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Dry Cooking Methods

Deep frying



Deep frying is a cooking method where food is completely submerged in hot oil or fat. Oil or fat must be pre-heated to the correct temperature before food is placed in the oil. This will prevent the food from absorbing excess oil. The temperature of the oil should be between 175°C and 195°C. Food should be dry before deep frying to prevent the oil from spitting. The oil/fat must be cleaned or changed regularly to produce quality food. Meat, fish, poultry and vegetables can all be deep fried. Some delicate foods are usually coated in breadcrumbs or batter to protect them during the intense cooking process. There are many pieces of equipment that can be used to deep fry food and some are safer than others. Deep fat fryers are the safest because they have a temperature gauge to prevent the oil from becoming too hot and setting alight.

Shallow frying



Shallow frying is a cooking method where foods are cooked in a small quantity of pre-heated oil or fat. The presentation side of the food should be fried first because the fat will be clean and give a better appearance, the food should then be turned over and cooked and coloured on the opposite side. Many foods can be cooked using this method. The most popular include eggs, potatoes, chicken, meat and vegetables. A shallow pan or a flat surface is needed to shallow fry. These can include a frying pan, sauté pan and a griddle.

Grilling



This method of cooking involves food being cooked by radiant heat coming from either the top or the bottom or both. There are many ways of grilling food. Food can be grilled over a heat source, it can be grilled under a heat source or it can be grilled between two heat sources. Each one has its own benefits. The equipment you use depends on the type of method you use to grill your foods. You would need a salamander to provide the heat from above, or a barbeque/flame grill to provide heat from below or a contact grill to provide the heat from both sides. Not all foods are suitable for grilling. Large, tough cuts of meat would be inappropriate as this fast technique would not allow the meat to cook slowly and tenderise. When using the grilling method, food is usually placed on a heat resistant wire rack. This allows the fat, excess oils or juices to drain away. Grilling is a healthy method of cooking.

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Dry Cooking Methods

Roasting



Roasting uses dry heat to cook food. You can roast food in an oven or over a spit, but foods such as meat and poultry will have to be basted with their juices at regular intervals to prevent them from drying out. Large joints of meats/poultry and root and bulb vegetables are the most suitable foods for roasting. A roasting tin is needed to roast in the oven, preferably with a rack to enable the fat to drip away from the food. The juices left over from roasting meat and poultry can be used to make gravy.

Baking



Baking is a cooking method which uses dry heat applied evenly throughout the oven. The oven should be pre-heated before baking the product. This method requires the dry heat, usually from an oven, to cook the food without adding any extra fat or oil. Many items are cooked using this method. These include cakes, biscuits, bread, potatoes, pastry products such as pies, pasties and tarts and many more. The equipment needed to bake food will depend on the product you are baking. Baking trays, cake tins, loaf tins, bun trays and ovenproof dishes are all suitable for use when baking.

Stir frying



Stir frying is a quick frying technique commonly used in Chinese cooking. Stir frying is seen as a healthy method of cooking. Food must be stirred continuously while being fried quickly in a small amount of oil. Many foods can be stir fried such as vegetables, meat and poultry. All food should be evenly sized to ensure they all cook at the same time. Stir frying is best done in a wok. A wok is a large frying pan with high, sloping sides. It usually comes with a lid.

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Wet Cooking Methods

Boiling



Boiling is the transfer of heat to food that is completely covered in liquid at boiling point. This could be water, milk or a seasoned stock. The liquid is at boiling point when lots of bubbles appear in the liquid. The hob should be set at the highest setting. Food can be placed into the boiling liquid to cook, or food can be placed into cold liquid and brought to the boil. Starchy foods such as noodles or rice are most suitable for boiling. Due to their tougher texture, root vegetables like potatoes and carrots are also good for boiling. Delicate foods like fish are not recommended for boiling as they will fall apart. A variety of equipment can be used to boil. (Stockpots, saucepans, bratt pans). Saucepans should have a plastic handle to avoid heat transfer. Saucepan handles should always be turned inwards to prevent accidents.

Simmering



Simmering is the transfer of heat to food that is completely covered in liquid, just below boiling point. This could be water, milk or a seasoned stock. Liquid is placed in a pan and either maintained at a heat where gentle bubbles are visible, or brought to the boil first and then turned down until gentle bubbles rise slowly to the surface. Simmering is an excellent choice of cooking method for foods such as stocks and soups, starchy items such as pasta and potatoes and many others. A variety of equipment can be used for simmering (stockpots, saucepans, bratt pans, casserole dishes). Saucepans should have a plastic handle to avoid heat transfer.

Poaching



Poaching is cooking food either partially or completely covered by a liquid which is brought to, and maintained at, a temperature where there are no bubbles in the liquid. There are two methods of poaching - deep and shallow. Shallow poaching involves cooking food in a minimum amount of liquid. Deep poaching involves covering the food completely with the cooking liquid. Delicate foods such as soft fruits, fish and chicken are all suitable for poaching. The poaching liquid contributes to the flavour of the food. Various equipment can be used to poach food. These include saucepans, bratt pans, frying pans and fish kettles. Poaching is usually done on the hob.

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Wet Cooking Methods

Stewing



Bite sized pieces of food are cooked slowly in a minimum amount of liquid, water, stock or sauce. The food and the cooking liquid are served together. Stews usually contain a mixture of meat (lamb, beef, pork) or fish or poultry and vegetables (potatoes, carrots, onions). Tough cuts of meat are tenderised through the stewing process. Stews can be cooked in a saucepan or a casserole dish. A tight-fitting lid is important to prevent the liquid from evaporating when cooking. Stews can either be cooked in a covered pan on the hob or in a covered pan/dish in the oven over a long period of time.

Steaming



Steaming is cooking food in an environment where the surrounding air has high moisture content. It is considered a healthy cooking technique because it's quick and the food retains its nutrients. Most foods are suitable for steaming. Vegetables, fish and rice are some of the most popular foods that are steamed. The food retains its colour, flavour and nutritive value when steamed. Electric, bamboo, stovetop and microwave steamers are different types of steamers and use the same method to cook the food, however electric and microwave steamers are the quickest. No fats or oil are needed when steaming food. Liquid is placed in the bottom chamber of the appliance and brought to the boil. The steam rises into the upper chambers through holes and cooks the food that has been placed in them.

Braising



Large or whole pieces of food are cooked slowly in an appropriate amount of liquid, water, stock or sauce. The food and the cooking liquid are usually served together. There are two main methods of braising. Brown braising where the food is browned beforehand and White braising where the food is blanched and refreshed before being placed in a dish with a tight-fitting lid and cooked in the oven for a long period of time. Meat that is too tough to roast is usually cooked by braising. A mixture of vegetables are also used. The slow process tenderises the meat. Thick bottomed pans or ovenproof dishes with a tight-fitting lid are needed to braise food. The lid prevents the liquid from evaporating when cooking. Bratt pans and jacket boilers are sometimes used.