



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

EQUIPMENT

Pan or baking sheet made of metal, glass, or ceramic

TEMPERATURE

Between 250°F and 500°F

FOODS

Fruit, vegetables, seafood, and lean cuts of chicken, turkey, beef, pork, and lamb

FLAVORING

- **Marinate.** Use low-fat marinades.
- **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).
- **Use herbs and spices.** Add a mixture of fresh or dried herbs and spices.

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

EQUIPMENT

Heavy roasting pan with a rack, shallow baking pan, or baking sheet

TEMPERATURE

Typically low (250°F) to moderate (375°F), but may be higher

FOODS

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)

FLAVORING

- **Baste.** Use low-sodium vegetable, chicken, or beef broth for vegetables, fish, and lean cuts of chicken and turkey.
- **Add seasoning vegetables.** Add garlic, green peppers, or a mix of seasoning vegetables such as chopped celery, onions, and carrots.

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).





BROILING

Cooking food directly underneath very high heat for a short length of time

EQUIPMENT

Broil pan

TEMPERATURE

500°F

FOODS

Fish and thin, lean cuts of beef, chicken, lamb, and pork

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.



GRILLING

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

EQUIPMENT

Gas, electric, or charcoal grill

TEMPERATURE

About 450°F for vegetables, seafood, lean cuts of chicken, beef, and pork, up to 650°F for searing steak

FOODS

Vegetables, fruit, fish and lean cuts of chicken, turkey, beef, and pork

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

EQUIPMENT

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)

TEMPERATURE

Hot enough for the coated pan to sizzle (typically medium-high heat or higher on a stove)

FOODS

Tender vegetables (e.g. asparagus, sugar snap peas, bok choy), tofu, and thin cuts of lean chicken, beef, and pork

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) 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.



STEAMING

Uses steam to cook food

EQUIPMENT

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)

TEMPERATURE

Boiling (212°F)

FOODS

Vegetables, fish, and chicken breast

FLAVORING

- **Include spinach and tomatoes.** Add to food in wrappers.
- **Use lime or lemon juice.** Add to the boiling water to release the flavor in the steam.
- **Use herbs and spices.** Add to the boiling water or sprinkle on top of food in the wrappers.

TIPS

Steaming is great for maintaining food's texture and nutrients without getting too soggy.

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

Beef, pork, veal, and lamb (steaks, roasts, and chops)	Fish	Beef, pork, veal, and lamb (ground)	Egg dishes	Turkey, chicken, and duck (whole, pieces, and ground)
145 °F	145 °F	160 °F	160 °F	165 °F

For additional healthy eating resources, please visit the [Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center Healthy Eating Web Page](#).