

ϕ Mental Mise en Place ϕ

Mise en Place: Fr. “Everything put in its place”

“Mise en place” is a French phrase that means *everything in its place*. This common professional phrase emphasizes the need to have all ingredients and equipment ready for the intended time of use. The introduction of this book is entitled “Mental Mise en Place”. A successful cook is one who has mentally prepared before beginning preparation of a dish. Mental Mise en Place is comprised of three concepts: knowledge, skill, and repertoire.

Knowledge: *Understanding an organized body of facts and principles through words, sensations, and observations.*

The measure of a cook’s culinary knowledge starts with his or her understanding of the relationship between cooking techniques, ingredients, and the desired outcome. A dish often begins with a creative thought that builds upon what is known so that the cook can discover what is possible. Creating a dish is really just an experiment. *The Chefs Reference Guide* has 1150 proven culinary experiments. These experiments can be used to understand the relationship between the ratio of ingredients. The understanding of these relationships is an essential first step in creating new concepts and dishes.

Skill: *The ability gained though correct repetitive practice.*

The most effective way to learn a new technique is through observation and practice. For a novice culinarian this involves an apprenticeship, a formal culinary education, or work experience. After a skill has been observed and practiced it needs to be refined through continued practice over a longer period of time. The mastering of some techniques may only take a few weeks but the perfection of that technique may be a lifelong challenge. Skills are perishable; continued practice is the key to success.

Can you recall a dish that you really enjoyed from your past? Have you ever been to a restaurant where you ordered the same thing on two separate occasions and found that the dish you ordered was not as you had expected? Perhaps your second experience was an improper execution of the formula, which will be defined in relation to a recipe. This could have happened through a lapse in skill amongst the team of cooks, improper sequencing of the preparation or a formula mise en place issue. This is where the consistency of preparation is critical; you ordered the dish the second time because you liked it the first time. A successful cook is one who can deliver a defined set of skills consistently therefore producing a consumable work of art. As chefs and cooks we are only as good as the last meal we prepared.

Repertoire: *A list of what has been learned for the purpose of performance.*

The Chefs Reference Guide provides the cook with a quick access to the “need to know” details of dishes and methodology. It is divided into three sections. The first section of this guide details the critical information concerning the basic cooking techniques. This technique focused section will allow the user to review the critical check points of food preparation to ensure a properly prepared product. The second section of this reference guide contains formulas and recipes. These recipes and formulas are presented in a matrix format. Details concerning the instruction for use will be detailed on the following page. The third section of the reference guide presents a basic interpretation of culinary terms as well as reference charts.

Recipe versus Formula

A recipe can be defined as a framework to work within to ensure a consistent product. A formula, on the other hand, can be defined as an exact ratio that produces a consistent product. Some recipes can be adjusted for similar results. For example, a recipe for stock that uses turkey bones instead

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of chicken bones will result in a similar finished product. A cook can adjust the ingredients, timing and temperatures to accommodate the primary change in flavor. Formulas on the other hand, if altered, can have an undesired effect. An example of this is pie dough. The correct measure of flour, fat and cold water is the key to successful pie dough. Too much flour and the dough will be tough and dry, too much fat and the dough will taste greasy, too little water and the product will fall apart when baked. It is very difficult for a cook to identify some of these potential problems in the preparation of a dough.

The recipe charts, which contain the recipes and formulas, have been designed with a recipe reference number to speed the referencing process. Use of the table of contents will primarily aid the user in referencing the categorized recipes through the use of recipe numbers. The numbering system used for these recipes and formulas can be used as a production training tool for managers to plan, organize and control the daily output of preparation.

The spreadsheet recipe format is very different from the standard recipe format found in most books. Let's first look at a traditional recipe so that it can be compared to the spreadsheet format used in this guide

Crêpe -Recipe Number 10-Yields 20 crêpes

Ingredients

2 ounces of clarified butter
1 cup of flour,
2 cups of milk,
4 each eggs.

Method of Preparation

Whisk the flour into the milk and eggs, strain, add butter.

Ladle 2 oz of batter for each crêpe and cook until golden brown.

Now let's look at the spreadsheet format for the same Crêpe recipe.

How to use the Recipe Formula Charts

Column A is the recipe/ formula reference number.

Column B is the recipe /formula name

Column C are the ingredients and the quantity

Column D is a common ingredient amount – refer to the top of the line if no amount is given.

Column E is a yield or portion

Column F is the method notes or chef notes

A	B	C		D				E	F
	Item		1	1	2	4	8	Y	Method of preparation
10	Crepe	1 ½ oz Melted Butter		cup Flour	cup Milk	ea Eggs		20 ea	Whisk the flour into the milk and eggs, strain, add butter. Ladle 2 oz of batter for each crepe and cook until golden brown.

This recipe/formula is on the page containing other basic kitchen preparations. Recipe number 10 is a Crêpe recipe that uses 1 ½ ounces of clarified butter, 1 cup of flour, 2 cups of milk, and 4 each eggs. These ingredients will yield 20 crêpes. The process or method of preparation is detailed in the right hand column. Whisk the flour into the milk and eggs, strain, add butter. Ladle 2 oz of batter for each crêpe and cook until golden brown.

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In many cases the spreadsheet format takes up considerably less space than a traditional recipe format. Each recipe and formula will give the quantity of the ingredient in the individual cell, or box. The numbers across the top of the page are the standard amounts that the recipe will utilize. Recipes and formulas can be quickly recalculated to adjust the desired production amount. This can be accomplished by increasing or decreasing the number or numerator across the top of a spreadsheet. The user can double, halve, and multiply the amount of batter to yield 100 crepes. The conversion is as simple as changing a 1 to 2, a 4 to 8, and so on across the top of the page.

Some recipes, like the crêpe recipe, will have a cell with a certain amount for the ingredient within it. This ingredient has been put in a separate cell because the amount needed for the recipe may differ from the set amounts across the top of the page, like the butter in the recipe example. The consolidated format in these charts allows the user to access up to 15 recipes per page.

The learning style of many Chefs is that of a visual learner. According to psychologist Dr. Linda Silverman of the University of Southern California visual- spatial learners tend to be more successful when information is presented in systematic patterns. Visual learners utilize the right side of their brain more often while reading than learners with other learning style preferences. Therefore they are able to process, recall or synthesize information more expeditiously. Dr. Silverman's research also indicated that visual learners also prefer to learn when concepts are presented as a whole first then broken down in parts. The graphic tools detailed in the Culinary Methods section of the book have been developed with this concept in mind: whole then part. The matrix recipe/ formula system in this book helps facilitate these learning processes because the ingredient amounts are separated from the recipe/ formula. By understanding the concept first, the cook is able to begin the process of committing that procedure and ingredients to long term memory. It is this author's belief that through repetitive practice the cook will also begin to form conceptual relationships with the ingredient amounts, therefore gaining a deeper understanding of the recipe/ formula concept.

There are a few things to remember before using the recipe/ formula charts.

- A. Acquaint yourself with the cooking methods and culinary terminology sections of the guide. The first key to success is to understand the correct technique for the recipe.
- B. When you measure out the ingredients for a recipe or formula remember that cups, tablespoons, and teaspoons measure only volume. A recipe or formula that calls for ounces or pounds needs to be weighed with a scale.
- C. Use this guide to cross reference recipes, methods and definitions. To summarize the introduction *Mental Mise en Place: Everything put in its place- the ingredients of knowledge, skill, and repertoire.*

Consistency is the most important factor in the preparation of food. Most cooks do not use recipes every time they prepare an item. They rely on memory and repetition. In some situations this works; however, if continued training and evaluation are not consistent then the final product may deviate from the expected outcome. Consistency of the final product and production efficiency are advantages that corporate restaurants may have over some independent operators in the same demographic market offering similar fare. Corporations and chain restaurants use recipe cards and pre-prepared components that deliver a known end result.

The recipes and formulas in *The Chefs Reference Guide* can be easily referenced for a quality finished product. Quality can be defined as the consistent delivery of a predetermined standard. Successful restaurateurs know that controlling quality will result in repeat customers. Understanding the basic methods and quality points will enable you to prepare countless dishes in an infinite number of combinations.

Silverman, L. K. (2002). Upside-down brilliance, the visual-spatial learner. DeLeon Publishing, Inc

The symbol ϕ represents the theory of first order logic in math, science, and philosophy