

Make Meals Easy with Mise en Place and Sequencing



Mise en place (MEEZ ahn plahs) is a French term for having all your ingredients measured, cut, peeled, sliced, grated, etc. before you start cooking. Pans are prepared. Mixing bowls, tools and equipment set out. It is a technique chefs use to assemble meals so quickly and effortlessly. Planning ahead and thinking through the entire cooking process, and giving yourself the time and space to create a mise en place will make cooking more about fun and less about stress!

It makes complicated recipes more fun to prepare when you're no longer doing a juggling act, trying to complete several tasks simultaneously. How will you set up your space? What equipment will you need to successfully accomplish these tasks? What types of storage/containers do you need?

To Prepare:

1. Read through the recipes. Picture them.
2. Fill out the sequence and organization template.
3. Have the plan with you when you cook.
4. To begin, remove jewelry, secure hair, put on an apron.
5. Wash hands thoroughly (sing Happy Birthday!).
6. Mise en Place - set-up cutting board, knives, utensils, bowls, pots, and ingredients needed for dish preparation in your cooking space.

Sequence and Organization Template

1. Read through the recipe(s).

As you read, notice any hidden steps (e.g. chopping the ‘diced onion’ in the ingredient list), or any similar tasks that could be grouped (e.g. all of the veggies that need to be chopped). It may be helpful to read the recipes through a couple of times.

2. List all of the ingredients in the recipe(s) using the template below.

If applicable, group ingredients by similar tasks/timing (e.g. list all of the ingredients you have to chop together, or all of the ingredients you don’t need to add until the end of cooking together).

3. List all of the tools you will need, grouping by how you will arrange them in your kitchen (e.g. counter/stovetop/oven).

4. Write out all of the steps you need to carry out to make the recipe(s). This should include those “hidden” steps (e.g. cutting or cooking ingredients listed as diced or cooked) and grouping similar tasks (e.g. Step 3. Cut the carrots, celery, onions, and garlic.) Make sure you pay attention to timing in this step. For example you can:

- a. Maximize efficiency by using downtime in recipes (e.g. when waiting for things to boil/simmer/sauté) to prep ingredients you don’t need until later.
- b. Create a **forward sequence** by starting from the first step and working through to the end. Note down the time you plan to start and approximations of how long each step to take to estimate when you will finish.
- c. Create a **backwards sequence** by starting with the last step, attached to the time you wish to finish cooking, and then working backwards from there until you reach the step you should start with and the time you should start it. This technique is especially useful when you need to finish at a particular time, when you’re coordinating several recipes at once, or when the timing of some of the steps is particularly vital.

Use this template as a starting place for your recipe organization and sequencing. As you grow more familiar with the process, you may make adjustments to the columns as they fit your space/recipes.

1. Ingredients:		
<i>Prep</i>	<i>Cooking</i>	<i>Finishing</i>

2. Tools		
<i>Prep/countertop</i>	<i>Cooking</i>	<i>Misc.</i>
3. Sequencing (if backwards, start from the last step of the final category and work back from there)		
<i>Prep</i>		<i>Time</i>
<i>Cooking</i>		<i>Time</i>
<i>Finishing</i>		<i>Time</i>

(Optional) Mise En Place Drawing: Use the space below to draw out how you will organize your physical cooking space. If you're a visual thinker or you have limited space, this step might be especially helpful. You can start by drawing out the countertop, sink, and stove top, and then adding key tools and ingredients, such as the cutting board, knives, bowls, etc.