



Demystifying Home Cooking

Cooking at home is the healthiest choice because it allows you to control the types and amounts of ingredients. Occasionally, you might encounter recipes with exotic sounding terms that make you want to order takeout instead! Rather than feeling overwhelmed, you can enhance your cooking skills by learning some unfamiliar cooking methods. Here's a glossary to guide you!

On the Cutting Board:

Bias: Cutting food, typically vegetables, at an angle to increase surface area for more browning and faster cooking.

Bite-sized: Small enough to be eaten without further cutting.

Carve: Slicing food, usually meat.

Chop: Cutting food into non-uniform pieces (common size: 1/2 to 1/3 inch). A rough chop is larger.

Chunk: Cutting food into large pieces (specific measurement often provided).

Cube: Cutting food into three-dimensional squares (specific measurement often provided).

Dice: Cutting food into small (1/8 to 1/4 inch) uniform cubes. Finely diced is smaller but larger than minced.

Grate: Reducing food to small shreds by rubbing it on a grater.

Matchstick: Cutting food into thin strips, about the size of a match.

Mince: Chopping food into uniform, tiny pieces.

Pare: Removing a thin layer of skin from fruits or vegetables.

Shave: Slicing a very thin layer.

Shred: Cutting or pulling into narrow strips.

Slice: Cutting into thin, flat pieces or cutting through.

Sliver: Cutting food into long, thin strips, longer than matchsticks.

Snip: Cutting food, such as chives or scallions, into small, uniform pieces using scissors or kitchen shears.

Zest: Removing the outer, colored layer of a citrus fruit with a zester or paring knife.

Turn Up the Heat:

Air Fry: Crisping food by circulating high heat around it with a fan, similar to baking.

Bake: Cooking with dry heat in an oven.

Blanch: Scalding vegetables in boiling water or steam for a short time.

Boil: Cooking in water that has reached 212°F.

Braise: Browning cut pieces of meat or vegetables, then gently simmering in a small amount of liquid in a covered pan until tender.

Broil: Exposing food to direct, intense heat from above, usually at 500°F, on the top rack of the oven.

En Papillote: Baking in a pouch made of foil or parchment paper.

Fry: Cooking food in hot oil over medium to high heat until brown and crisp.

Grill: Cooking food on a grate over hot coals or a flame.

Poach: Cooking at a low temperature in liquid, either shallow or fully submerged.

Roast: Cooking a large piece of meat, poultry, or oiled vegetables, uncovered, using high heat in an oven.

Sauté/Pan-fry: Cooking food on the stove in a small amount of fat over relatively high heat.

Sear: Forming a golden crust on meat by cooking it in fat in a heavy skillet over high heat.

Simmer: Cooking in liquid just below boiling, with bubbles forming but not bursting.

Slow Cook: Cooking for a long time at a low heat, often using a crockpot or Instapot.

Sous Vide: Vacuum-sealing foods in airtight bags and simmering in water at a constant temperature.

Steam: Cooking food on a rack or in a steamer over a pot of boiling liquid, typically covered to retain the steam.

Stew: Cooking food in liquid, covered, over low heat.

Stir-fry: Cooking small pieces of food quickly over high heat, stirring constantly, with a small amount of fat or liquid.

Sweat: Cooking vegetables over low heat in a covered pan until moisture beads appear and they begin to brown.

Source: Tufts Nutrition and Health Letter, June 2023, VOL. 41, #4

Have fun as you navigate and master various cooking techniques, making your home-cooked meals even healthier and more delicious!

Mediterranean Stuffed Tortillas



Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup red onion, finely chopped
- 1 medium zucchini, diced
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 1 cup cooked grains of your choice (e.g. quinoa and couscous mix)
- 1 15-oz can of chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1/2 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1/4 cup Kalamata olives, sliced
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 4 large tortillas (sundried tomato, spinach, or whole grain variety)
- 1/4 cup crumbled feta cheese (optional)
- Fresh parsley, chopped (for garnish)
- Tzatziki sauce or tahini sauce (for serving)

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. In a large skillet, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the garlic and red onion and sauté for 2-3 minutes until fragrant. Add the zucchini and bell pepper. Cook for another 5 minutes until the vegetables are tender.
3. Stir in the grains, chickpeas, cherry tomatoes, Kalamata olives, and seasonings. Cook for another 2-3 minutes until everything is well combined and heated through.
4. Place the whole grain tortillas on a flat surface. Spoon an even amount of the filling mixture onto the center of each tortilla. If using, sprinkle a bit of crumbled feta cheese over the filling.
5. Roll the tortillas tightly and place them seam-side down in a baking dish. Cover the baking dish with aluminum foil. Bake for 15-20 minutes, until the tortillas are heated through and slightly crispy on the edges.
6. Serve with a dollop of tzatziki or tahini sauce on the side, and garnish with parsley.

Serves 4.