Your notes

GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition: revision notes

Food preparation skills

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Knife skills and preparing ingredients

- The **bridge hold**: hold the food with your fingers and thumb forming a bridge, and cut under it. Used for cutting round foods, such as halving an onion.
- The **claw grip**: curl your fingertips under and slice with the knife against your knuckles. Used for slicing and dicing.
- Cuts include **julienne** (thin matchsticks), dice (cubes) and chiffonade (thin ribbons of leaves).
- Use the right knife and chopping board, and keep knives sharp: a blunt knife slips more easily.

Using equipment and the cooker

- The hob is used for boiling, simmering and frying; the grill for radiant heat; the oven for baking and roasting.
- Blenders, food processors and electric mixers save time and effort, such as making breadcrumbs or whisking.

Key techniques

- Sauces: a **roux** sauce (fat and flour cooked, then liquid added), an all-in-one sauce, and reduction sauces.
- Doughs: bread (kneading to develop gluten), pastry (rubbing in, shortcrust; laminating, flaky) and fresh pasta.
- Setting mixtures: eggs set quiche and custard; gelatine sets cheesecake.
- Tenderising and **marinating**: acid (lemon juice, vinegar, yoghurt) or bashing with a meat hammer softens meat and adds flavour.

Testing for readiness

- Use a **food probe** to check the core temperature has reached 75°C.

- Other tests: a skewer comes out clean from a cake; bread sounds hollow when tapped; pasta is "**al dente**" (firm to the bite).

Key terms

Bridge hold	Holding food with a hand arched like a bridge while cutting underneath.
Claw grip	Tucking fingertips under while slicing, so the knife is guided by the knuckles.
Roux	A mix of cooked fat and flour used to thicken sauces.
Julienne	Cutting food into thin matchstick strips.
Marinating	Soaking food in a flavoured, often acidic, liquid to add flavour and tenderise.
Food probe	A thermometer inserted into food to check its core temperature.
Al dente	Pasta cooked so it is firm to the bite.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. Which knife grip is used for slicing, with fingertips tucked under?
2. Which knife grip is used to cut an onion in half?
3. What is a roux?
4. What is julienne?
5. Why should knives be kept sharp?
6. What core temperature shows food is cooked safely?
7. How can you tell a cake is cooked?
8. What does "al dente" mean?

Answers

1. The claw grip
2. The bridge hold
3. A cooked mixture of fat and flour used to thicken sauces
4. Thin matchstick strips
5. A blunt knife is more likely to slip
6. 75°C
7. A skewer comes out clean
8. Firm to the bite

What to do next

Practise 11 questions on this topic

Try 4 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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