

Maggie Beers Big Mission: Episode 1:

Texture Modified Food, Navigating Common Kitchen Pitfalls.

In a bustling kitchen, where time is of the essence and precision is paramount, even seasoned chefs can encounter mishaps. In episode 1, footage captured one of these scenarios, highlighting a common issue. During the texture-modified frittata scene, the minced & moist (MM5) frittata was blended for a little too long, resulting in a particle size, smaller than what's described in the International Dysphagia Standardisation Initiative guidelines (IDDSI). Whilst the example MM5 frittata shown wouldn't expose residents to additional choking risk, let's explore how this happens and what cooks and chefs can do to remedy such situations.

Why Does This Happen?

1. **Busy Cooks & Chefs** In a high-pressure kitchen environment, cooks and chefs are often racing against the clock to prepare multiple dishes, in multiple textures simultaneously. This can lead to over-blending or over-processing ingredients as they multitask and try to maintain a quick pace.
2. **Fear of Choking – Ensuring Safety** Particularly in settings where food is prepared for individuals who experience swallowing difficulties, there is an emphasis on safety. Chefs may over-process food to ensure there are no large pieces that could pose a choking hazard. While this is done with the best intentions, it shouldn't be a standard practice.
3. **Training Gaps** Not all kitchen staff receive extensive training on the nuances of IDDSI and texture-modified food preparation, particularly when it comes to achieving perfect consistency. It can be years between cooks and chefs receiving this training, if at all. Without proper guidance, making errors like over-blending ingredients is easy. High-quality texture modification training for all chefs and kitchen staff is highly recommended.

How to Remedy Over-Blending

When a resident has been assessed by a speech pathologist as requiring a specific IDDSI texture modification, it's important that this is followed. Texture-modified food and fluid are recommended specific to the clinical needs of that resident and it's important for both safety and quality that we get this right.

If you find yourself with a modified food item that has been blended for too long, there are a few techniques you can use to adjust it back to an appropriate level.

1. **Pulse Further Portions in a Food Processor** Instead of continuously blending the entire mixture, pulse further portions briefly in a food processor. This helps achieve the desired consistency without over-processing.
2. **Hand Mince with a Knife or Chopping Board** Another effective method is to hand-mince the mixture using a knife and chopping board. This allows for greater control over the particle size and ensures the texture remains intact.



3. **Fold the Mix Together** Once you've achieved the desired consistency with part of the mixture, fold it together with the over-processed portion. This helps distribute the texture evenly throughout the dish, improving the final result.

Testing Methods

Achieving the perfect IDDSI texture level in a busy kitchen is no small feat. It is recommended that all staff, kitchen and dining room, are provided with training to prepare and serve texture-modified food within the IDDSI Guidelines. Speech pathologists can help with IDDSI training and compliance testing, to ensure staff have the skills to provide high-quality, compliant texture-modified foods.

To learn more about the IDDSI framework and access valuable resources visit

<https://iddsi.org/Testing-Methods>