

## Sharpening Your Knife Skills

- Invest in good quality knives which will last many times longer than cheap ones. Look for forged, high-carbon steel with a blade that continues the full length of the handle.
- You can get by with just the basics to start—a paring knife and a chef’s knife. The smaller paring knife is used to peel fruit, de-stem strawberries, and handle all the small cutting tasks involved in food preparation. Chef’s knives are used to chop, slice, and so on. A slicing knife with a serrated edge is also very handy for cutting cake or slicing bread when a sawing action is needed.
- Sharp knives are much safer and easier to use than dull ones. A hand-held sharpener with fixed sharpening blades is simple and easy to use, and will last for a long time. Whetstones are the traditional sharpening tool, but take much practice to use correctly.
- Always cut with the blade of the knife angled away from you. Use a claw grip to hold foods while chopping or slicing. Curve your fingers under your knuckles and hold food with fingertips.
- Stay focused on the knife when it is in your hand to avoid accidents.
- Use a cutting board to protect the knife and counters or other work surfaces. A damp towel under the cutting board will keep it from moving on the counter.
- Hand wash knives and dry thoroughly. Do not put knives in a sink of sudsy water or other place where they might not be seen.
- Store knives in a knife block or rack both for safety and to keep them sharp.
- Do not use knives for jobs other than cutting food.
- If you drop a knife, do not try to catch it. Step back quickly and let it come to a rest before attempting to pick it up.



### Chop, Dice, Mince—What’s the Dif?

Dice	To cut food into cubes about 1/8 to 3/4-inch in size.
Mince	To chop food into small pieces, usually less than 1/8-inch
Chop	To cut into small pieces. If the recipe does not specify a size, make the pieces a size you like.
No matter how fine you cut it, always strive to make the pieces as uniform in size and shape as possible so they cook evenly.	



## Chopping an Onion

Knowing how to chop an onion quickly and efficiently is an essential skill for every cook, especially those pressed for time. Follow these easy steps to cut this cooking job down to size:

- Thoroughly rinse onion under cool running water, as you do every fresh fruit and vegetable.
- Use a chef’s knife to slice off both stem end and root end of onion on a cutting board. Remove papery outer skins.
- Cut onion in half from top to root end.
- Lay onion half flat side down on cutting board. Make vertical cuts across onion half from stem almost through root end. These cuts help determine the final piece size; for smaller pieces, make cuts closer together.
- Using a claw grip to hold onion together, cut across the vertical cuts you just made, yielding tiny pieces. When you get to root end where the vertical cuts stop, lay this small piece flat side down. Finish chopping this bit by making a few additional vertical cuts, then turn knife 90° and cut in that direction.

## Safety First!

The kitchen is a gathering place for many families, but it can also be the most dangerous room in the house. Sharp objects, heat and slippery floors are potential hazards. National statistics show that one-third of all house fires begin in the kitchen, so take care.

- Don't wear loose clothing or dangling sleeves. Keep a fire extinguisher in the kitchen and learn how to use it.
- Keep an eye on cooking food, especially if frying, grilling, broiling or boiling. Set a timer to remind you to check what's cooking.
- Use pot holders, never towels, to handle hot dishes and utensils.
- Turn pan handles toward the back of the stove so they don't get bumped or tipped over.
- Never leave young children in the kitchen alone, especially when cooking.
- Use a spoon rest instead of leaving utensils sitting in a pan.
- Take care when handling knives, can openers and other sharp objects.

Bacteria are another potential source of trouble in the kitchen. There are four simple steps to keep your family foods safe.

### Clean

- ◆ Wash hands, utensils, cutting boards and all surfaces before and after contact with raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs.
- ◆ Change dishcloths, towels and sponges often—three or four times per week at a minimum.
- ◆ Replace cutting boards when they develop grooves where bacteria cling. Wash non-wooden cutting boards in dishwasher. Use wooden cutting boards exclusively for low-risk tasks like slicing bread; wash, rinse and air dry after each use.
- ◆ Clean up spills immediately, especially in refrigerator, microwave, or stovetop and on floors. Wash at least once a week with hot, soapy water.
- ◆ Go through refrigerator weekly to throw out perishable food past its prime—3-4 days for cooked meats and vegetables; check 'use by' dates on bottled foods and dairy products.
- ◆ Keep pets off counters and out of food.

### Cook

- ◆ Use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature when cooking meat and poultry or reheating leftovers. You cannot tell temperature by looking. The minimum temperature for fish, beef, veal and lamb steaks and roasts is 145°F, egg dishes, pork, ground beef, veal, and lamb is 160°F and poultry, whole or pieces is 165°F.
- ◆ Stir, rotate the dish and cover food when microwaving to prevent cold spots where bacteria can survive.
- ◆ Bring sauces, soups and gravies to a rolling boil when reheating.

### Separate

- ◆ Keep raw meat, fish and poultry apart from foods that won't be cooked further before eating. At the store, place packages of raw meat in plastic bags or keep separate from other foods in your shopping cart. At home, store these foods on the lowest shelf of the refrigerator on a plate so no juices can drip onto other foods.
- ◆ Keep one dishwasher-safe cutting board exclusively for raw meat, poultry and fish. Wash it in dishwasher after every use, or hand wash and sanitize with a solution of 1 teaspoon liquid chlorine bleach in 1 quart of water. Let sanitizing solution sit on board for 10 minutes before rinsing and air drying.
- ◆ Place cooked foods on a clean plate, not an unwashed one that was used for raw meat, poultry or fish.
- ◆ Do not wash raw poultry or meat before cooking. Any bacteria on these foods will be destroyed by proper cooking, while washing can splash bacteria-laden water onto other food preparation surfaces.

### Chill

- ◆ Check that the refrigerator stays at 40°F or below with an appliance thermometer.
- ◆ Chill leftovers and takeout foods within 2 hours. Divide food into shallow containers for rapid cooling. Cool boiling hot foods in a sink of ice water before placing in small containers for storage in refrigerator or freezer.
- ◆ Thaw meat, poultry and seafood in the refrigerator, not on the counter.