

Organizing and Re-Organizing Kitchen

To begin with . . . Safety starts with cautious practices:

Safety While Preparing Meals

Did you know that good handwashing with soap and water for 20 seconds is key to keeping the food you prepare safe from germs?

1. Once you wipe your hands on the towel, the stage is set, because you will wipe your hands on that towel numerous time while preparing the meal. So, keep it clean! Or, use disposable paper towels. (Note: Don't rely on alcohol liquid gel cleaners alone . . . soap and water and friction are always better.)
2. The next precaution is to wipe off the counter surfaces before putting food there to prepare . . . and then after you are done, of course.
3. There's no need to rinse meat, poultry or fish before cooking. Doing so can spread bacteria to your sink, countertops, and other kitchen surfaces.
4. Stainless steel and cast iron are better choices for cookware. If you desire Teflon-coated cookware, be sure it was manufactured since 2012 to avoid contact with *perfluorooctanoic acid*, which was previously in the coating and proved to be cancer-causing.
5. If you're frying, keep a lid or splatter shield nearby to smother a small grease fire.
6. If you use a microwave oven, let food cool a few minutes before removing, and be careful touching a hot container or removing a cover. Allow scalding steam to escape. Microwaves cause more emergency room scald injuries than any other kitchen device.
7. Pots and pans should be handled with care when hot to avoid injury from burns to shattering glass pans. Mitts are mandatory.
8. Don't take glass dishes directly from the freezer to the oven, and never add liquid when a glass pan is piping hot

KITCHEN SAFETY

1. Mind your pots and pans. The Consumer Product Safety Commission says that in 2014 more than 32,000 people were hurt using pots and pans, from burns to shattering glass pans. Mitts are mandatory. And remember — don't take glass dishes directly from the freezer to the oven, and never add liquid when a glass pan is piping hot.
2. Leave it unwashed. Contrary to what you may have heard, there's no need to rinse meat, poultry or fish before cooking. Doing so can spread bacteria to your sink, counter tops and other kitchen surfaces.
3. Forgo the cooling-off period. Illness-causing bacteria can grow in perishable foods within two hours. So put leftovers in the refrigerator as soon as possible, even if they're still warm.
4. Marinate food in the fridge, not room temperature, to prevent food poisoning.

Organizing and Re-Organizing Kitchen

- 5. Don't stick to Teflon.** Sure it makes cooking and cleanup easier, but pans coated with Teflon that were made before 2012 contain perfluorooctanoic acid, and studies in lab animals have found exposure to this chemical increases the risk of certain cancers. Stainless steel and cast iron are better choices for cookware.
- 6. Beware the bagel.** Nearly 3,000 people in 2014 cut their hands or fingers while trying to slice a bagel. Either buy them sliced or, better yet, buy a bagel slicer.
- 7. Marinate in the fridge.** Harmful germs in marinade or food can multiply quickly at room temperature.
- 8. Nuke with care.** Microwaves cause more emergency room scald injuries than any other kitchen device. Let food cool a few minutes before removing, and be careful touching a hot container or removing a cover. Allow scalding steam to escape.
- 9. Put a lid on it.** If you're frying, keep a lid nearby to smother a small grease fire.
- 10. Be dishwasher wise.** Place utensils with the sharp end down. Let the machine cool before emptying to prevent burns.
- 11. Keep knives sharp.** Dull knives are more dangerous than sharp ones because they require more force to slice through the food. That makes it more likely you will lose control if the worn edge slips.
- 12. Chill out.** You might be tempted to save energy costs by setting the refrigerator and freezer at slightly higher temperatures, but you'll be beckoning bacteria. Keep the fridge at 40 degrees, the freezer at zero degrees.
- 13. Rinse all produce.** Even if they are prewashed, you should still give your fruits and vegetables a cleaning. Use a brush to remove visible dirt and then rinse them under running water from the faucet. Studies show that this is more effective than using a commercial produce wash.
(From "99 Great Ways to Make Your Home Healthier and Safer.")

3 Germ Magnets

- 1: Sponges:** Zap moist sponge for 2 minutes in the microwave to clean.
- 2: Faucet screens:** Soak in bleach solution to sanitize.
- 3: Stove knobs:** Remove, if possible, and wash in hot soapy water.