

Everything in its Place

Overview: Youth will be introduced to some basic culinary terms, basic meal timing principles and chopping techniques.

Subject area: Proper Culinary Preparation

Grade level: 6-8

Objectives:

- Participants will be able to demonstrate proper cutting techniques
- Participants will be able to define the culinary terms chop, dice, mince, julienne and *mise en place*
- Participants will be able to demonstrate proper meal timing with the recipes provided

Prep time: 30 minutes

Lesson time: 20-25 minutes

Materials needed:

- White or chalk board
- Cutting boards – one per student
- Knives – one per student

Space needed: Functional kitchen space

Staff needed:

- 1 Instructor
- 1 Volunteer per group of 2-4 students

Preparation steps:

1. Print definitions of culinary terms
2. Obtain 5 pieces of produce for each group (the same 5 for each group). For example, 4 potatoes, 4 onion halves, garlic cloves, 4 green pepper halves and 4 cucumbers – which can be combined to make “Potatoes O’Brien” (a pan-fried potato dish, often prepared with onions and peppers) once chopping is finished

Pre-test of knowledge:

- Ask youth what they know about cutting or chopping techniques
- Ask youth what they know about meal timing and preparation timing
- Ask youth if any of them know what *mise en place* means
- Write all responses on the white board

Presentation Steps:

1. Have youth wash their hands and their knives.
2. Divide youth into small groups of 2-4 students.
3. Youth should prepare their cutting board with a damp washcloth underneath. Demonstrate proper knife skills as a review from the first class.
4. Explain the following terms to youth:
 - a. *Mise en place*: A French term that roughly translates to 'put in place'. This term describes the practice of preparing (measuring, cutting, or chopping) ingredients so that they can be used to prepare your dish; and having all cooking utensils and equipment ready for use.
 - b. Meal Timing: Preparing multiple dishes to have them ready to be served at the same time.
 - c. Roughly Chop: To cut food into irregular pieces or chunks.
 - d. Chop: To cut food into equal sized cubes, each about $\frac{3}{4}$ - 1 inch square
 - e. Dice: To cut food into equal sized cubes, each about $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ inch square
 - f. Mince: To cut food into tiny equal sized pieces, smaller than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch square
 - g. Julienne: To cut food into thin, equal sized strips, each about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide
5. Demonstrations
 - a. Ask if any youth feel comfortable demonstrating chopping a vegetable. If someone volunteers, have them come to the front and demonstrate, if not, demonstrate it yourself. Praise or highlight safe knife usage and good technique. Make small corrections or suggestions as needed.
 - b. Repeat for dice, mince and julienne.
 - c. Bonus demonstration - show how garlic can be more easily minced by first smashing it with the broad side of a chef's knife.
6. Mini-Competition
 - a. Tell youth, within their teams, that they will have 5 minutes to wash their hands and their vegetables and successfully demonstrate each chopping technique as follows (example):
 - i. Chop – Potato (skin on, but scrubbed)
 - ii. Dice – Onion (peeled)
 - iii. Mince – Garlic (peeled)
 - iv. Julienne – Green Pepper
 - v. Slice – Cucumbers
 - b. Youth can choose among themselves who will perform each cutting technique, but each team member must complete at least one of the four cutting techniques.
 - c. Set a timer for 5 minutes, and have all teams begin at the same time.
 - d. Supervise youth to ensure students use safe chopping techniques.
 - e. After the 5 minutes have passed, score each individual student's or group's performance.

Notes:

This is a great lesson to follow up with a recipe that requires a lot of chopping, and a variety of cooking techniques to ensure that all students have a chance to practice/demonstrate the skills learned.

Suggested Theme: Food and Culture of Thailand

1. Present students with a few small cultural artifacts (i.e. money, flag, map, piece of clothing, cultural game).
2. Present students with different books about the culture, cooking or language.
3. Have each group find an interesting cultural fact in one of the books to present to the rest of the group. (Write down these cultural facts on a board in the room)
4. Name a few foods that grow well in the climate of the country, and are thus very popular foods eaten there.
5. Have students name some Thai dishes they have already heard of.
6. Discuss how there are healthy foods to be found in every culture, or foods that we can make in a healthy way!
7. Highlight some of the ingredients that are provided, pointing out some that are familiar and others that are new or rare.
8. Present the recipes and have students place recipes in plastic sleeves.
9. Have groups sit down and read through their recipes before they begin cooking.
10. Allow students to begin cooking, give them a suggested order for preparation.

Recipe Ideas:

- Pad Thai & Sauce – We used a similar version to this recipe, but without the shrimp and meat. Also, if you can find them, use brown rice noodles.
<http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/kuay-tiaw-pad-thai-recipe.html>
- Thai Soup – You can make this recipe healthier by using lite coconut milk.
<http://allrecipes.com/Recipe/Thai-Ginger-Soup/Detail.aspx?evt19=1>
- Thai Salad with peanut dressing.
<http://www.livebetteramerica.com/recipes/healthified-thai-salad-with-peanut-dressing/a2e27587-0eb0-46e2-b5de-a4693acd2fbb>
- Thai Red Curry
<http://www.food.com/recipe/scrumptious-thai-coconut-red-curry-214590>

Another option:

- Bring a variety of vegetables, sauce, ingredients and toppings, brown rice, a can of lite coconut milk for each group and 3 different curry pastes (red, yellow, green).
- Bring a variety of curry recipes to choose from.
- Let groups choose which curry they will make and have all the groups sample each other's creations at the end.