

A

- Achaar:** A spicy condiment usually made of mango and oil and served with curry.
- Aïoli:** A flavored mayonnaise made with eggs, olive oil and garlic.
- Al dente:** The ideal texture of cooked pasta. The pasta should be cooked until just soft with a slightly chewy centre.
- Allspice:** An aromatic spice, about the size of a pea, used in spicy or sweet foods like Moroccan stews or spiced cakes. Also called Jamaican pepper, allspice can be bought whole or ground.
- Amuse Bouche:** Very small taster portions before a meal, meaning 'to amuse the palate'.
- Antipasto:** The name for an Italian starter. Normally platters of cold meats, cheeses, preserved peppers, artichokes and ciabatta.
- Arrabbiata:** An Italian spicy homemade tomato and chilli sauce served over pasta.
- Arugula:** (Rocket) A peppery-tasting salad green.
- Arborio rice:** A short-grain, high-starch rice. Normally used to make Italian risotto (a creamy rice dish prepared with stock, wine and added flavors like mushrooms or lemon).

B

- Bain-marie:** A water bath (normally a roasting pan half filled with boiling water) used for ensuring even baking for fragile dishes (such as egg-based desserts).
- Baklava:** A Greek desert made with phyllo pastry, nuts and honey.
- Béarnaise Sauce:** A classic sauce made with a reduction of vinegar, tarragon and onions, emulsified with egg yolks and butter, usually served with steak or vegetables like asparagus.
- Béchamel Sauce:** A basic white sauce of milk, butter and flour, flavored with onion, cloves, salt and pepper.
- Beurre Noisette:** Butter cooked in a pan until it turns nut brown, and seasoned with lemon juice and herbs.
- Biltong:** Sticks or slices of salted and spiced meat, air-dried and enjoyed as a snack.
- Blanch:** To first plunge thin skinned vegetables into boiling water, then in ice water in order to peel them easily. This process is also used when freezing vegetables.
- Blind Baking:** The method of pre-baking a pie crust filled with dried legumes in order to keep its shape, and ensure that the crust is completely cooked through.
- Bordelaise Sauce:** A rich sauce made from wine, stock, meat, onions and herbs.
- Bouillabaisse:** A classic French fish stew or soup made with various types of fish and shellfish cooked in tomato, onion and herbs.
- Brine:** Water based pickling/preserving liquid with salt, and spices.
- Brioche:** A French bread made with yeast, butter and eggs. Great for bread & butter pudding.
- Brunoise:** A knife technique used to dice vegetables by first slicing into thin julienne strips, then turned a quarter of a turn to cut into fine dice.

C

- Cannelloni:** Large, pasta tubes normally filled with ground beef or spinach, baked in a tomato and cream sauce.
- Capers:** Berries of the Mediterranean caper plant, preserved in brine. Used to add salt and more flavor to pizza or fish dishes.
- Carbonara:** A sauce served over pasta made with bacon, Parmesan cheese and egg.
- Carpaccio:** An appetizer made of very thin slices of raw beef fillet served cold with salad greens and olive oil.
- Ceviche:** Raw fish marinated in lemon or lime juice and olive oil and served as an appetizer.
- Chorizo:** A Spanish pork sausage seasoned with garlic and chilli.
- Compote:** Fresh fruit, stewed in sugar until syrupy and served with dessert or over ice cream.
- Confit:** Meat (like duck or goose) that has been salted, cooked and preserved in its own fat.
- Consommé:** Clear meat or fish stock served hot or cold as a soup.
- Coulis:** A thick sauce made of puréed fruit or vegetables.
- Couscous:** Pasta made of crushed and steamed semolina, a popular staple food in North Africa usually served with stew.
- Crème Anglaise:** Rich vanilla custard, served hot or cold with dessert. It can also be used as a base for making ice cream.
- Crème Fraîche:** A soured hi-fat thick cream served with desserts or in sauces and soups.
- Crepes:** A very thin pancake, normally served as the French dessert, crepe Suzette.
- Crostini:** Meaning "little toasts" in Italian. Served as a starter with a selection of toppings.

D

- Dal:** Made by cooking lentils with ghee (or butter) and curry spices until very soft and served with rice, meat or fish.
- Dariole:** A small cup-shaped cooking mould (normally metal), used for preparing individual sweet or savoury dishes.
- Dauphinoise:** (Potato bake) A French dish of thinly-sliced layered potatoes, covered with milk, cream, and cheese and baked in a gratin dish.
- Demi-glace:** A classic method of making sauce by loosening the residue in a pan with stock or wine after food has been cooked, and then reducing it to create a rich brown gravy.
- Dolmades:** A Greek starter made from vine-leaves stuffed with rice, meat and lentils and preserved in brine.
- Dukkah:** Dry spice-and-nut mixture usually made from Hazelnuts or pistachios and spices like cumin and coriander, salt and pepper. It's eaten by first dipping crusty bread in olive oil then in the dukkah.
- Duxelles:** A finely chopped mixture of mushrooms and onions sautéed in butter. It is the basic preparation for stews and soups.

E

Emulsion: Created when two liquids are combined into a smooth and glossy consistency. Two familiar emulsions are mayonnaise and hollandaise sauce.

En Croute: Food wrapped in pastry and baked in the oven.

Essence: A concentrated flavor extracted from an ingredient.

F

Falafel: Ground chickpeas, spiced, shaped into balls and deep fried. Served in pita breads with tzatziki.

Flambe: Food served with a tot of alcohol poured over the top, then set alight to create a dramatic presentation.

Florentine: Food normally served on top of spinach, like steak or poached eggs.

Floating Islands (oeufs à la neige): A light dessert made of stiffly beaten and sweetened egg white 'islands', poached in milk and served in a thin custard.

Frittata: An Italian omelette, similar to a Spanish omelette with the filling mixed into the eggs and cooked open, not folded over.

Frenched: To scrape the fat and meat off the ends of bones for presentation purposes. Generally lamb, veal or rib chops are used.

Fritto Misto: An Italian dish, made from a selection of deep-fried foods like different vegetables or meats.

Fromage Frais (or Fromage Blanc): A fresh cheese from France, with a light and creamy texture, delicious with fresh fruit.

G

Ganache: Generally used as an icing for cakes made of melted chocolate and cream.

Gâteau: A French-style sponge cake.

Gazpacho: A Spanish soup made from peeled & diced tomato, cucumber, onion, bell pepper, olive oil and garlic, served chilled with croutons.

Ghee: Clarified butter, used in Indian and Middle-Eastern cuisine.

Gnocchi: Pasta made with potatoes and flour, similar to dumplings and served with aromatic sauces like pesto.

Gratin: Any dish baked with a cheese or breadcrumb topping.

Gravlax: Thinly sliced, cured raw salmon, served as a starter.

Gremolata: A mixture of finely chopped parsley, lemon peel and garlic, sprinkled over meat dishes like Osso Bucco.

H

Halloumi: Goat's milk cheese with a hard texture and quite salty. Good to deep fry and serve as a starter with a sweet chilli sauce or added to salads.

Harissa: A chilli-paste originating from North Africa made with tomato, spices, garlic and olive oil. It can be served with couscous or used in marinades, vinaigrette or curry.

Hoisin: A Chinese dipping-sauce made from soya beans, sugar, vinegar and garlic which can also be used in stir-fries.

Hollandaise: A classic creamy sauce made with an emulsion of egg yolks, lemon juice and melted butter. Delicious with vegetable, fish and egg dishes.

Hummus: A Middle-Eastern condiment made from mashed chickpeas flavored with lemon juice, garlic and olive oil to create a spread or dip for pita bread, falafel or vegetables.

I

Iceberg Lettuce: A crisp, tightly packed, watery lettuce.

Infuse: Extracting flavor from tea or herbs by immersing into boiling liquid and allowed to steep.

Italian Meringue: Made by adding hot sugar syrup instead of granular sugar to stiff egg whites. Used as icing for cakes or in soufflé's.

J

Julienne: The term used for vegetables that have been cut into long, thin strips.

Jus: Rich gravy, normally made by deglazing a pan with stock or wine, and then left to reduce into a thick and glossy accompaniment to roast meat.

K

Kalamata (or Calamata): A black olive grown in Greece and harvested when completely ripe then cured in brine.

Kirsch: Brandy distilled from cherries.

Knead: To knead dough is to stretch and fold the dough to help develop the gluten to ensure good baking results.

Knock Back: Kneading dough that has risen already to reduce bubbles and develop the gluten further.

Koeksister: A South-African pastry made from twisted dough strips, then baked and plunged into sweet, sticky syrup. Best served ice cold.

Korma: A South-Asian curry made with braised meat and spiced with in particular, cardamom and yoghurt.

L

Langoustine: The French term for prawn. This shellfish is much larger than prawns but smaller than crayfish and can be prepared by steaming or grilling and served with lemon and garlic butter.

Lard: Pork fat which has been rendered and clarified.

Lasagne: Italian dish made by layering well seasoned, cooked ground beef and tomato, with sheets of pasta and béchamel sauce. Baked in the oven and topped with a layer of cheese. It can be made with layered vegetables for a vegetarian option.

Lassi: An Indian drink made with yogurt, buttermilk or extra-rich milk and crushed ice. It can be flavored with herbs and spices or fruit and sugar then blended until light and frothy.

Latke: A traditional potato-cake made with grated potatoes, eggs, onion and seasoning. It's deep fried and served as a side dish at Hanukkah.

Latte: A drink made with espresso and hot milk.

Leaf Gelatin: An odorless, tasteless and colorless setting agent used for setting jellies, moulds, terrines and mousse. Available in leaf or granular form.

Leaven: Batter or dough left to rise by adding a rising agent like baking powder, yeast or bicarbonate of soda.

M

Mace: This spice is the bright red membrane that covers the nutmeg seed and has a far more pungent taste than nutmeg. It is usually ground and used to season sweet dishes.

Macerate: Fruit that is coated with sugar or a liquid like a liqueur, and left to soften and release their own juice. Served with ice cream or Pavlova.

Mandoline: A kitchen utensil used for slicing wafer thin vegetables, normally with adjustable blades. Most household graters have a mandoline blade.

Mange-tout (or Sugar-snap Peas): Fresh peas, still in the pod. The whole vegetable is edible.

Marbling: Natural streaks of fat that runs through a cut of meat.

Marinade: An aromatic marinating-liquid usually made with oil, lemon juice and seasoning to tenderise and flavor food.

Marinate: To place meat, fish or vegetables in a marinade and left to absorb the flavors for a couple of hours or overnight.

Mascarpone: An Ultra-rich, soft, fresh Italian cheese made with cow's milk, normally used in Tiramisu.

Mealie Meal: Porridge made with ground corn. It can be served as breakfast or as a side dish to grilled meat or stew.

Mezzaluna: A half-moon shaped blade used for chopping mainly herbs and smaller vegetables. It is normally sold with a hollowed chopping board to allow a smooth rocking movement.

Mirepoix: A classic French mix of onion, celery and carrot, (sometimes with herbs and bacon) sautéed in butter to add flavor to soups, stews and stock.

Miso: Fermented soy bean paste which contains barley or rice. It is highly nutritious and used mainly in Japanese soups.

Mother Sauce: This term refers to the five basic sauces that can be used to create any other sauce. They include: brown sauce (demi-glace – stock-based), velouté (white stock and roux), béchamel (milk and roux), red or tomato sauce (tomato based), emulsions (i.e. hollandaise or mayonnaise).

Moussaka: A Greek dish made with layers of minced lamb, aubergine slices, béchamel sauce and cheese and baked until bubbly.

N

Naan: Flat unleavened bread from India, made with white flour and baked in a Tandoor (clay oven). Served with curry.

Nacho: Mexican tortilla chips normally served with a topping of diced tomato and onion, guacamole and grilled cheese

Niçoise: A term used for the cuisine of Nice, France. This typically A term used for the cuisine of Nice, France. This style typically includes ingredients like garlic, black olives, anchovies and tomatoes. The most famous of these dishes is probably salade niçoise, which contains the basic ingredients as well as a combination of green beans, onions, tuna and hard-boiled eggs.

Noisette: The French word for hazelnut. It is also the term for a small and tender round steak, cut from lamb, beef or veal rib or loin.

Nori: Seaweed sheets typically used for wrapping sushi.

Nouvelle Cuisine: This French term means 'new cooking' and refers to post 70's cuisine which is lighter food served in smaller portions.

O

Oeuf: The French term for egg.

Oeufs à La Neige: see Floating Islands.

Ossobuco: An Italian dish made with veal shanks, white wine and vegetables, slow cooked in the oven.

Oyster Sauce: Used in Chinese and Thai cooking to add umami (the savoury part of a dish). Made from oysters, it is not fishy at all, but very savoury.

Orzo: Small rice-shaped pasta, often used in soups or as a substitute for rice.

P

Paella: A Spanish rice-based dish, cooked with mainly shellfish and some meat and vegetables and flavored with saffron. The name actually refers to the large, shallow pan that it is made in.

Pain Perdu (or French toast): Slices of brioche (or good white bread), soaked in seasoned egg and milk, then fried in butter and served with maple syrup.

Pancetta: Italian bacon made from dry-cured pork belly.

Panettone: A sweet bread, originally from Italy and served at Christmas. Made with yeast, candied fruit peel, raisins and pine nuts and baked in a tall cylindrical shape.

Panna Cotta: A rich and silky Italian dessert, made from cooked cream and gelatin, then left to set. Served with a fruit or chocolate sauce.

Panzanella: An Italian bread-salad. Made with large croutons, tomatoes, olives, basil, olive oil, vinegar and seasoning.

Papillote: The French term for the paper caps used to decorate the ends of rib bones on a rib roast. En Papillote means to bake food (normally fish and vegetables with herbs) wrapped in paper and allowed to steam in its own juice.

Pavlova: A decadent dessert named after a Russian ballerina, Anna Pavlova. It is made with a base of meringue, topped with whipped cream and a selection of fresh fruit.

Pesto: A fragrant Italian pasta-sauce made with chopped basil, olive oil, garlic, pine nuts and Parmesan cheese. It can also be made with coriander or even peeled red pepper instead of basil.

Phyllo: Tissue-thin sheets of pastry originally used to make Greek and Eastern sweet or savoury dishes like baklava and spanakopita, but can be used with a variety of modern fillings.

Pilaf: This rice based dish is always started by first browning the rice in butter or oil before adding the stock and other ingredients like vegetables, meat or fish and seasonings.

Pimento: Spanish word for 'pepper'. This refers to a red sweet pepper normally used in stir-fries and salads, but also used to make paprika.

Poach: A cooking method used to gently simmer foods in liquid like poached eggs, fish or fruit.

Polenta: Coarsely ground, Italian yellow cornmeal, cooked in water or stock, to a thin or thick consistency. Usually served with a stew or fried and served with salad.

Praline: A candy made from sugar syrup and nuts, and left to set in wafer thin slabs.

Q

Quenelle: A small portion of food or dessert (like chocolate mousse or cream) served in the shape of a three-sided oval, shaped with two dessert spoons.

Quiche: A savory pie made with eggs and cheese with a selection of added flavors like spinach and feta or ham and mushroom.

Quinoa: A grain which can be cooked and eaten as breakfast or a savoury dish. It is a very good source of protein and available in most health shops.

R

Ratatouille: A Provençal slow-cooked vegetable stew made with tomato, onion, eggplant, zucchini, and herbs.

Rémoulade: A classic French-mayonnaise flavored with mustard, gherkins, capers, anchovies and herbs, served with fish or meat.

Render: A cooking process in which animal fat is cooked slowly until it separates from any connective tissue. It is then strained to produce a clear fat used for cooking.

Risotto: An Italian dish made with Arborio rice. The rice is usually fried first, then cooked by adding small amounts of liquid at a time, and stirred until all the liquid is absorbed. Many flavors can be added from mushrooms to shellfish.

Roti: Unleavened Indian flatbread cooked in a griddle and served with curry.

Roux: A mixture of flour and butter, cooked over low heat and used as a thickening agent for sauces or soup.

Rosti: Grated potato packed together and fried on both sides to create a crispy potato cake.

S

Salsa Verde: An Italian green sauce made with coarsely chopped herbs, onion, capers and garlic soaked in vinegar and olive oil.

Satay: Skewered meat or fish, grilled and served with a spicy peanut sauce. A popular Indonesian starter or snack.

Sauté: A cooking method used to cook food briefly in oil until just glossy.

Sear: A cooking process whereby a cut of meat (like steak or stew) is fried briefly on all sides over high heat to seal in the meat's own juices.

Semifreddo: An Italian term, referring to any chilled or partially frozen dessert.

Soffritto: Similar to the French mirepoix, it is a combination of onions, carrots and celery sautéed in olive oil and used as a base for soup or stew.

Springform Pan: A round baking-pan with high sides and a loose bottom. The ring of the pan tightens around the base with a clamp, and once the dish is baked, the ring can be easily removed by loosening the clamp.

Sous Vide: A French term meaning 'under vacuum'. It is a molecular gastronomy cooking-method whereby food is vacuum-packed and cooked in water with a low temperature for a very long time. This ensures that the food remains moist and full of flavor.

Souvlaki: A Greek dish made by marinating cubed lamb, and placing onto skewers before grilling.

Steel: A long, thin, steel rod with a handle used for sharpening knives.

Stollen: A traditional German loaf made with yeast and dried fruit, coated with cherries and icing sugar and served at Christmas.

T

Tagine: A North-African clay pot with a cone-shaped lid, used to slow-cook stew in the oven.

Tahini: Sesame seed paste used in Middle-Eastern cooking.

Tapenade: A thick paste made from olives or anchovies, used as a condiment or a spread.

Tempura: A Japanese dish of batter-dipped and deep-fried vegetables or fish.

Terrine: This term originally refers to an earthenware container used to cook foods in, but it is also the term for a pressed loaf made with meat or vegetables and served sliced at room temperature.

Timbale: A round high-sided mould used to cook individual portions of baked food or dessert.

Torte: A cake made with mainly ground nuts and often filled with butter-cream or jam.

Truffle: An intensely flavored mushroom that grows under the ground. In Italy, sows are used to find them.

Truss: To tie the wings and legs of poultry with string or skewers before cooking, so that the food maintains its shape.

Tzatziki: A Greek dip made with thick yoghurt, grated cucumber and garlic and normally served with filled pitas.

U

Udon: A thick spaghetti-shaped Japanese noodle.

Unleavened: Bread and cakes that do not contain a rising agent like baking powder or yeast so that it doesn't rise.

Umami: A Japanese term used to describe the fifth part of taste, which is savoury (i.e. soy sauce) after sweet, sour, bitter and salty.

V

Velouté Sauce: A white-sauce made with stock, thickened with a roux and used as a base for many other sauces. It is one of the five 'Mother Sauces'.

Verjuice: A liquid similar to vinegar made from unripe fruit (usually grapes) and used to add an acidic flavor to sauces or dressings.

Vichyssoise: A rich and creamy thick soup made with leek and potato and usually served cold.

Vinaigrette: A dressing made with oil and vinegar, and added flavors like herbs or mustard and served with salad or vegetables.

W

Wasabi: A Japanese condiment made with green horseradish and usually served with sushi.

Water Bath: See Bain-marie.

Welsh Rarebit: A British breakfast or teatime snack. A slice of hot buttered toast, topped with a mixture of grated cheese, mustard and seasoning and grilled until bubbly.

Wonton: An Asian dumpling made by filling thin sheets of dough with meat, seafood or vegetables, and usually steamed.

Y

Yam: A vegetable similar to a sweet potato but from a different plant.

Yeast: A leavening or rising agent used in baking, wine and beer making. It is available fresh or as dried granules.

Z

Zabaglione: An Italian dessert made by whisking egg yolks, Marsala wine and sugar together in a double boiler until thick and foamy. It can be served as a dessert by itself or as a sauce over dessert.

Zest: The thin outer layer of citrus peel. It's normally removed with a zester to create thin long strips of aromatic peel (without pith) and used in dishes such as gremolata or cheesecake.

Zuppa: Italian term, meaning soup.

