Cooking Methods

2025 NC ProStart Leadership Training

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Read. The. Rules.

Everything you need to win is spelled out in the rules

What are the cooking methods?

- 1) Sauteeing
- 2) Braising
- 3) Grilling/Broiling
- 4) Deep Fat Frying
- 5) Pan Frying
- 6) Baking
- 7) Roasting
- 8) Steaming
- 9) Poaching

Sauteeing

- The purpose of sautéing is to cook food quickly in order to minimize water loss and vitamin destruction, yet maximize browning, and flavor development. The juices released during cooking form the basis of a sauce made in the same pan and served with the sautéed item.

Braising

- **Braising:** braising takes place at lower temperatures than sautéing, and the pieces of meat and vegetables are much larger. This cooking method is most appropriate to, but not limited to, tougher pieces of meat. When braising, the meat is first seared in hot fat. This prevents the loss of water and flavor during the cooking process. It also serves to brown the outside of the meat and to form compounds that will determine the final flavor of the dish.
- The meat used is often from an older animal, or from what is termed “an inferior cut” of meat. These cut contain more connective tissue that can only be dissolve by long, slow cooking with moist heat.
- Once the meat has been seared and browned, liquid, vegetables, and usually a tomato product are added. The pot is then covered and brought up to approximately 210°F in a slow oven. The moist heat is drawn completely into the piece of meat. It is allowed to stay there until the connective tissue that holds the muscle fibers together dissolves/”fork tender”.
- During this exposure to moist heat, the proteins which make up the muscle fibers are unwinding or denaturing a bit. When the process is complete, the connective tissue has melted into the liquid and will give the sauce made from the braising liquid a gelatin shine. The meat will be very tender and juicy. The flavors introduced throughout the cooking process will be successfully married.

Grilling/Broiling

- these two cooking methods are really the same, with the only difference being gravity. In broiling, the heat source is above the food; in grilling the heat source is located below the food. Both methods depend on transfer of heat through the air in order to brown and cook the food. The major flavor compounds in broiled or grilled foods are due to the browning of the food, and any marinade/seasoning used prior to cooking.
- Broiling and grilling are dry heat cooking methods. They should only be used to cook tender cuts of meat, because there is no time to break down the connective tissue that might be present.

Deep Fat Frying

- deep fat frying usually occurs at 325°F to 400°F. These temperatures are difficult to maintain, but are essential to producing evenly cooked foods.
- When a food is fried in oil, it is completely surrounded by high heat and thus cooks evenly. Because such high temperatures can be attained in deep fat frying, browning reactions take place at an accelerated rate. These changes are what produce the flavors and aromas characteristic of deep-fried foods.
- In deep fat frying the oil must be protected from the food, and the food from the oil. There is always a certain amount of evaporation of the water from the food that takes place during the frying process, but too much will dry out the food and destroy the oil. A coating on the fried food will help to seal in that moisture and help protect the oil. More importantly, the water will turn to steam and cook the product inside the coating.

Pan Frying

- Pan-frying works along the same lines, the only difference is the amount of fat being used to cook in; pan frying requires the cook to use only enough fat to come halfway up the side of the product to be fried.
- The rate of conduction of heat across the coating barrier will depend on the type of coating used. A batter that has large amounts of air whipped into it will result in slower cooking, because air is a terrible conductor of air. For denser batters, the thickness of the coating will determine how fast the food inside will cook.
- The best tasting fried foods are those that are sealed into their own casings by the frying process. These foods are in turn cooked in their own steam, which is fueled by the heat of the oil used to fry the food.

Baking

- baking cooks food by surrounding it with dry heat. This method delivers heat at an even rate to all sides of a food, so that all parts cook at the same rate. However, the rate of heat transfer is dependent on the type of container the food is in; containers made of materials that conduct heat poorly will result in unevenly cooked products.
- Convection ovens, which are equipped with fans, speed the baking process by constantly moving the heated air throughout the baking chamber. Because there is a concentration of heat at the surface of the food, and temperatures are at least 325°F, browning proceeds at an accelerated rate. Baking generally refers to the cooking method for breads and pastries.

Roasting

- Roasting also uses high temperature to brown and cook foods. This cooking method is used chiefly for meats.

- During roasting, meats brown due to the amount of protein and amino acids present in the meat, (the maillard process, NOT caramelization), and because of the fats present. There is also a small amount of sugars present, which react to the high heat and produce the wonderful smell of roasting meat.

Poaching/Steaming

- boiling water reaches a maximum temperature of212°F. The nearer you get to that temperature, the more agitation occurs in the cooking vessel. The result can be broken pieces of food, which can be very unattractive. For this reason, food is rarely boiled. Instead, it is simmered at a lower temperature or steamed at a higher temperature. Steaming achieves higher temperatures without the agitation present during boiling. The use of steam under pressure makes it possible to reach very high temperatures, equal to those used in deep fat frying and baking.
- Steam under pressure can reach very high temperatures because there is no air present. However, too much pressure is undesirable because it tends to compress the foods being cooked. Another drawback to steam under pressure is that you cannot easily inspect the food as it is cooking, so overcooking can be a problem.
- Although steam can reach high temperatures, browning reactions do not occur. This is because the water present in the steam acts as a barrier to many of the chemical reactions that result in browning.