

Cooking Glossary



- **Bake:** To cook with dry heat, usually in an oven.
- **Beat:** To mix one or more ingredients completely until smooth – either by hand with a spoon, fork, or whisk – or using an electric tool such as a blender, beater, or mixer.
- **Blanch:** To cook food in boiling water for a few minutes, then plunge into cold or ice water to stop the cooking. Blanching seals in color and juices and makes it easier to remove skins or peels.
- **Blend:** To mix two or more ingredients together with a spoon, fork, or whisk – or using an electric tool such as a blender, beater, or mixer.
- **Boil:** To heat liquid on high until many bubbles rise to the top. A full or rapid boil is when the bubbles churn and rise up quickly.
- **Broil:** To quickly cook food (usually meat and veggies) directly under a heat source until it turns brown or crispy on the outside. You can use the broil setting in an oven or toaster oven.
- **Broth:** A clear, flavorful liquid made by simmering meat, poultry, seafood, or vegetables in water with seasonings, then draining out the liquid. Similar to “stock,” but broth is usually more flavorful and can be sipped by itself, while stock is more often used as a base for soups and sauces.
- **Brown:** To quickly cook food (usually meat) on the outside only, either in an oven or on the stovetop. Browning helps seal in juices and gives food an appealing color.
- **Chill:** To put food in a refrigerator until it gets cold.
- **Chop:** To cut food into small pieces, about 1/2-inch in size.
- **Colander:** A bowl with holes in it for rinsing or draining liquids from food.
- **Core or cored:** To remove the center or “core” of fruit, which often has seeds or a pit. After the center or pit is removed, fruit is described as “cored.”
- **Cream:** To blend butter together with another ingredient, like sugar, until the mixture is smooth and creamy. To “cream” fats (such as butter), it needs to be warmed to room temperature first.
- **Cube:** To cut food into small square shapes, about 1/2- to 1-inch in size.
- **Dash:** A small amount of dry spices or seasonings, about 1/8th of a teaspoon.
- **Deep-fry:** To cook food by covering it completely in hot oil or fat (see “Fry”).
- **Dice:** To cut something into very small pieces in the same shape, about 1/4-inch in size.
- **Dilute:** To thin a liquid or make its flavor less intense by adding liquid.
- **Dissolve:** To completely mix a dry ingredient into liquid until you can’t see the dry ingredient anymore.
- **Divided:** When a recipe says to “divide” an ingredient, that means you’ll use that same ingredient more than once in the recipe. Read ahead in the cooking steps to find the measurements you’ll need.
- **Drain:** To pour the liquid out of food you’re cooking, such as the hot water from cooked pasta. You can use a colander or strainer to drain liquid.
- **Flip:** To cook something on one side, then turn it over to cook on the other side. For example, you can use a spatula to flip pancakes to cook them on both sides.
- **Fold:** To gently mix a light or delicate ingredient (such as egg whites or grated cheese) into a heavier one (such as batter) without releasing air bubbles. For best results, use a rubber spatula to carefully turn ingredients over and under (rather than rapidly stirring or beating).
- **Food mill:** A kitchen tool used to purée, mash, or coarsely grind foods. It has a round metal container with a blade at the bottom and a hand crank above, and it cuts food into small pieces then pushes them through holes at the bottom of the mill.
- **Food processor:** An electric kitchen tool with different settings used to quickly chop (or slice, grate, mix, etc.) foods. Unlike a blender which needs liquid to blend foods, food processors need little or no liquid.

- **Fry:** To cook food in hot oil or fat. Stir-frying or sautéing is to cook in a pan with a very small amount of hot oil. Pan-frying or shallow-fat frying is to cook in one-to-two inches of hot oil. Deep-frying is to cook in a deep layer of hot oil.
- **Garnish:** To decorate a dish of food before serving with small edible herbs, flowers, or slices of fruits and vegetables. Examples of garnishes include herbs such as parsley or dill, edible flowers like nasturtiums or pansies, and lemon, fruit, or vegetable slices.
- **Gluten:** A substance found in grains, especially wheat, that gives dough a stretchy texture.
- **Grate and grater:** To shave or break apart soft foods (such as cheese) or hard foods (such as carrots) into small bits. You can use a “grater” – a metal tool with different-sized holes that you rub the food against to break it up – or an electric food processor or blender on the “grate” setting.
- **Grease:** To coat a pan or dish with butter, oil, or other fat to prevent food from sticking as it cooks.
- **Grill:** To cook food over flames using a barbecue grill, stovetop grill, or hibachi grill.
- **Grind:** To turn solid foods into tiny particles using a food processor, coffee grinder, or hand tool called a mortar and pestle.
- **Herbs:** Any green or leafy part of a plant most often used for seasoning, flavoring, or garnishing recipes. Basil, parsley, rosemary, thyme, and dill are all herbs. Pesto and tabouli are examples of dishes that use herbs as main ingredients.
- **Ice bath:** A bowl with water and ice cubes used to chill something very quickly.
- **Julienne:** To cut food – most often vegetables – into long thin strips that look like matchsticks.
- **Knead:** To press and squeeze dough with the palms of your hands or using a mixer. Kneading dough brings out gluten in the flour, which gives bread its texture and structure.
- **Let stand:** To let a food cool or sit at room temperature before slicing or serving it.
- **Lukewarm:** Medium temperature, similar to body temperature, that doesn’t feel either hot or cold when you touch it.
- **Marinate:** To coat or soak foods such as meat, chicken, fish, tofu, or vegetables in seasoned liquid to give it extra flavor before cooking.
- **Measure:** To get the correct amounts of ingredients for recipes, it’s important to use measuring cups and spoons labeled with specific amounts (such as teaspoon, tablespoon, cup, 1 cup, etc.). For liquids, use 1- or 2-cup clear glass or plastic containers with ounces marked on the side. Pour dry ingredients into measuring cups or spoons and level them off with a flat knife so the amount is just right.
- **Mince:** To chop food into very small pieces using a knife or electric food processor. Mincing an onion means to first chop or slice it into pieces, then cut it up even smaller by rocking your knife back, forth, and across it until the pieces are tiny.
- **Mix:** To stir and combine two or more ingredients in a bowl with a spoon, fork, or whisk – or using an electric blender, beater, or mixer.
- **Mortar and pestle:** Two kitchen tools used together to crush and grind ingredients into a fine paste or powder. The mortar is a bowl that holds the ingredients, made of hard wood, metal, ceramic, or stone. The pestle is a hard, club-shaped tool used to crush the ingredients in the mortar.
- **Pan-fry:** Similar to shallow-fat frying, this is to cook in one-to-two inches of hot oil or fat (see “Fry”).
- **Pare and paring knife:** To use a small knife, often called a paring knife, to cut the skin or outer layer off of fruits and vegetables.
- **Peel:** To use a kitchen tool called a “peeler” to take just the skin off of fruits and vegetables. You can also peel with a knife – but be careful! Always slice away from your body to avoid cutting yourself.
- **Pinch:** A very small amount of an ingredient – about 1/16th of a teaspoon – measured by “pinching” it between your thumb and index finger.
- **Purée:** To mash foods until completely smooth using a sieve, food mill, blender, or food processor.



- **Reduce/Reduction:** To boil a liquid until it thickens, which gives it a stronger flavor.
- **Reserve:** To save and set aside an ingredient, often a liquid, to add back into your recipe later.
- **Roast:** To cook with dry heat in an oven.
- **Sauté:** Also called stir-frying, this is to fry lightly with a small amount of oil or fat in a hot pan. This is a way to cook vegetables, meat, and seafood very quickly, turning the food frequently while it cooks.
- **Sear:** To brown meat very quickly in a pan over high heat to seal in the juices.
- **Season:** To flavor food by adding “seasonings” such as salt, pepper, and other herbs and spices.
- **Seeded:** To “seed” a fruit or vegetable is to remove all of the seeds before cooking or eating. Once the seeds are removed, the fruit or vegetable is then “seeded.”
- **Shallow-fat-fry:** Similar to pan-frying, this is to cook food in one-to-two inches of hot oil or fat (see “Fry”).
- **Shred:** To cut or tear into small, long, narrow pieces.
- **Sieve:** Sometimes called a “strainer” or “sifter,” a sieve is a metal, nylon, or cloth mesh bowl or basket with a handle, used to strain liquids or sift dry ingredients.
- **Sift and sifter:** To put dry ingredients through a kitchen tool called a sifter that removes clumps to make the dry ingredients lighter or powdery.
- **Simmer:** To boil liquid ingredients very gently over low heat so that only tiny bubbles rise to the top.
- **Slice:** To cut large ingredients into flat, similarly shaped pieces. The recipe usually tells you if the slices should be thin or thick.
- **Spices:** Any dried part of a plant (except for leaves; see “Herbs”) used in small amounts to season and flavor a recipe. Dried bark, roots, berries, seeds, twigs – or anything else that isn’t the green leafy part – is considered a spice. Spices are often strong in flavor.
- **Steam and steamer:** To cook food in steam rising off boiling water using a metal or bamboo “steamer” basket placed inside or on top of a pot – or to cook food in a small amount of boiling water.
- **Steep:** To let food sit in water just below boiling point – tea, for example – to bring out its flavor.
- **Stir:** To mix one or more ingredients using a rotating motion with a spoon, fork, or whisk in a pot, pan, or bowl.
- **Stir-fry:** Similar to sautéing, this means to quickly cook small pieces of vegetables, meat, and/or tofu over high heat with a small amount of oil while continuously stirring or tossing in a pan or wok (see “Fry”).
- **Stock:** 1) A liquid made by simmering animal bones, meat, and/or vegetables in water (sometimes with herbs and/or spices) used as a base for cooking soups, stews, and sauces. 2) To “stock” a pantry is to buy foods in bulk – things that you eat often and that don’t have to be refrigerated until opened or cooked – such as rice, oatmeal, dried beans, sauces, and other canned or bottled foods.
- **Strain and strainer:** To drain liquids from foods or sift dry ingredients using a “strainer,” a metal, nylon, or cloth mesh bowl or basket with a handle.
- **To taste:** To add small amounts of seasonings such as salt, pepper, herbs, and spices until the food is flavored to your personal “taste” – or just the way you like it.
- **Toss:** 1) When stir-frying, toss means to mix your ingredients in a pan or wok with a lifting motion (be careful not to splatter hot oil!). 2) You can also “toss” a salad, which means to gently mix it with dressing until all ingredients are well coated or evenly combined.
- **Whip:** To beat ingredients at high speed with a spoon, fork, whisk, or electric mixer until the mixture is light and airy.
- **Whisk:** To beat or stir ingredients with a light, quick motion until well mixed using a fork or a kitchen tool called a “whisk.”

