

Essential Kitchen Skills

Your Foundation for Cooking Like a Pro 🔪🍴🔥

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A downloadable resource from The IncrEDIBLE Discourse



Why These Skills Matter

- Build confidence in the kitchen 🔥
 - Work faster, cleaner, and safer
 - Cook with consistency and precision
 - Think like a chef—not just follow recipes
 - Avoid costly, time-consuming mistakes
- 💡 **Skills over recipes. Foundation over flash.**

Section 1: Knife Skills

Your knife is your most important kitchen tool. Mastering grip, control, and consistency will improve your cooking more than any fancy ingredient ever could.

This section covers:

- Grip & safety 
- Common cuts 
- Knife maintenance 
- Choosing the right knife for the task 

"A dull knife is dangerous. A sharp knife is professional."

Grip & Safety: Respect the Blade

- Use the pinch grip – thumb and index finger grip the blade just above the handle
- Support with a relaxed, firm hold using remaining fingers
- Use the claw technique on your guiding hand – fingers curled inward, knuckles forward
- Control = safety + consistency

🧠 A dull grip leads to sloppy cuts. A proper grip leads to professional results.

Essential Knife Cuts for Every Cook

Cut	Description	Best For
Julienne	Thin matchstick slices (1/8" x 2" / 3mm x 5cm)	Stir-fries, salads, garnishes
Fine Julienne	Extra-thin matchsticks (1/16" x 2" / 1.5mm x 5cm)	Delicate garnishes, raw veggie slaws
Batonnet	Thicker matchsticks (1/4" x 2" / 6mm x 5cm)	French fries, crudité
Brunoise Dice	Very fine dice (1/8" cube / 3mm cube)	Soups, sauces, precise garnishes
Small Dice	Small, uniform cubes (1/4" cube / 6mm cube)	Sautés, stews, uniform cooking
Medium Dice	Larger cubes (1/2" cube / 12mm cube)	Roasting, braises, slow cooking
Large Dice	Big, even cubes (3/4" cube / 2cm cube)	Hearty stews, rustic dishes
Chiffonade	Thin, ribbon-like strips	Herbs, leafy greens
Rondelle	Round slices	Carrots, cucumbers, zucchini
Bias Cut	Diagonal slices	Stir-fry vegetables, proteins
Paysanne	Thin rustic squares/triangles	Soups, casseroles
Tourne	Seven-sided barrel shape	French cuisine, root vegetables
Mince	Very fine chopping	Garlic, shallots, herbs

✂ **Even cuts = even cooking.**
Learn these and watch your food
level up instantly.

Keep It Sharp, Use It Right

- **Hone your knife before each use to realign the edge**
- **Sharpen your knife every few weeks (or as needed) with a whetstone or service**
- **Wash by hand only – never in the dishwasher**
- **Store safely – knife block, magnetic strip, or sheath**

Bonus Tips - Choosing the Right Knife:

Knife Type	Best For
Chef's Knife (8-10")	Versatile; chopping, dicing, slicing
Paring Knife (3-4")	Peeling, trimming, intricate cuts
Serrated Knife	Bread, tomatoes, delicate items
Boning Knife	Removing bones from meat, poultry, and fish
Cleaver	Heavy-duty chopping, breaking down meats
Santoku Knife	Precision slicing, especially for vegetables

⚠ Using a dull blade is dangerous. You'll force cuts, lose control, and risk injury.

Section 2: Cooking Techniques 🔍

Great cooking isn't about fancy ingredients—it's about understanding heat.

Each cooking method brings out different textures, flavors, and aromas. Mastering these techniques means knowing when to use high heat, low heat, moist or dry environments to control the outcome of your food.

This section covers:

- Key cooking methods
- Dry vs moist heat
- Layering flavors like a pro

"Technique is the difference between good food and great food."

Dry Heat vs. Moist Heat Cooking

Dry Heat 🔥

Searing

Sautéing

Roasting

Grilling

Moist Heat 💧

Boiling

Simmering

Steaming

Braising/Stewing

How They Differ:

- **Dry heat enhances flavor through browning & caramelization**
- **Moist heat gently cooks and tenderizes food, especially proteins and starches**

⚠️ Don't boil when you should simmer. Too much heat can destroy delicate textures and clarity in broths.

Building Flavor, One Layer at a Time

Technique isn't just about cooking—it's about developing flavor.

- Sear to build a crust before finishing in the oven
- Deglaze pans to create rich sauces with fond
- Toast spices or aromatics to awaken flavor
- Reduce sauces for concentration and body
- Finish with acid, fat, or herbs for brightness and balance

🧠 Technique is your flavor amplifier. Each step builds complexity.

Quick Technique Reference

Technique	Best For	Key Tip
Sautéing	Vegetables, meats, aromatics	Use high heat and don't overcrowd the pan.
Searing	Steaks, proteins	Let meat develop a crust before flipping.
Boiling	Pasta, potatoes, seafood	Salt your water!
Simmering	Soups, stocks, sauces	Keep the heat low for clear, flavorful broth.
Blanching	Vegetables	Always shock in ice water to stop cooking.
Roasting	Meats, veggies	High heat for crispy exteriors.
Baking	Pastries, bread	Don't open the oven too often.
Steaming	Veggies, fish, dumplings	Keep a tight lid on the pot.
Poaching	Eggs, chicken, fish	Low temperature prevents tough texture.
Grilling	Meat, seafood, vegetables	Let meat rest after grilling.
Broiling	Melting cheese, crisping tops	Watch closely to avoid burning.
Braising	Tough cuts of meat	Sear first, cook slow with liquid.
Stewing	Small meat cuts, hearty dishes	Simmer gently for deep flavor.

🔥 **Master heat = Master flavor. Let the technique match the ingredient.**

Section 3: Food Safety & Sanitation 🧼

Delicious food starts with safe food.

Cross-contamination, improper storage, and unsafe handling can undo everything you've worked to prepare.

This section covers:

"A clean kitchen isn't just nice—it's necessary."

- **Handwashing & hygiene**
- **Safe storage and handling**
- **Cross-contamination prevention**
- **Temperature & cleaning guidelines**

Clean Hands, Clean Kitchen

- Wash hands before cooking, after handling raw meat, and after touching your face, phone, or trash
- Scrub for 20 seconds with warm soapy water
- Use clean paper towels or air dryers—never your apron
- Tie back long hair and avoid touching your face or phone while prepping



 **Wiping hands on your apron \neq clean. Wash often, not just at the start.**

Don't Just Store It—Store It Smart

- **Keep fridge at $\leq 40^{\circ}\text{F}$ / 4°C and freezer at $\leq 0^{\circ}\text{F}$ / -18°C**
- **Store raw meats on the bottom shelf to prevent drips**
- **Label and date leftovers—FIFO (First In, First Out)**
- **Use a thermometer to cook proteins:**
 - Poultry: 165°F**
 - Ground meats: 160°F**
 - Whole cuts: 145°F + 3 min rest**
 - Reheats: 165°F**

 **A labeled fridge is a chef's best friend. Oldest stuff goes first.**

Cross-Contamination = Kitchen Killer

- **Use separate cutting boards for meat and vegetables**
- **Never reuse utensils or containers that touched raw proteins**
- **Wipe surfaces with food-safe disinfectant between tasks**
- **Replace sponges and towels frequently—don't let bacteria build up**
- **Wash knives by hand immediately after use**

Red - Raw Meat

Blue- Raw Fish

Yellow - Cooked Meat

Green - Salad And Fruits

Brown - Vegetables

White - Bakery And Dairy

Purple - Allergens

⚠ **Don't place cooked food on a plate that held raw meat—ever.**

Section 4: Mise en Place & Kitchen Efficiency

“Everything in its place” isn’t a suggestion—it’s a strategy.

Mise en place is more than prepping ingredients—it’s the professional mindset that separates chaos from control.

When done right, it makes cooking faster, cleaner, and more precise.

This section covers:

- **How to set up your station**
- **Time-saving workflows**
- **Cleaning strategies and pro habits**

 *If you’re constantly backtracking, you’re not set up properly.*

Set Up to Succeed

- Prep everything before turning on the heat
- Place essential tools (knives, oils, salt, towels) within reach
- Use a “trash bowl” or bin to stay tidy and reduce movement
- Prioritize your workflow:
- Start with items that take the longest
- Use downtime to chop, wipe, or stir
- Keep your board clean and clear

↻ *Running back and forth ≠ cooking efficiently.*

Stay Clean. Stay Sharp.

- Wipe down between each task—don't let grime build
- Wash knives immediately after use to prevent residue and cross-contamination
- Swap out towels frequently—dirty towels = dirty food
- Label, date, and organize food using FIFO (First In, First Out)
- Consolidate and stack dirty dishes strategically during longer cooking steps

🧽 ***"Clean as you go" is the single biggest difference between pros and mess-makers.***



Section 5: Tasting & Adjusting 🗑️

If you're not tasting, you're just guessing.

Professional cooks taste their food constantly—not just to check for seasoning, but to balance flavor, adjust texture, and fine-tune every element of a dish.

This section covers:

- **How and when to taste**
- **Balancing salt, fat, acid, and heat**
- **Fixing mistakes before the plate hits the pass**

🧠 *Taste early, taste often, taste with purpose.*

Salt. Fat. Acid. Heat. Balance It.

If it's...	Try this:
Too salty	Add acid or a touch of sugar 🍋 🍯
Too bland	Add salt, umami, or a splash of acid 🧂 🍅
Too spicy	Cool it with dairy or fat 🥛 🧈
Too rich or greasy	Brighten with lemon or vinegar 🍋
Too sweet	Balance with salt or citrus 🧂 🍊

Bonus Tip:

- Layer salt in stages, don't dump it all at the end
- Taste every major step—especially sauces and proteins
- Fix small mistakes before they become big ones

✗ ***Seasoning once at the end = flat food. Build flavor in layers.***

Taste Done? Now Make It Sing.

- Add a splash of acid or a pinch of flaky salt right before serving
- Use fresh herbs, citrus zest, or chili oil to finish with contrast
- Think about texture:
 - Creamy + Crunchy
 - Crisp + Tender
 - Chewy + Silky
- Even plating and garnish can change the way your dish feels

 *Balance isn't just flavor. It's contrast, texture, and timing.*

Now It's Your Turn, Chef



Knowledge is power. Practice makes it permanent.

**You've got the foundation. Now it's time to cook with intention.
Master these skills, and you'll not only cook better—you'll think like a chef.**

- ✓ **Chop with confidence**
- ✓ **Cook with control**
- ✓ **Taste with purpose**
- ✓ **Clean like a pro**
- ✓ **Plate like it matters**

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💡 *Skills over recipes. Consistency over chaos. Get back to the cutting board.*