Work on perfecting the correct size and shape for each cut.

3. Critical Thinking: Flavorings

What are some common flavorings you enjoy, and in what dishes do you especially enjoy them? How does that reflect your family’s heritage or your community’s nature?