Objectives
Participant will:
1. Name the two knives most needed in the kitchen and a use for each.
2. Identify two ways to properly hold a chef’s knife.
3. Identify three ways to make a cut with a chef’s knife.
4. Demonstrate proper care of knives.

Required Materials:
• Chef’s knife.
• Paring knife.
• A steel.
• Wood, plastic, or rubber cutting board.
• Several vegetables and/or fruits to show cuts with chef’s knife (example – onion, bell pepper, celery, zucchini, carrot, apple, pear ~ any vegetable or fruit that would taste good with dip recipes included in this lesson).
• Vegetables or fruits to show cuts with paring knife (example – apple, pear).

Optional Supplemental Materials:
• Card stock or cardboard cut-outs of chef’s knife (pattern included at end of lesson) to practice knife holds.

Preparation Required:
• Review lesson plan.
• Practice knife cuts so that you are familiar with them and comfortable using them. If you are unfamiliar with the concepts taught in this lesson, please review the references listed at the end of the lesson for additional information and knowledge. The ifood.tv video is especially good at demonstrating the three cuts described in this lesson.
• Gather ingredients and materials needed to demonstrate knife cuts.
• Make vegetable and/or fruit dips to be used for sampling vegetables and fruits that will be cut up during lesson.
• Make copies of recipes and any other handout you wish to distribute (see pages 10 and 9 of this lesson) – enough for all class participants.
• Make a paper sheath to show participants.
• Make enough cardboard knives for group if you choose to do optional activity in objective two.
• Bring paper, tape, and scissors if you choose to make paper sheaths.
• Make copies of all required paperwork for lesson.
LESSON PLAN

Introduction
Time: 5 minutes

• Welcome everyone to the class and thank them for taking time to participate.
• Briefly introduce yourself and the program.
• **Ask the class:** Do you ever get in the kitchen and feel a little intimidated or frustrated because you just don’t really know how to get things done in the most timely or efficient way? Do you think you can’t cook because you don’t have a kitchen full of equipment or tools?
• This lesson is designed to show you how to get dinner on the table in a snap using some very basic tools. Sound too good to be true? Just watch what you can do with two good, sharp knives!

Objective 1: Name the two knives most needed in the kitchen and a use for each.
Time: 5 minutes

• Infomercials would have us believe that we all need the latest, greatest slicers and dicers to make a nice meal, but the fact is we really only need two good knives and a cutting board.
• A chef’s knife (*show knife as you are talking about it*) is by far the most valuable tool in the kitchen. When you learn to use one, it is the knife you will use 99% of the time. You will use this knife for general purpose chopping, slicing and dicing.
• The other knife you will need is a paring knife (*show knife*). This knife is used to trim vegetables and fruits and usually has a blade that is 2 to 4” long.
• One other knife that is nice to have is a serrated slicing knife (*Optional: show knife*) used to cut breads. In this lesson we will focus on the chef’s knife and the paring knife.
• The good news is that you really do only need one good quality chef’s knife. If you take good care of it, it will last a lifetime. The bad news is that good chef’s knives can be a bit pricey but they are a worthwhile investment. If you don’t have one, it would be wise to budget and save to get a good one. You can often find knives on sale. Shop around (in stores and online) so you are familiar with prices and understand a good deal when you find one.
• This is what you want to look for in a good chef’s knife (*hold knife up and show each feature as you discuss it*):
  o A chef’s knife will have a blade that is between 8 to 12” long (8” works well for most women, men with bigger hands may prefer the 10 or 12” knife).
  o The blade will be made of a high-carbon stainless steel. This metal can be honed to an extremely sharp edge and does not rust, corrode, or discolor.
  o The knife will have a full tang. That means that the metal runs the full length of the handle. It is one piece of forged steel from tip to end. This gives the knife heft and durability.
  o The knife will be balanced. You should be able to lay the knife flat on your finger and balance it between the handle and the blade. This feature makes working with the knife much easier because cuts will be smooth and even.

Objective 2: Identify two ways to properly hold a chef’s knife.
Time: 5 minutes

• Explain that there are several basic ways to hold a chef’s knife and just like signing your name, everyone finds the fit that suits them best. We will cover three basic grips here.
• **Note:** Pictures of holds are for convenience of teacher. It is expected that you will demonstrate the holds with your own knife rather than showing a picture of the holds.
• *Optional activity:* If class is very small and you have confidence in participants, let them take turns holding the knife in each of the grips as you explain them. If class is large or you do not want participants handling the knife, let them practice grips on cardboard knives (see pattern at end of lesson).

• Grip #1 – grip handle with all four fingers and hold thumb gently but firmly against handle on opposite side.

![Grip #1](image1)

• Grip #2 – grip the handle with 3 fingers and the thumb on the opposite side. Place the index finger on top of the blade.

![Grip #2](image2)

• Grip #3 – grip the handle with 3 fingers, rest the index finger flat against the blade on one side, and hold the thumb on the opposite side of the blade to give additional stability and control.

![Grip #3](image3)

• As you practice holding and using your knife, you will find the grip or grips that are most comfortable for you and that give you the most control.

• *Ask the class:* Now that you know what to do with the hand holding the knife, what do you do with the other hand?

• The guiding hand:
  
  - Holds the item being cut.
  - Guides the knife.
  - Protects the hand from cuts (claw hold).

![Guiding hand](image4)
Objective 3: Identify three ways to make a cut with a chef’s knife.
Time: 10-15 minutes

• If you have ever read a cookbook or watched a cooking show on TV you are probably familiar with words like mince or julienne. It can be pretty intimidating to think you have to julienne something if you don’t have the slightest clue what (or who) julienne is!

• Well, you can relax right now, because there are only three simple cuts a home cook really needs to know – the draw, the slice, and the chop. Once you master these, you will be able to handle any cut. We will talk about these three and then define some of those other scary words later.

• Demonstrate three cuts as you describe them – if group is small enough, let participants practice the cuts. Watch them carefully to make sure they are following safe procedures. If you have any doubts about them using a knife, do NOT have them participate!
  o Demonstrate the cuts on the vegetables and/or fruits that you will use with the dip recipes for tasting at the end of the lesson.

• The draw:
  o Especially good for cutting strips.
  o Only uses the tip of the blade.
  o Put index finger on top of blade to help guide and control your movements.
  o Put tip of knife on cutting board away from you then draw tip of knife through the food towards you.
  o Suggested items to cut – onion, green pepper.

• The slice:
  o Uses the middle portion of the blade.
  o Loose grip on handle (use grip #1 or #3).
  o Place tip on board and push tip away from you as you push down and away. The heel of the knife falls down to make the cut.
  o The free hand grips the ingredient to be cut. Curl the hand into a claw with the thumb and pinky tucked behind the other three fingers. This protects the fingers from cuts.
  o Suggested items to cut – zucchini, carrots, celery, mushrooms.

• The chop:
  o Uses the entire blade.
  o Place tip of knife on board.
  o With other hand, place 4 fingers on top of knife.
  o Gently push knife down and away but keep tip on cutting board entire time.
  o Cut in many semi-circular motions, keeping tip of knife on board and rotating handle.
• Flip knife over and scrape ingredients back to center then continue chopping.
  • *Suggested items to cut – garlic, broccoli, seconds cuts on onion.*

• There you have it! With those three cuts, you can prepare any dish or follow any recipe. Remember, 99% of the time you will want to use your chef’s knife.
• For that other one percent, you will want to use a paring knife. This knife is used to trim fruits and vegetables. You will have a much easier time removing the core from an apple with a good, sharp paring knife than with your big chef’s knife!

• *Demonstrate coring apple or pear, then use draw cut with chef’s knife to cut in strips for dipping.*
• With a little practice you will get better at cutting even and uniform shapes.

• **Ask the class:** Why do you think it matters whether or not your food is cut in uniform shapes?
  o It ensures even cooking.
  o It enhances the appearance of the final product.
  o **Ask the class:** Ready to define some of those words we talked about earlier? Who knows what it means to:
    ▪ Chop – to cut into irregular shaped pieces
    ▪ Concasser (*con-cass*-SAY) – to chop coarsely, to crush
    ▪ Mince – to chop into very fine pieces (think minced garlic)
    ▪ Shred – to cut into thin strips either with coarse blade of a grater or with chef’s knife (think shredded cabbage for coleslaw)
    ▪ Chiffonade (*shi-fo-NOD*)– cutting leaves (lettuce, herbs) into fine strips
    ▪ Dice – cut into uniform shapes.
      ▪ Brunoise (*broo-NWAHZ*) – tiny diced cubes measuring ⅛” by ⅛”
      ▪ Small dice – ¼” by ¼” cubes
      ▪ Medium dice – ½” by ½ “cubes
      ▪ Large dice – ¾” by ¾ “cubes
    ▪ Julienne (*joo-lee-ENN*) – ⅛” by ⅙” by 2 ½”strips (think match sticks).
    ▪ Batonnet (*bah-tow-NAY*) – ¼ “by ¼”by 2 ½ to 3”strips.
    ▪ French fry – ½ “ by ½ “ by 3 “.
Objective 4: Demonstrate proper care of knives

Time 5 - 10 minutes

- Just as important as it is to understand how to use a knife, it is equally important to know how to take care of one. A good knife will last a lifetime with proper care.

- Cleaning knives:
  - Clean in hot, soapy water and dry thoroughly between tasks and after you are through cooking to prevent cross contamination.
  - Never put a good knife in the dishwasher. The edges could be damaged by jostling or extreme temperature changes.
  - Never drop a knife in a sink of soapy water. The knife could become dented or nicked and anyone reaching into the sink could be seriously cut.

- Storing knives:
  - Protect the blade by storing your knife in a block made for knives or by keeping a sheath on the knife if stored in a drawer (show paper sheath and any other sheath you may have).
  - Optional activity: Make a paper sheath using instructions at end of lesson.

- Keeping knives sharp:
  - The surface you cut on makes a difference. A cutting board is an important partner to your knife. Hard wood or hard plastic or rubber boards are preferred. Any of these can harbor harmful bacteria so care should be taken to clean and sanitize them with each use.
    - Ceramic, glass and tile are very hard on the knife’s blade and should be avoided as cutting boards.
  - Another tool important to a good, sharp knife is the steel. A steel is used for truing and maintaining the knife’s edges between sharpenings and immediately before sharpening with a stone. Using the steel to maintain the edges of your knife is called honing. Ideally, you will hone your knife each time you use it for repeated cuts. Only making one or two slices or cuts? Don’t worry about it!
    - Honing:
      - Place steel perpendicular to cutting board and hold knife at a 90˚ angle. Then bring the knife up half way and then half way again. Now you should be holding the knife at a 20˚ angle to the steel. With a loose grip on the knife, draw the knife down and towards you. Repeat this 3 or 4 times, then do the same thing on the other side of the blade 3 or 4 times.

Conclusion:

Time: 5 minutes

- That concludes our lesson on knife skills. Now you should be able to do the following:
  - Identify two of the most important tools in the kitchen – the chef’s knife and paring knife.
  - Decide what hold or grip is most comfortable for you.
Cut any food using either the draw, the slice or the chop.
Take care of your knives by keeping them clean and sharp.

• Thank you for participating in this lesson on knife skills. Although a good knife is an investment, once you learn to use it, you will find that you don’t need many of the kitchen tools you thought you did. With a good knife, you will be able to create countless mouth-watering meals for a fraction of the cost of eating out and in record time!
• Bon Appetit!
• *Let participants taste the cut up vegetables and fruits with the dips.*

Resources


This material was funded by USDA's Food Stamp Program. The Food Stamp Program provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, call 1-800-221-5689 or visit online at http://www.fns.usda.govfsp/outreach/coalition/map.htm. In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture's policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, political beliefs or disability. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.
MAKING PAPER SHEATHS

Rigid or soft sheaths can be purchased to fit a variety of knives. It is also possible to make sturdy sheaths inexpensively from kraft paper, as shown here.

1. Cut a piece of paper than is 1 inch longer than your blade and 18 inches wide. Fold back 1 inch along the entire width of the paper.

2. Lay your knife on the paper, one blade-width in from the edge, along the short side, with the tip inserted in to the 1 inch crease. Fold over the short edge to begin wrapping the blade in paper.

3. Continue to fold the paper, wrapping it around the blade in several layers.

4. Use tape to secure the bottom and top of the sheath; use as many additional pieces of tape as needed to keep the sheath closed.
Knife Skills

Knife Skills Cooking Terms

- Chop – to cut into irregular shaped pieces.
- Concasser (con-cass-SAY) – to chop coarsely, to crush.
- Mince – to chop into very fine pieces (think minced garlic).
- Shred – to cut into thin strips either with coarse blade of a grater or with chef’s knife (think shredded cabbage for coleslaw).
- Chiffonade (shi-fi-NOD) – cutting leaves (lettuce, herbs) into fine strips.
- Dice – cut into uniform shapes.
  - Brunoise (BROON-wah) – tiny diced cubes measuring 1/8 inch by 1/8 inch.
  - Small dice – ¼” by ¼” cubes.
  - Medium dice – ½” by ½” cubes.
  - Large dice – ¾” by ¾” cubes.
- Julienne (joo-lee-ENN) – 1/8” by 1/8” by 2 ½” strips.
- Batonnet (bah-tow-NAY) – ¼” by ¼” by 2 ½ to 3” strips.
- French fry – ½” by ½” by 3”.

Three Basic Knife Cuts

- Draw ~ Use tip of blade and draw tip of knife through food (onions, green peppers, apples, etc.).
- Slice ~ Use middle of blade, keeping tip on cutting board, and push down & away (zucchini, carrots, celery, etc.).
- Chop ~ Use entire blade, keeping tip on cutting board, and pushing down & away in semi-circular motion (garlic, dicing onion, potatoes, etc.).

This material was funded by USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact 1-800-221-5689 or visit online at http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/. In accordance with Federal Law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, political beliefs or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-0410 or call (800)795-3672.
Caring for your Knife

- Cleaning knives:
  - Clean in hot, soapy water and dry thoroughly between tasks and after you are through cooking to prevent cross contamination.
  - Never put a good knife in the dishwasher. The edges could be damaged by jostling or extreme temperature changes.
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  - The surface you cut on makes a difference. A cutting board is an important partner to your knife. Hard wood or hard plastic or rubber boards are preferred. Any of these can harbor harmful bacteria so care should be taken to clean and sanitize them with each use.
  - Ceramic, glass and tile are very hard on the knife’s blade and should be avoided as cutting boards.

What can you do with fresh cut veggies and fruit?
Try adding them to salads, pasta, rice, soups, stir-fries, sandwiches, and wraps.
Or just plunk them into one of these tasty dips!

Cottage Cheese Dip
- 1 cup low fat cottage cheese
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon parsley flakes
- ¼ teaspoon dill weed
- Salt and pepper to taste

Mix all ingredients together and chill. Serve with fresh cut up vegetables.

Yogurt Dip
- 1 (8 oz) carton strawberry yogurt
- 1-2 tablespoons frozen orange juice concentrate
- Dash ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon poppy seeds (optional)

Combine all ingredients in a small bowl and stir to blend. Serve as dip for fresh fruit.

What else can you do?
Sauté fresh cut veggies in a little olive oil until they are just tender then add them to casserole, quesadillas, burritos, omelets, potatoes, and sauces. Yum, yum!