

Being Safe in the Kitchen

Do you like putting on an apron and making a delicious snack for your family? How about helping out at the stove, stirring and sniffing the sweet smells? Or making cookies by cutting out your favorite shapes?

Although making food is fun, it's important to know how to be safe. This means knowing when to get the help of an adult assistant, how to keep things clean, and how to use the kitchen safely. Let's get cookin'!

Your Adult Assistant

If you've ever seen a cooking show on TV, you know that all the best chefs have an assistant to help them out. If you're a kid, an adult assistant can come in handy to make cooking easier and keep you safe.

Before beginning *any* recipe, get an adult's permission to work in the kitchen. If your recipe uses knives, the stove, or other kitchen appliances, you must have some adult help. Some things that adults use in the kitchen may seem simple to operate, but once you use them yourself, you might be surprised by how difficult they actually are. By having your assistant around, you can avoid surprises, stay safe, and have fun while you cook.

What Should You Wear?

Wearing an apron will keep your clothes clean. If you don't have an apron, an old shirt will do. But don't wear anything that's big and loose. Baggy sleeves or clothes could catch fire or get caught in mixer beaters or other equipment.

Keep Germs Out of Your Food

A big part of safe cooking is keeping the chef and the kitchen clean. The idea is to keep germs, which can make you sick, out of your food. Always wash your hands with soap and water immediately before you begin any recipe. This is especially important for recipes that involve touching the food directly, like kneading dough or mixing ingredients with your hands.

Also be sure to wash your hands before and after handling raw meat, poultry, egg, and fish products because these foods can contain bacteria. You don't want that bacteria getting on your hands because then they could end up in your mouth — yuck!

You also can fight germs by keeping your working surfaces (like countertops and cutting boards) clean and dry. Wash them with soap and warm water after you're done cooking.

Leftovers are great, but you don't want germs in them either. Ask your adult assistant for help in storing any leftovers. Food may be refrigerated or frozen to keep it fresh. Eat refrigerated leftovers within 3 to 5 days and frozen leftovers within 2 months.

Using the Kitchen Safely

You have your ingredients neatly lined up, your hands washed, and your measuring spoons out. But before you start, it's a good idea to learn a few rules of the kitchen. It's easy to get injured in the kitchen if you're not careful, and a cut or burn will put an end to your fun cooking session.

Always ask your adult assistant if you can use blenders, food processors, knives, or other sharp kitchen tools. If you're allowed to use a knife, point the blade away from yourself and keep your fingers away from the blade when you're cutting. Give the job your full attention — no looking at the TV for a quick second or yelling to your sister. Your adult assistant should be nearby to keep an eye on what you're doing.



Before you get started on a recipe, read it over with your adult assistant. Make sure you have the ingredients and equipment you need.

The same goes for the stove or oven: Get permission first and be sure your adult assistant is nearby to watch you.

Here are some ways to keep from getting burned:

- Use potholders or oven mitts (no dish towels) when handling hot pots, pans, or baking trays.
- Turn pot and pan handles toward the back of the stove so you won't knock them over by accident.
- Get help from an adult when using a gas stove. **Never** try to relight the pilot light on a gas stove. Only an adult should do this.
- Use only microwave-safe cookware in the microwave — never tinfoil or anything metal. If you're not sure if something is safe for use in the microwave, ask an adult first.

Cooking Lessons

Did you know there are special schools where grownups go to learn how to cook? That's because cooking is an art and it takes time and practice to learn how to do it.

If you're just starting out, it can take a while before you learn how to crack an egg or cook the pasta until it's just right. You'll figure it out — with a little help from your adult assistant!

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