

Blanching and Parboiling

Some foods, especially vegetables, are blanched or parboiled before being used in a recipe where they will be finished by another cooking method, such as sautéing or baking. To do so, they are immersed in a large quantity of a boiling or simmering liquid – oil or water – and partially cooked. This partial cooking is a significant part of advance preparation.

The only difference between blanching and parboiling is cooking time. Blanching is done quickly, usually 30 seconds to a minute. Parboiling is usually several minutes.

The four main reasons for blanching are:

1. **To increase holding quality.** Heating helps preserve foods by destroying bacteria that cause spoilage and by destroying enzymes that discolor foods (as when potatoes turn brown) and cause them to deteriorate.
2. **To save time.** Vegetables can be blanched, chilled, and stored in the fridge. When you are ready to stir-fry, bake or make a dish requiring vegetables (such as a pasta or risotto dish), having the vegetables blanched will shorten the final cooking time.
3. **To remove undesirable flavors.** Certain strong-flavored vegetables, such as rutabaga, can be blanched to make them milder and more acceptable.
4. **To enable the product to be processed further.** Vegetables and fruits, such as tomatoes and peaches, as well as some nuts, are blanched to loosen the skins for peeling.



Making an Ice Bath

Foods that are blanched or parboiled in water are often shocked or refreshed in an ice bath to stop the cooking process. An ice bath is simply a container of ice cubes and cold water. The combination of ice and water will chill foods more rapidly than a container of only ice. The food being chilled will also cool faster if it is in a metal container, rather than one made of plastic or glass.

Blanching Potatoes

In the food service industry, blanching potatoes before deep frying ensures that the finished potato has the proper color, texture, and flavor and that it cooks thoroughly without becoming greasy or scorched.

Most deep-fried potatoes prepared from the raw state are first blanched in oil heated to 300-degrees to 325-degrees F until tender and almost translucent. They are then drained thoroughly and held until needed. At that time, they are finished in oil heated to 350-degrees to 375-degrees F.

Blanching Meats

The purpose of blanching meat is to dissolve out blood, salt, or impurities from meats and bones. Place the item in cold water, bring to a boil, lower heat and simmer briefly. Cool the item by placing it into cold water.

Acid/Alkali Reactions

The acid or alkali content of the cooking liquid affects the texture and color of many vegetables.

If an acid such as lemon juice, vinegar or wine is added to the liquid for flavoring, the vegetable will resist softening and will require a longer cooking time. Naturally occurring acids in vegetables are also released during cooking. If the cooking pan is kept covered, the acids can concentrate.

- GREEN: Spinach or broccoli will turn a drab olive green if cooked with an acid.
- RED/WHITE: However, red cabbage will stay red when cooked with an acid. Cauliflower will remain white when cooked with an acid.

Alkalinity can be caused by tap water, detergent residue on utensils or the addition of baking soda to the cooking liquid. Alkalinity causes a loss of thiamin and other nutrients.

- GREEN: Spinach or broccoli cooked with an alkali turn the veggies bright green.
- RED/WHITE: Red cabbage turns blue and cauliflower turns yellow when cooked with an alkali.

Color changes alone do not affect flavor, but the altered appearance can make the product visually unappealing.

Tomato Concasse

Tomato concasse can be used as the base for tomato sauce and other sauces, served on a bruschetta, used in stews, and more.

- Core the tomato. With a paring knife, cut an "X" through the skin at the bottom of the tomato.
- Drop in boiling, salted water and blanch for 30 seconds to 1 minute, just to loosen the skin.

- Transfer to an ice bath to stop the cooking.
- When tomato is cooled, remove from ice bath and peel the skin off the tomato starting from the “X” at the bottom.
- Cut tomato in half crosswise through the middle. Remove seeds and chop coarsely.

Sweet and Sour Broccoli and Veggie Stir Fry

Serves: 4

Ingredients:

Sauce

- ½ cup light brown sugar, packed
- ½ cup vegetable broth
- ¼ cup apple cider vinegar
- ¼ cup ketchup
- 2 tbsp coconut aminos
- 4 tsp cornstarch

Stir Fry

- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 cup large diced onions
- ½ cup large diced red bell pepper
- ½ cup large diced green bell pepper
- 1/8 tsp salt
- 4 cups chopped green cabbage, blanched for 30 seconds to 1 minute, shocked in ice bath to cool & drained
- 3 cups broccoli florets, blanched for 2 minutes, shocked in ice bath to cool & drained
- ½ cup diagonally cut carrots, blanch for 30 seconds to 1 minute, shocked in ice bath to cool & drained (see recipe notes)
- 4 cups cooked white or brown rice
- Chopped green onions, garnish



Method:

1. **For the sauce**, place all sauce ingredients in a small saucepan over medium heat, whisking to combine. Whisk constantly. It could take up to 5 minutes, but when it comes to a simmer, whisk for another 2 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside. This makes 1-1/4 cups of sauce.
2. **For the stir fry**, heat wok or large sauté pan over medium-high to high heat. Add oil. When oil is hot add onions, bell peppers, and salt. Cook and toss for 1 to 1-1/2 minutes. Add

cabbage, broccoli, and carrots. Stir or toss for another 1 to 1-1/2 minutes. Add sauce and bring to a boil, stirring for 1 minute.

3. Serve over rice and garnish with green onions.

Recipe Notes:

- After peeling the carrot, place on a cutting board. Holding the carrot firmly, use a sharp knife to cut the carrot at a 60-degree angle. Continue cutting the carrot on the diagonal, keeping the pieces uniform in width.
- Other veggies that can be substituted are mushrooms, celery, sugar snap peas, bamboo shoots, water chestnuts, blanched green beans, pineapple, baby corn, cauliflower, bean sprouts, etc. Choose your favorite veggies.



Sources for some of the blanching information can be found in the culinary textbooks, Professional Cooking by Wayne Gisslen and On Cooking by Sarah R. Labensky, Alan M. Hause, and Priscilla A. Martel.