

Poaching is the technique of cooking foods over low heat in a gently simmering liquid. It is particularly appropriate for cooking fragile foods such as fish, lean poultry and meat, or fruit, that may fall apart, or dry out and toughen over a higher heat. It is also a good way to cook foods that are to be served cold. Depending on the food to be cooked, the liquid used may simply be water or a highly seasoned liquid known as a court bouillon, a flavorful stock or wine, or a sweet syrup.



The choice of poaching liquid depends on the desired result. If you plan to serve the liquid as a broth or to make a rich sauce, a well-flavored stock is indicated. For dishes that do not make use of the poaching liquid, it is appropriate to use a court bouillon, made by simmering water and wine and/or lemon juice with aromatic herbs and vegetables for 20 minutes. For poached fruits, a sugar syrup and sweetened, spiced wine are common poaching mediums; both may

be reduced to make a sauce.

The temperature of the poaching liquid is all-important. It must be maintained at a bare simmer (the French say it must just *frissonne*, or shiver) - a more vigorous simmer may cause the food to fall apart or cook unevenly. A favorite method for poaching fish at Le Cordon Bleu is to bring the cool poaching liquid to a simmer with the fish, then remove the pan from the heat and let the fish continue cooking in the hot liquid; this technique ensures that the fish is gently cooked and is never overdone.

Poaching is ideal for cooking whole fish. Make sure that the poaching liquid is cold when you add the fish or the outside flesh will be overcooked before the inside is cooked through. It is helpful to wrap the fish in a tea towel before cooking to help hold its shape and make it easier to handle (poultry and large pieces of meat are usually trussed before poaching for the same reason). A fish kettle, a long narrow pan with a removable rack, is a perfect vessel for poaching a whole fish, but you may also use a large deep pan such as a roasting tin.

How to Poach an Egg



1. Eggs can be poached up to a day ahead and kept, refrigerated, in water, until ready to use. To poach 6 eggs, bring 2 1/2 to 3 quarts of water and 1/4 cup white vinegar to a boil in a shallow saucepan about 10 in. wide then reduce your heat. Break one of the egg on a flat surface to crack it. (Breaking eggs on the edge of a pan or table can push the shell inside and break the yolk.) Insert your thumb in the little opening created and break the shell directly above the water, close enough so the water doesn't splash as the egg drops into it. Repeat with the other eggs, working as fast as you can. You can poach all 6 eggs at one time in the saucepan, dropping them into the water quickly - all within about 1/2 minute.

2. The heat is still on high under the eggs and you will see threads of the egg whites rise to the surface and float a little. Drag the back of a skimmer or slotted spoon across the surface of the water to catch those threads and to move the eggs enough that they don't stick to the bottom of the pan. After the eggs have been moved once, they won't stick anymore.

3. Let the water return almost to the boil (about 200 degrees). When it begins to simmer, lower the heat and continue poaching the eggs approximately 3 to 4 minutes, depending on how well done you like your eggs. At this point, lift one of the eggs out of the water with a slotted spoon and press on it gently with your finger to determine the degree of "doneness." The yolk should be soft to the touch, indicating it is soft and runny inside. Transfer the cooked eggs to ice-cold water.

4. After 10 to 15 minutes, the eggs will be cold. Lift them out of the water and trim off any hanging pieces of white to create a nice oval shape.

5. Notice that the yolk is more apparent on one side while the other side of the egg is more evenly rounded and no yolk is visible. Serve the eggs smoother side up (i.e., the one on the right). The trimmed eggs can be kept in water in the refrigerator for up to 24 hours.

Poached Salmon

Serves 4

4 - 8 oz. Salmon Fillets
3/4 Gallon Water
2 Lemons
2 tsp. Black Peppercorns
Pinch Salt

Put the water in a large pot. Cut the lemons in half and squeeze the juice into the water and then place the juiced lemons in the water. Add the peppercorns and the salt and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to just a slow simmer. Carefully add the salmon fillets and cover the pot. DO NOT LET THE WATER BOIL! Depending on how thick the salmon is they will be cooked in 15-25 min. Remove from the water with a skimmer and serve with the sauce.

Shallow Poached Cod Monomoy

Serves 4

1 1/2 lbs. Cod
4 oz. Leeks, sliced
1/4 cup Fish Stock
2 Tbsp. Sauvignon Blanc
1 tsp. Garlic, minced
4 oz. Carrot, julienne
2 oz. Sun Dried Tomato, julienne
Juice of 1/2 Lemon
1/2 cup Heavy Cream
2 tsp. Oil
1 Tbsp. Butter
Salt and Pepper to taste
2 Tbsp. Scallions, sliced

Cut the cod into four servings. Heat the oil in a pan. Add the leeks and carrot and sauté for 2 minutes. Reduce heat and spread the vegetables to form a flat layer in the bottom of the pan. Place the fish on top of the vegetables and add the stock and wine. Bring to a simmer and loosely cover the pan. Shallow poach for 15-20 minutes or until almost done. Remove the fish from the pan and keep warm. Add the garlic and the lemon juice to the pan and increase heat and reduce by half. Add the cream and the tomatoes and simmer until the sauce has thickened. Season with salt pepper. Whisk in the butter. Place the fish on a serving plate. Spoon the vegetables and the sauce over the fish. Garnish with the scallions and some lemon zest and serve.

Fish Stock

Yield: 1 quart

2 lbs. Fish Bones
1 1/2 Qt. Cold Water
4 oz. Mirepoix
Salt to taste

Place all of the ingredients into a stock pot and bring them to a simmer slowly. Skim the surface. Simmer for 45 minutes. Strain and cool.

Mirepoix

2 Parts Onion
1 Part Carrot
1 Part Celery

Peel and Chop the Vegetables into large pieces.

Poached Pears Stuffed with Caramelized Fruit

Serves 4

4 Anjou Pears
2 oz. Fresh Cranberries
2 oz. Apricots, diced
2 oz. Fresh Currants
4 Medjool Dates, pitted and chopped
1 Tbsp. Butter
1/4 Cup Toasted Walnuts, chopped
1 Tbsp. Honey
1 Qt. Cranberry Juice
1 tsp. Cinnamon
1/2 Gal. Water

Pinch Fleur d' Sel

Put the juice and the water in a pot and bring to a boil. Peel the pear leaving the stem on the pear. Slice the bottom of the pear off about 1/4 inch from the bottom, so that the pear will stand upright when finished. Core the pear with a sharp knife or an apple corer. Make sure to remove enough pear flesh so that there will be room for the filling. Melt the butter in a sauté pan then add the cranberries, apricots, currants and dates. Sauté for 2 minutes then add the honey and the walnuts. Add the cinnamon and the salt, sauté for 4 minutes. Remove from the heat and let cool. When the juice and water have come to a boil reduce the heat and add the pears carefully. Poach for about 10 minutes or until the pears are fairly soft. Remove the pears from the poaching medium and let cool. Carefully stuff the pears with the filling and plate for service.