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# Kitchen Basics

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## Helpful tools

- Pot
- Pan
- Spoon
- Spatula
- Paring knife or chef's knife
- Measuring cups
- Measuring spoons
- Strainer
- Potholder

## Basic Safety

- Check temperature by holding hand over heated areas; never touch items directly.
- Never leave food cooking without watching it.
  - If you need to step away, set a kitchen timer or phone alarm to remind you food is cooking.
- Make sure your tools are safe to heat. Some general rules:
  - Dishes and bowls should state they are “microwave safe” on the bottom. If not, they may melt in the microwave if heated.
  - Plastic NEVER goes inside the oven.
  - Do not leave plastic utensils or dishes sitting on the stove or burner.
  - Do not leave utensils sitting inside pots cooking on the stove. Plastic may melt, and metal may become too hot to handle.
- Make sure there is ventilation.
  - If there is no vent above the stove, turn on a fan or open the window.

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## Basic Cooking Tips

### Microwave:

- Use only microwave safe dishes.
- For frozen meals, read the package instructions to make sure packaging can be put in microwave.
- Follow directions on packages for heating time and temperature.
- Use a potholder or towel to remove items from microwave.

### Stovetop:

- Use only stove top safe pots and pans.
- When cooking items, read package directions for temperature instructions and timing.
- Most food requires some liquid to cook in a pot or a pan, such as oil or water.
  - Exception: Meat such as ground beef will not require additional liquid.

### *Cooking in a pot:*

- For boiling water, make sure there is enough to cover all of the food in the pot.
- Pay attention to make sure enough water stays in the pot while cooking, otherwise food might burn.
- Be sure to stir food in the pot every few minutes to prevent sticking/burning.
- Leaving the lid on the pot will help bring the water to a boil faster and heat food faster. Pay attention because the pot can quickly overflow.
  - If the pot overflows, turn off the burner, and move the pot to a clean burner to finish cooking.
  - When the burners cool, you can clean the stove top to prevent the burn from sticking.

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## *Cooking in a pan:*

- Items cooking in a pan will need to be flipped in order to cook all the way through.
- Pour the oil in first, then turn on the burner to prevent splattering.
- Because pans are not deep, be careful to not heat oil or water too high, as it may splatter when you add food to the pan.

## *Getting rid of oil:*

- Left over oil should not go down the drain/sink.
- Wait for oil to cool, then put into a container to throw away (such as a Styrofoam cup).

## *Cooking in an oven:*

- Use only oven safe dishes (NEVER plastic).
  - Some stove top pans CAN NOT go into the oven, due to the handles having rubber on them.
- Make sure to grease the pan you use or use aluminum foil or parchment paper on the pans, to prevent food from sticking and burning to pans.
- Turn the oven to the temperature indicated in the directions, you will need to allow time for the oven to heat up.
- Set a timer, alarm, or note the time on your clock to take food out. Setting a timer can prevent food from burning or from you forgetting about the food in the oven. Turning the oven light on can also remind you food is cooking.
- Use potholders to take food out of the oven. Place the hot pan on a stove top or other safe surface. Plastic surfaces are not safe.
- Make sure to turn off the oven.

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## Food Preparation

### Cutting with knives:

- Cut or chop items on a non-slippery surface.
- NEVER place fingers under or in the way of knives

### Keep it clean:

- Be sure to wash your hands with warm water and soap. If warm water is not available use cold water and soap.
- Wash all cooking surfaces, cutting boards, utensils before and after cooking.
- Avoid cross-contamination, by using a cutting board for meat and a different board for non-meat foods.

### Cook it well:

- Cook chicken and turkey until the juices run clear and the meat is no longer pink.
- Cook other meat until it is no longer pink.
- You can test by cutting the meat open in the middle, if there is still pink, it needs to stay in the stove/oven longer.

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## Food Storage

Store it right:

- Do not let food sit out for more than 2-3 hours.
- Do not let raw meat sit out at room temperature for more than 2 hours.
- Separate raw meats into different packaging while storing.
- Prepared cooked food can sit out for 2-3 hours before putting in a refrigerator or eating it.
- Store food in tightly sealed containers. It will keep food fresh for longer and keep bugs from getting into food.
  - Plastic containers can be purchased from the dollar store.
  - Use Ziploc bags – they can be rinsed and re-used.
- Check food and expiration dates before eating. Avoid food if there is mold on it after storage. Some foods require refrigeration.
  - Keeping foods out of sunlight or heat will let them last longer.
  - Use the hand-out on freezing and refrigeration as a guide for specific foods.

<b>Must Refrigerate</b>
Meat
Cheese
Dairy
Opened juice