

Vegetables must be cooked in a way that protects their texture, flavor, color, and nutrients. Overcooking vegetables will reduce their quality, nutrient value, and appearance.

Maintaining the quality and flavor of the vegetable depends on both the type of vegetable and the cooking method used. There are many cooking methods for vegetables:

- Boiling (blanching, parboiling)
- Steaming
- Microwaving
- Roasting and baking
- Sautéing and stir-frying
- Pan-frying
- Deep-frying
- Grilling
- Stewing and braising
- *Sous vide*
- Puréeing

See Table 9.11 for the appropriate cooking method for different vegetables.

Table 9.11: Vegetable Cooking Guide	
Cooking Method	Appropriate for:
Baking	Carrots, eggplant, mushrooms, onions, potatoes, squash, tomatoes
Boiling	Dried beans and legumes, cabbage, carrots, corn on the cob, potatoes
Braising	Cabbage, celery, mushrooms, potatoes, squash, zucchini
Broiling	Eggplant, mushrooms, onions, tomatoes
Deep-frying	Brussels sprouts, carrots, cauliflower, eggplant, potatoes, squash, zucchini
Steaming	Artichokes, asparagus, green beans, beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, onions, potatoes

Cooks use both appearance and texture to test whether or not a vegetable is cooked. Green vegetables show a visible difference from one stage of doneness to another. White and orange vegetables show very little change in their color,

so cooks check their texture to determine doneness. Table 9.12 illustrates the different color changes in vegetables and shows whether cooking vegetables in acid or alkali is necessary to keep the natural color.

Table 9.12: Vegetable Color Changes During Cooking

Color	Examples of Vegetables	Cooked with Acid	Cooked with Alkali	Overcooked	Reason for Its Color
White	Potatoes, turnips, cauliflower, onions, white cabbage	Yellow	Yellowish, gray		No coloring compounds
Red	Beets, red cabbage (but not tomatoes; their pigment is like that in yellow vegetables)	Red	Blue/blue green	Greenish blue, faded	Anthocyanins that respond to pH changes
Green	Asparagus, green beans, lima beans, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, peas, spinach, okra, green peppers, artichokes	Olive green	Bright green	Olive green	Chlorophyll that responds to pH changes
Yellow and orange	Carrots, tomatoes, rutabagas, sweet potatoes, squash, corn	Little change	Little change	Slightly faded	Beta-carotene, which has no noticeable color response to pH changes

Boiling is best for hard, starchy vegetables, such as corn and potatoes. Blanch vegetables by quickly and partially cooking them in hot water or oil. This cooking method has some important effects:

- Makes the skin easy to remove
- Sets the color of vegetables that are served cold
- Eliminates or reduces strong flavors
- Is the first step in other cooking methods

Parboiling, like blanching, partially cooks vegetables in boiling water.

Steaming is an excellent way to prepare vegetables for to-order service. It is the best way to retain vitamins and minerals because the vegetables are cooked gently in a vapor, or steam bath, not in direct contact with water.

Essential Skills

Steaming Vegetables

- ① Bring the liquid to a full boil, and add the seasonings and aromatics.
- ② Add the vegetables to the steamer in a single layer. See Figure 9.23a.
- ③ Steam the vegetables to the desired doneness.
- ④ Serve the vegetables, or plunge them in an ice bath and then refresh and hold. See Figure 9.23b.



Figure 9.23a: Step 2—Add the items to the steamer in a single layer.



Figure 9.23b: Step 4—Serve or plunge the items in an ice bath.

Microwaves cause food molecules to vibrate, and the friction from that vibration generates heat. This causes the food's natural liquids to steam the item. Cook vegetables in a microwave-safe container, covered, in a small amount of liquid. Or leave the vegetable whole, with the skin or peel intact, and steam it with its own moisture.

Essential Skills

Microwaving Vegetables

- ① Place the vegetable in a suitable dish or plate, and cover it.
- ② Place it in a microwave oven, and cook it to the desired doneness.

- 3 Serve the vegetables, or refresh and hold. See Figure 9.24.

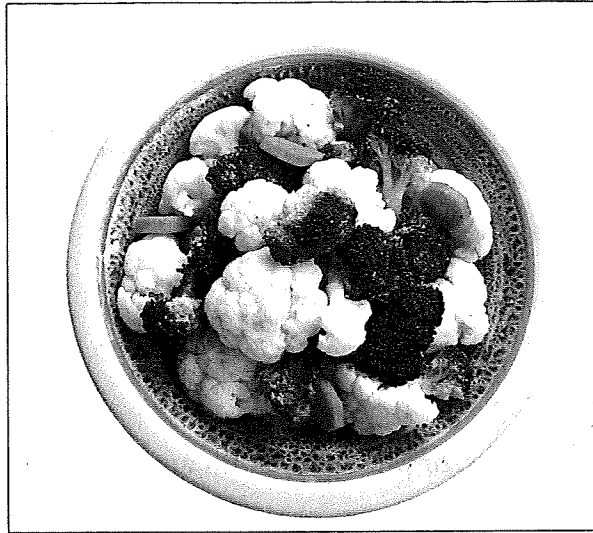


Figure 9.24: Step 4—Serve the vegetables.

Roasting and baking are two very popular ways to cook vegetables. Roast or bake vegetables in a hot or moderate oven. Leave them whole or cut them into large pieces without adding liquid. This cooking method is best suited to vegetables with thick skins that protect the interior from drying or scorching, such as winter squash, potatoes, and eggplant. Figure 9.25 is a photo of roasted crab apple with pork.



Figure 9.25: Adding roasted vegetables to a dish is a way to make a healthy and hearty dish.

Essential Skills*Roasting Vegetables*

- ① Place the vegetables onto a preheated, hot pan and into a hot or moderate oven.
- ② Roast them to the desired doneness. See Figure 9.26.
- ③ Serve, hold, or use them in a secondary technique.



Figure 9.26: Step 2—Roast to desired doneness.

While thick-skinned vegetables are well suited for roasting, vegetables with little or no skin are best when sautéed. Sautéing gives vegetables a crisp texture. Some vegetables are suitable for sautéing in their raw state, such as mushrooms and onions. Partially cook denser vegetables, such as green beans and carrots, before they are sautéed.

Essential Skills*Sautéing and Stir-Frying Vegetables*

- ① Heat the pan; add the cooking medium, and heat it.
- ② Add the vegetables.
- ③ Sauté the vegetables, keeping it in motion. See Figure 9.27a.
- ④ Add the aromatics, seasonings, or glaze, and heat thoroughly.

- 5 Serve the vegetables immediately. Figure 9.27b.

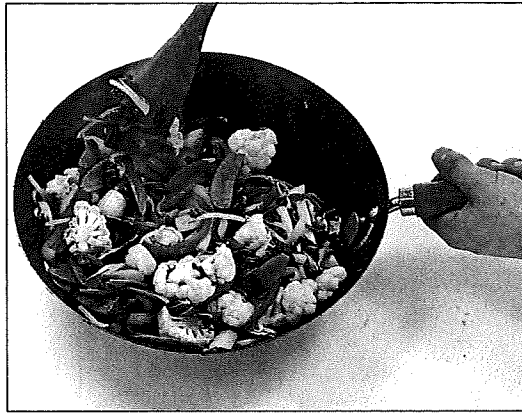


Figure 9.27a: Step 3—Keep vegetables in motion.

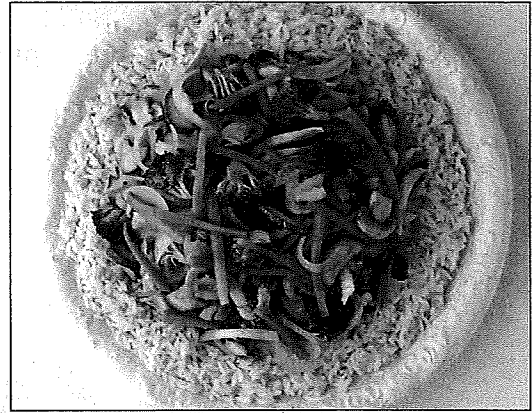


Figure 9.27b: Step 5—Serve immediately.

Glazing is a finishing technique that gives vegetables a glossy appearance. Add a small amount of honey, sugar, or maple syrup to the vegetable to coat it and give it a sheen as the vegetable reheats. For example, cooks often glaze small pearl onions and baby carrots.

Essential Skills

Glazing Vegetables

- 1 Bring the liquid to a simmer and season or flavor as the recipe instructs.
- 2 Sweat or smother the vegetables and any aromatics in a cooking fat or in the cooking liquid, if desired. See Figure 9.28a.
- 3 Pour or ladle enough cooking liquid into the pan to properly cook the vegetables.
- 4 Cover the pan and cook until the vegetables are done.
- 5 Remove the vegetables and drain. See Figure 9.28b.
- 6 Reserve the cooking liquid. Add honey, brown sugar, or maple syrup and continue to reduce to make the glaze.
- 7 Gently toss the vegetables in the glaze.



Figure 9.28a: Step 2—Sweat or smother the vegetables.

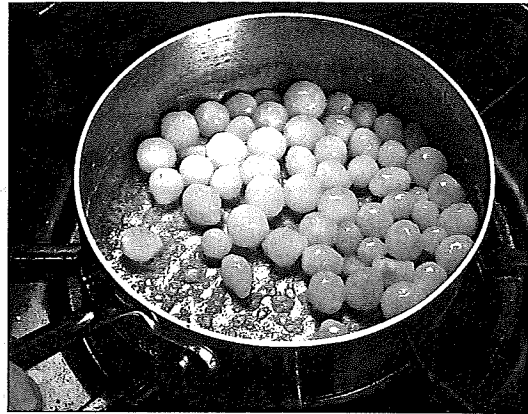


Figure 9.28b: Step 5—Remove the vegetables and drain.

Unlike the cooking methods covered so far, cooks often coat pan-fried vegetables with breading or batter. The amount of oil used in pan-frying is greater than that for sautéing. Cook batter-dipped vegetables in oil or butter until their exteriors are lightly browned and crisp.

Essential Skills

Pan-Frying Vegetables

- ① Heat the pan.
- ② Add the cooking oil and heat. See Figure 9.29a.
- ③ Add the vegetables.
- ④ Cook until their exteriors are slightly browned and crisp. See Figure 9.29b.
- ⑤ Blot them on absorbent paper toweling.
- ⑥ Season and serve immediately.

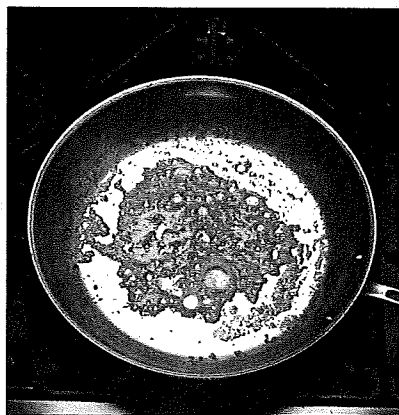


Figure 9.29a: Step 2—Add cooking oil and heat.

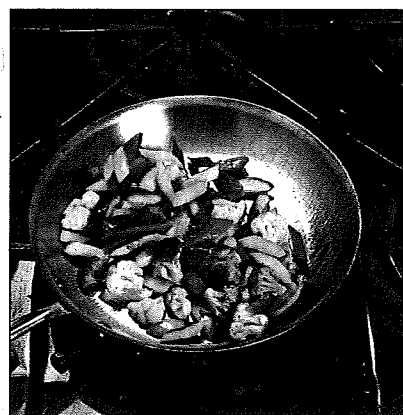


Figure 9.29b: Step 4—Cook until slightly browned and crisp.

As in pan-frying, coat vegetables to be deep-fried with breading or batter just before cooking. Instead of a shallow pan, use a deep fryer or large, heavy pot. Blanch slow-cooking vegetables, like broccoli and cauliflower, before they are deep-fried to speed the cooking process.

Essential Skills

Deep-Frying Vegetables

- 1 Coat the vegetables with breading or batter.
- 2 Heat the oil in a deep-fryer and add the vegetable. See Figure 9.30a.
- 3 Fry the vegetable until they are evenly browned or golden.
- 4 Remove from the oil and blot them on absorbent paper towels.
- 5 Adjust the seasoning and serve the vegetables immediately. See Figure 9.30b.

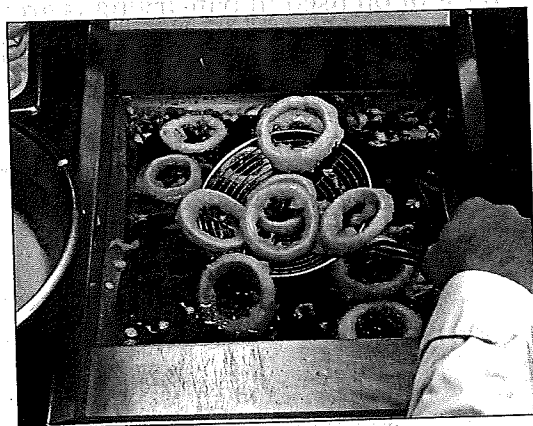


Figure 9.30a: Step 2—Heat the oil and add the vegetables.

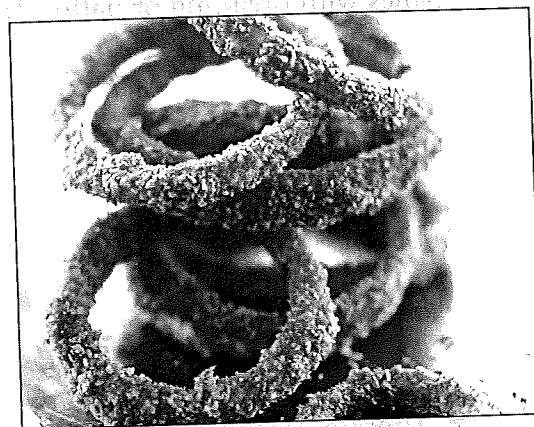


Figure 9.30b: Step 5—Adjust seasoning and serve immediately.

Grilling is a popular method for cooking vegetables. Some vegetables can be grilled in the raw state, while others must be marinated. To marinate vegetables, soak them in oil or vinegar, herbs, and spices. This gives them added flavor and helps to tenderize the vegetable. The vegetable must be able to withstand the grill's intense heat. Some vegetables well suited for grilling are bell peppers, potatoes, zucchini, and onions.

Essential Skills

Grilling Vegetables

- 1 Heat the grill or broiler.
- 2 Marinate the vegetables or brush them with oil. See Figure 9.31.
- 3 Grill or broil until the vegetables are tender and properly cooked through.

- ④ Season to taste and serve the vegetables immediately.



Figure 9.31: Step 2—Marinate or brush with oil.

Vegetable stews and braises are good ways to retain the vitamins and minerals that are transferred to the cooking liquid. For either method, cook vegetables in oil or stock and then season them. Add broth or another cooking liquid, then cook the vegetables until tender. In these methods, serve the liquid as part of the dish. Cut stewed vegetables into small pieces; cut braised vegetables into large pieces or leave whole.

Essential Skills

Stewing and Braising Vegetables

- ① Heat the pan.
- ② Heat the oil or stock.
- ③ Add vegetables, and cover with seasonings or aromatics.
- ④ Add the liquid, bring it to a simmer, and cook the vegetable. See Figure 9.32a.
- ⑤ Add the remaining vegetables and aromatics. See Figure 9.32b.
- ⑥ Cook the stew or braise until the vegetables are tender.
- ⑦ Adjust the seasoning, and finish the dish according to the recipe. See Figure 9.32c.

- 8 Serve the vegetables or hold.

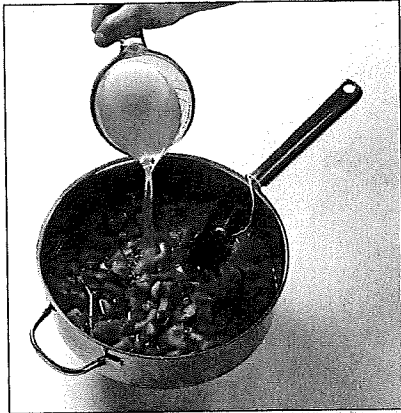


Figure 9.32a: Step 4—Add liquid, simmer, and cook.

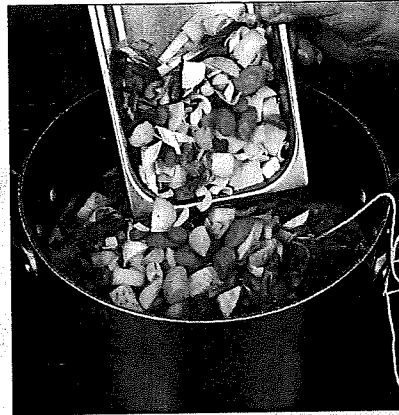


Figure 9.32b: Step 5—Add remaining vegetables.



Figure 9.32c: Step 7—Adjust seasoning.

Sous vide is a method in which food is cooked for a long time, sometimes well over 24 hours. Rather than placing food in a slow cooker, the *sous vide* method uses airtight plastic bags placed in hot water well below boiling point. Food is cooked using precisely controlled heating, at the temperature at which it should be served.

Serve **puréed** (PYOO-rayed) vegetables as individual dishes or use them in other preparations, custards, and soufflés. Cook the vegetable until it is tender enough to purée easily by pushing it through a sieve or food mill, or using a vertical chopping machine or blender. Some vegetables, such as tomatoes, spinach, and cucumbers, can be puréed from the raw state.

Essential Skills

Puréeing Vegetables

- 1 Cook the vegetable until it is very tender. See Figure 9.33a.
- 2 Drain it and remove any excess moisture.
- 3 Purée the vegetable using a sieve, a heavy-duty blender, or an immersion blender. See Figure 9.33b.