



MEALTIME MEMO

MAY
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CULINARY BASICS: MISE EN PLACE – THE KEY TO KITCHEN EFFICIENCY



If you are not a chef or lack a culinary background, the term “mise en place” may seem like French to you. Spoiler alert – it is! However, it is a necessary skill to utilize in all kitchens (big and small) when preparing meals. This *Mealtime Memo* will define the term and identify the steps to maximize efficiency and reduce errors in the kitchen.

What is Mise en Place?

Mise en place (pronounced me-zohn plahs) is a French culinary phrase that means “everything in its place” or “gather.” It refers to organizing and arranging the ingredients (e.g., meat, spices, chopped vegetables) and equipment required to prepare the menu items before you begin.

Mise en place:
Organizing and
arranging ingredients
and equipment

Mise en place is a common practice for chefs in commercial kitchens when preparing meals for many people. However, don't let the foreign term scare you if you are a small operation. Any person, in any size kitchen, preparing meals for any number of people can benefit from using mise en place.

Why is it Important?

- Mise en place is a collection of good work habits. Developing these habits takes planning, effort, and practice; however, once these good habits are established, you will be more organized and efficient in meal preparation.
- Mise en place maximizes efficiency, reduces errors and preparation time, and helps to ensure you serve a quality menu item on time.



Mise en Place Steps

Mise en place is a series of six steps.

Step 1: Read over the entire recipe and develop a plan.

- Review recipes several days in advance to identify needed food and equipment.
- Take an inventory of all the required ingredients. Identify how much of each ingredient you have on hand and what ingredients you need to acquire.
- Take inventory of all the necessary kitchen tools, such as pots, pans, measuring cups, etc.
- Identify foods that require time to defrost.
- Plan for and combine similar tasks, such as dicing onions or vegetables for several recipes.



Step 2: Prioritize your work.

- Note the cooking and prep times.
- Develop a production schedule to prioritize meal preparation steps.
- Start with the meal service time and work backward, so you know when to start preparing the meal.



Step 3: Collect tools and prepare equipment.

- Make sure all equipment is in good operating condition.
- Organize required kitchen tools on the countertop.
- Preheat the oven if necessary.



Step 4: Gather recipe ingredients.

- Follow food safety practices and only have foods you actively work with at your workstation.
 - Note: A good practice is to have the items organized for use in temperature-appropriate storage areas to prevent time-temperature abuse. It also avoids overcrowding or cluttering the workstation.
- Group ingredients to reduce trips to the dry, refrigerated, and frozen storage areas. Using a tray to gather similar items will reduce trips to storage.



Step 5: Prepare and measure ingredients.

- Dice, chop, slice, and mince all ingredients as required by the recipe.
- Pre-measure and portion ingredients (e.g., spices, chopped vegetables) into one portion cup or bowl based on when you will add them to the recipe.



Step 6: Set up your workstation.

- Limit unnecessary movements by keeping items easily accessible.
- Organize your prepped and measured ingredients on the countertop in the order you will add them to the recipe.



Helpful Tips!

It is good practice to clean as you go to prevent cross-contamination. Clean dirty dishes and countertops whenever there is a lull (e.g., when pasta is cooking). This ensures utensils are clean when they need to be reused for a different food item.

Benefits of Mise en Place

- No last-minute trips to the store when you have everything required for the recipe.
- Reduces opportunities to cross-contaminate.
- Pre-planning and visualization of the recipe enable a sharper focus on the cooking process.
- Being organized and prepared helps minimize the risk of mistakes, such as missing an ingredient or adding an ingredient twice.
- You are more efficient and less stressed, and the preparation and cooking processes take less time. Everything you need is close at hand; there is no searching around for ingredients and kitchen tools.



Are you ready to try mise en place? If you would like to learn more, you can watch demonstration videos on the Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition (CICN) website (<https://theicn.org/cicn/mise-en-place/>).

Classroom Discussion Prompts



Spark positive conversations with children about meal preparation with the following questions.

- Do you help make meals at home? If so, what are some of the jobs you help with (setting the table, tearing lettuce, measuring spices)?
- Do you help with cleanup after meals? If so, what jobs do you help with (clearing the table, dishes)?

Menu Ideas

The recipes below have multiple steps and some of the same ingredients. Try mise en place when making these recipes and see where you can combine tasks.

Breakfast	Lunch/Supper	Snack
Vegetable Frittata (Meat Alternate and Vegetable) 1% Milk	Breakfast Burrito With Salsa (Meat Alternate and Grain) Sliced Avocado Roasted Potatoes 1% Milk	Creamy Coleslaw (Vegetable) Kiwi Chunks Water

Recipes



- The [Child Nutrition Recipe Box](#) has USDA-standardized recipes for child care centers and family child care homes.
- The [Child Nutrition Recipe Box: New CACFP Lunch/Supper Recipes](#) has standardized recipes per age group (3–5 and 6–18 year-olds) and for 6, 25, and 50 servings.

References

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