

Professional Cooking

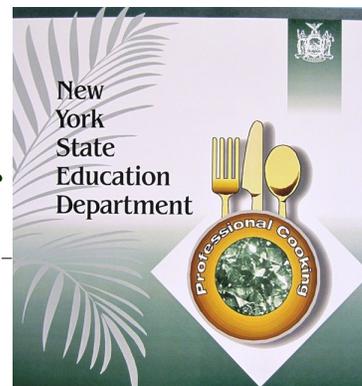
Knife Skills.....practice, practice and more practice.....

It's a skill many of us envy as we watch a Food Network chef prepare intricate vegetable cuts for a recipe they assemble in minutes. And having good knife skills does make food preparation much easier. Part of NYSED's Professional Cooking workshops each summer introduces basic knife skills before the start of the hands-on food preparation segments. It is a short demonstration that teaches the parts of the French knife, the proper way to hold the knife, knife safety, care of the knife, different types of knives, and basic slicing, julienne, and dicing techniques. These techniques are then expected to be applied throughout the food preparation sessions as participants prepare their assigned recipes. This is practice, practice, practice.



With the short time frame for the Professional Cooking workshops, our intention is to incorporate several skills into the recipes that have been developed by the Master Instructors. So a single recipe may have the participant learning how to make a sauce, how to measure by weight, and how to dice carrots in $\frac{1}{4}$ inch size. These skills may not all be perfected during the Professional Cooking workshops, so participants are encouraged to practice what they learned when they return home and to their schools.

So how do you practice these newly acquired skills? Like anything else...practice, practice and more practice. Challenge yourself by using a new recipe that requires the use of a skill you learned at Professional Cooking – whether you do this at home or at your school does not matter. If you want to improve your knife skills, make a pot of vegetable soup. You can practice a variety of the different cuts on a variety of vegetables, and then toss them into a pot of broth. Prepare perfect carrot sticks for your students by practicing a julienne cut. Your sweet potatoes or squash will look so tempting when you have them perfectly cut into a uniform, large dice. All these are opportunities for perfecting your knife skills. In time, you will find that preparing fresh produce is not the chore it once was. In fact... you might even get some compliments!



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Top 10 Knife Tips

1. Sharpen knives frequently.
2. Never try to catch a falling knife.
3. Cut away from your body and hands..
4. Never drop knives into a sink of water. Wash them individually.
5. Carry knives point down at your side.
6. Never cut items held in your hand.
7. Always use a cutting board– do not cut on a metal surface.
8. Make sure your guiding hand has fingers tucked under.
9. Keep your eyes on your work.
10. Don't rush– speed and precision come with practice.