



copywriting sample - wordfeeder.com
contact: dina@wordfeeder.com

Culinary Chat: Do Your Slicing Techniques Cut It in the Kitchen?

Many budding foodies want to know: how do I become "fast" like the professional chefs on television? What's the secret to swift preparation of dishes that look as attractive as they taste? How do I work through more complicated meals - without destroying the

place, and losing a few fingers in the process? The answer is by sharpening your cutting skills.

Most culinary institutions offer training in cutting techniques as part of their curriculum. However, if you don't plan on attending cooking school but at least want to get semi-serious in the kitchen, you'll appreciate this overview. The cuts described here are best suited for vegetables. Nearly all are achieved via a chef's knife.

Helpful tip: Believe it or not, you're more likely to cut yourself with a dull knife, than you are while using the properly sharpened blade of a good, heavy chef's knife.

Following are some basic cutting techniques that you'll need to master if you plan to become "chef extraordinaire" one day:

Straight slicing. Insert the front or tip of the knife into the food you wish to slice. Hold the food in place with your opposite hand, keeping fingers curled so that only the knuckles come into contact with the side of the knife. Press straight down, and cut into the object with the back of the blade. Continue this motion, making sure that your slices are uniform and the desired thickness is achieved.

Diagonal slicing is the same as straight slicing, but you hold the food at a 30-degree angle. This technique is commonly used when preparing Asian dishes but don't let that stop you from trying it - the diagonal slice adds a bit of artistic flair to any meal.

Dicing. This is when you cut up vegetables into little cubes. Most of the world's greatest recipes call for diced onion and/or garlic. Here's how dicing is done: slice the food into strips using the technique for slicing, described above. Then, slice the strips crossways, into cubes. You do not need to impart a great amount of pressure when slicing or dicing. If you find yourself having to press down hard to make a simple cut, then either the knife is too dull or your technique needs work. Keep at it - you'll get better as you go.

Brunoise refers to dicing food until it is smaller than 1/8 inch. The *Macedoine* dice refers to food that's slightly smaller than 1/4 inch.

Mincing. Minced food is chopped finely into tiny bits. Garlic is a staple ingredient that is frequently minced so as to blend or almost melt away into whatever meal you're preparing. The technique goes as follows: first, dice the food that you plan to mince. Once the food has been cut into small cubes, take the knife handle in your dominant hand, and rest your other hand on the top of the blade. Mince the ingredients using a rocking or chopping motion, so that the front or tip of the blade maintains contact with the board, while the back of the knife moves up and down, doing the work. Use the sides of the knife to "pile" the ingredients repeatedly, as you continue mincing into very small particles.

Julienne describes the cutting of vegetables into uniform, matchstick-sized pieces. You'll find julienned ingredients in many a stir-fry, as the finely cut veggies make a nice presentation and tend to absorb the flavor of sauces well. Begin by neatly cutting several rectangular blocks of whatever ingredient you plan to julienne - let's say, carrots or potatoes, just to give a visual here. Next, stack the blocks and slice into 1/8 inch strips by rocking the back of the knife a bit while keeping the front of the knife in contact with the cutting board. If some of your strips come out thicker than others, you can always go back and slice them again later.

Chiffonade. This technique is used to slice herbs. Stack the herbs into a little bundle. With two hands, pinch both ends of your herb bundle, then roll the herbs tightly together. Place on the cutting board, and make a perpendicular cut across the roll of herbs, keeping your knuckles curled in to prevent accidents.

Shredding is common for salads or slaws. It can be achieved using a chef's knife - however, if you're pressed for time, you may want to try your hand at shredding with a *mandoline*. The mandoline contains an adjustable blade that allows you to slide the vegetable across it to produce very thin strips. Many standard block graters have a mandoline side (these are typically not adjustable). You'd be surprised at how quickly this sharp-bladed device easily makes ribbons of a cucumber, carrot, head of cabbage or other vegetable. The same can happen to your fingers in seconds - so ALWAYS use a hand guard and be very careful.

For many new cooks, cutting presents a real challenge. If you're clumsy with the kitchen knife or wobbly on the cutting board, what should have been a simple meal can become hours of labor, sweat and tears (and yes, sometimes even a little blood). Thankfully, practice really does make perfect - so the best way to get good at your cutting techniques is to keep at it until it feels like second nature. Don't forget to keep those knuckles tucked in!

Copyright 2007. All rights reserved.

Need copywriting support for your specialty food business? Contact dina@wordfeeder.com for a custom quotation today.