

Preparing, Cooking and Serving Food – Visual Vocabulary Video

In this visual vocabulary lesson, you can learn words and phrases to talk about food and cooking.

You'll learn English vocabulary to talk about the stages of preparing, cooking and serving different kinds of food.

1. Preparation

For the first portion of preparing, cooking and serving food in English, we will talk about the preparation.

Peel the courgettes (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/courgette>).

'Peel' means to take the skin off some fruit or vegetables. Some foods are easy to peel, like bananas. With other ingredients, you might need to use a knife or a peeler.

Cut the tomatoes into quarters.

When talking about preparing food, the combination 'cut...into...' is common. For example, you might hear: 'Cut the chicken into six pieces', or 'Cut the aubergine into small cubes.'

There's one common exception to this pattern; you cut something *in* half, not 'into'. For example: 'Cut the lemon in half', not 'into half'.

Cut the radish into thin slices.

Slice the radish thinly.

Many words connected with cooking can be both verbs and nouns. 'Slice' is a common example. You can cut something into slices, or just use slice as a verb: 'Slice the cucumber', 'slice the carrots', and so on. Learn more about verbs and nouns in this Oxford Online English lesson on Parts of Speech (<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/parts-of-speech>).

Halve and deseed the peppers.

'Halve' is the verb from 'half'. It's an efficient way to say 'cut something into two pieces'. You can also use 'quarter' as a verb. For example: 'Quarter the tomato' and 'Cut the tomato into four pieces' have the same meaning.

'Deseed' means you remove the seeds. With peppers, you also need to remove the pith – the white flesh on the inside.

Chop the onion as finely as possible.

Usually, 'chop' means to cut something into medium-sized pieces, perhaps not in a precise way. However, if you chop something finely, you cut it into the smallest pieces possible.

Dice the red pepper.

'Dice' means to cut into small pieces. More specifically, 'dice' means that you cut something in two directions. If you dice a pepper, you first cut it into strips, and then cut the strips into small pieces.

Mix the ingredients together.

Stir the ingredients to mix them.

Here, 'mix' and 'stir' have the same meaning. In general, 'stir' is more specific, because it means to use some kind of implement – like a spoon – to mix whatever you're mixing. You can mix something with your hands, or by putting it in a container and shaking it, or in other ways.

Next in preparing, cooking and serving food in English we will talk about cooking.

2. Cooking

Stir fry the veggies on a high heat.

Turn the heat up to high and fry the vegetables, stirring continuously.

Often, you can say the same thing in fewer words by using a more specific verb. Both these sentences are fine and both have the same meaning, but in the first sentence you save words by using a more specific verb: 'stir fry'.

Bring the water to the boil and then add the dumplings.

In cookbooks and recipes, you'll often see the phrase 'bring the water to the boil'. This means that you boil the water, and when it starts boiling, you'll add something or do something else with it.

Turn the heat down to low and simmer the soup for twenty minutes.

If you need to simmer something, you turn the heat down until it is *just* boiling. There are a few bubbles, but it isn't boiling vigorously.

Fry the meatballs until browned on both sides.

Deep fry the potatoes and leave to dry.

If you use the verb 'fry' in English, it generally means shallow-frying: when you fry something in a little bit of oil or butter. Use the verb 'deep fry' if you want to talk about cooking something in boiling oil, like fried potatoes.

'Brown' is another useful verb. When cooking meat, you often fry the meat first to brown it – you cook it until it is brown on the outside, but probably not cooked in the middle.

Pre-heat the oven to 180, then roast the chicken for around one hour.

Here's a question for you: 'roast' and 'bake' both mean to cook something in the oven, but what's the difference?

There are different answers to this. Technically, 'roast' means to cook something uncovered, until it turns brown. However, in everyday language, 'roast' is generally used for meat and vegetables, and 'bake' is generally used for bread, cakes, and fish.

We grilled the shrimp kebabs over a charcoal fire.

We cooked the shrimp kebabs on the grill.

With cooking, you can often use different verbs or verb phrases (<https://7esl.com/cooking-verbs/>) to say the same thing.

For example, you can grill food, or cook food on the grill. You can roast food, or cook food in the oven. It doesn't matter which you use.

The verb 'grill' is often used when you cook something on a barbecue, but your cooker in your kitchen might have a grill, and you can also buy electric grills to use in your kitchen.

Blend the soup until fairly smooth.

I used a hand blender to puree the sauce.

You can blend something with a hand blender, like you saw here, or with a regular blender.

(<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/food-kitchen-cook-blender-scaled.webp>)

If you blend something for a longer time, it will come out smooth. The opposite of smooth here is 'chunky' – meaning you blend it for a short time, and there are still some solid pieces.

3. Serving

Now we're at the final portion of preparing, cooking and serving food in English: Vocabulary for serving food.

Add a dollop of sour cream to the soup and mix it in.

Add a spoonful of sour cream to the soup.

A 'dollop' means a small amount. It's not specific, but it generally used to mean around one spoonful. You can use 'dollop' for things which are between solid and liquid, like yoghurt, thick cream, sour cream, or other thick sauces.

Sprinkle with grated parmesan cheese before serving.

You can might *sprinkle* something on your food before you serve it, like cheese. Another example: you might sprinkle pepper, paprika or oregano on top of a dish once it's ready.

They served the steak with green beans and corn on the side.

You can use 'on the side' for vegetables or other things which accompany the main dish.

Garnish with a mint leaf and serve.

A garnish is something you add mainly for decoration, to make the food look more attractive. Some garnishes are chosen for their flavour, but you might garnish a dish with something that isn't intended to be eaten. You can also garnish a drink; cocktails often have a garnish.

(<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Garnish.webp>)

Pour the chocolate icing generously over the top.

The verb 'pour' is mostly used with liquids. You can also use the verb 'drizzle' to mean that you pour a small amount of something. For example: 'Drizzle some olive oil over the salad.'

'Generous' is more often used to describe people, but you can also use it to talk about food (<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/talk-about-food>).

For example, you can have a generous portion or a generous serving. Here, 'generous' has the meaning of large, but in a positive way – not too large.

If you liked this lesson on preparing, serving and cooking food in English, don't forget to check out the other lessons in our Visual Vocabulary series (<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/?s=visual+vocabulary>).

Thanks for watching!