Mastering Healthy and Flavorful Cooking

Healthy cooking can be easy, fun, and delicious. Healthy cooking techniques capture the flavor of food, increase the nutritional quality of meals, and promote healthy eating behaviors. Food that is prepared using healthy cooking methods also retains more nutrients and reduces fat, salt, and caloric intake.

Dry Heat Cooking Methods

Dry heat cooking methods use hot air and heat from a pan or grill to cook food.

**BAKING**
Uses hot air of an oven to cook food covered or uncovered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQUIPMENT</th>
<th>TEMPERATURE</th>
<th>FOODS</th>
<th>FLAVORING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pan or baking sheet made of metal, glass, or ceramic</td>
<td>Between 250°F and 500°F</td>
<td>Fruit, vegetables, seafood, and lean cuts of chicken, turkey, beef, pork, and lamb</td>
<td>• Marinate. Use low-fat marinades.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Encrust. Coat fish, and lean cuts of chicken, beef, pork and lamb with ground nuts (e.g. pecans, walnuts) or seeds (e.g. sesame seeds, flax seeds).</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Use herbs and spices. Add a mixture of fresh or dried herbs and spices.</td>
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**TIPS**
Cut fruits and vegetables in similar size pieces for even cooking.

**ROASTING**
Similar to baking, but typically refers to cooking food uncovered in an oven

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heavy roasting pan with a rack, shallow baking pan, or baking sheet</td>
<td>Typically low (250°F) to moderate (375°F), but may be higher</td>
<td>Dense vegetables (e.g. potatoes, turnips, cauliflower), whole chicken, whole turkey, fish (e.g. salmon, red snapper, trout), and lean cuts of large pork and beef roasts (e.g. beef bottom round, pork top loin)</td>
<td>• Baste. Use low-sodium vegetable, chicken, or beef broth for vegetables, fish, and lean cuts of chicken and turkey.</td>
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<td>• Add seasoning vegetables. Add garlic, green peppers, or a mix of seasoning vegetables such as chopped celery, onions, and carrots.</td>
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**TIPS**
Use a low temperature (250°F) to ensure that large cuts of meat (e.g. whole chicken) cook evenly and thoroughly. To prevent vegetables from becoming soft, use medium heat (375°F).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BROILING</th>
<th>Cooking food directly underneath very high heat for a short length of time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EQUIPMENT</strong></td>
<td>Broil pan</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TEMPERATURE</strong></td>
<td>500°F</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FOODS</strong></td>
<td>Fish and thin, lean cuts of beef, chicken, lamb, and pork</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **FLAVORING** | • Marinate. Use low-fat, low-sodium marinades.  
• Use herbs and spices. Add a mixture of fresh or dried herbs and spices. |

**TIPS**
To control the cooking time, adjust the distance of the food from the heat as opposed to adjusting the temperature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRILLING</th>
<th>Food is cooked using either indirect heat (on a closed covered grill allowing hot air to circulate around the food) or direct heat on an uncovered grill</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EQUIPMENT</strong></td>
<td>Gas, electric, or charcoal grill</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TEMPERATURE</strong></td>
<td>About 450°F for vegetables, seafood, lean cuts of chicken, beef, and pork, up to 650°F for searing steak</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FOODS</strong></td>
<td>Vegetables, fruit, fish and lean cuts of chicken, turkey, beef, and pork</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **FLAVORING** | • Marinate. Use low-fat, low-sodium marinades.  
• Use a cedar wood plank. This infuses a smoky wood flavor to fish.  
• Use herbs and spices. For grilling, use fresh or dried herbs as a meat rub. |

**TIPS**
Wait about 20 minutes after you fire up the grill to begin cooking. This allows time for the grill and metal to reach the same temperature, which leads to more even and controlled grilling.

| SAUTÉING/STIR-FRYING | Sautéing: constant flipping of food over high heat  
Stir-frying: frequently stirring food over medium high to high heat |
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<tr>
<td><strong>EQUIPMENT</strong></td>
<td>Pan (skillet or sauté pan for sautéing, wok or large skillet for stir-frying) coated with a cooking spray or a healthy cooking oil with a high smoke point (e.g. olive oil, canola oil, avocado oil)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TEMPERATURE</strong></td>
<td>Hot enough for the coated pan to sizzle (typically medium-high heat or higher on a stove)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FOODS</strong></td>
<td>Tender vegetables (e.g. asparagus, sugar snap peas, bok choy), tofu, and thin cuts of lean chicken, beef, and pork</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **FLAVORING** | • Use broth. Use low-sodium vegetable, chicken, or beef broth.  
• Use wine or vinegar. Add red or white dry wine, or balsamic or sherry vinegar. |

**TIPS**
Make sure the heat is high enough that the pan sizzles. If the cooking heat is too low, the vegetables will release liquids and steam as oppose to sautéing or stir-frying.
Moist Heat Cooking Methods
Moist heat cooking methods use a liquid or steam to cook food

**BLANCHING**
Keeps food crispy by partially cooking food. It consists of two steps:
1. Boiling the food
2. Immediately plunging food into ice water

**EQUIPMENT**
A large pan for boiling and a bowl for ice water

**TEMPERATURE**
Boiling water (212°F) and ice water (32°F)

**FOODS**
Vegetables

**FLAVORING**
- Use herbs and spices. Toss with cooled vegetables.
- Use balsamic vinegar. Drizzle over cooled vegetables.

**TIPS**
You can eat blanched vegetables immediately or freeze them for later use.

**BRAISING**
Slowly simmers food that is partially submerged in a liquid (either on a stove or in an oven). Typically consists of two steps:
1. Brown the food by pan searing
2. Add liquid, lower heat, and low simmer

**EQUIPMENT**
A deep and heavy pot with a tight fitting lid (e.g. a Dutch oven)

**TEMPERATURE**
Use medium high heat (approx. 375°F) to brown the food. Braise the food on a low heat (200°F - 250°F)

**FOODS**
Firm vegetables (e.g. sweet potatoes, carrots, winter squash) and lean cuts of inexpensive beef roasts (e.g. bottom round), pork roasts (pork shoulder), and lamb shank

**FLAVORING**
- Get creative with liquids. Combine cooking liquids such as vegetable broth and wine or beef broth and pureed tomatoes.
- Use herbs and spices. Add fresh or dried herbs and spices.
- Add salsa. Smother lean cuts of inexpensive beef, pork, and lamb in red or green salsa.

**TIPS**
Braising is not recommended for tender cuts of meat (e.g. chicken breast, pork chops) that are prone to drying out.

**POACHING**
Submerge a food item in a liquid until it is completely cooked

**EQUIPMENT**
Large cooking pan or pot with lid

**TEMPERATURE**
Below boiling (160-180°F)

**FOODS**
Fish, chicken breast, and eggs

**FLAVORING**
- Use flavorful liquids. Use low-sodium vegetable, chicken, or beef broth or vinegar.

**TIPS**
Make sure the pan or pot is not too full with food or uneven cooking may result.
Using healthy cooking methods to prepare meals can be a great way to cultivate a healthy lifestyle. To enjoy a safe and flavorful meal, please follow the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) recommended minimum internal cooking temperatures for meat and poultry.

**USDA Recommended Minimum Internal Cooking Temperatures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOODS</th>
<th>TEMPERATURE</th>
<th>EQUIPMENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beef, pork, veal, and lamb</td>
<td>Boiling (212°F)</td>
<td>A pan with a rack and tight fitting lid, a pan with a steamer insert and tight fitting lid, or an enclosed wrapper (e.g. foil, grape leaves, corn husks, parchment paper)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(steaks, roasts, and chops)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>145 °F</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beef, pork, veal, and lamb (ground)</td>
<td>160 °F</td>
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<tr>
<td>Egg dishes</td>
<td>160 °F</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turkey, chicken, and duck (whole, pieces, and ground)</td>
<td>165 °F</td>
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For additional healthy eating resources, please visit the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center Healthy Eating Web Page.