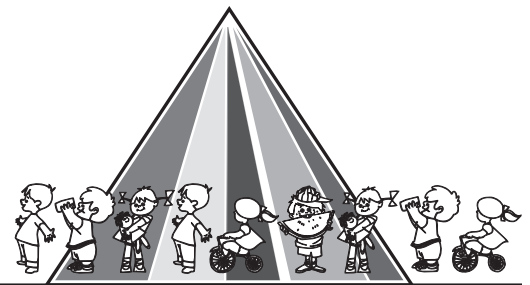


Mealtime Memo

FOR CHILD CARE



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Healthy Cooking with Limited Equipment

You read a recipe and say - "But I don't own a steamer or a steam jacketed kettle." The truth is quality meals can be provided from a kitchen even with limited equipment. Each standard piece (such as an oven or cook top) can be used as a tool for more than one cooking method. Let's look at how to make what we have flexible.

Begin by making sure the equipment is in good working order, and that you are using it correctly.

Proper Use of Equipment

Follow the directions from the manufacturer. If you have questions about use, ask for help - phone numbers or Web sites are useful. You may want to call NFSMI's Help Desk at 800-321-3054 for information.



Using the right pot or pan increases flexibility and most equipment can be used for more than one cooking method. An oven, stove top, or flat top/griddle, can act as a heat source for:

- preheating pans for searing.
- heating liquid for simmering, poaching, and boiling.
- baking, roasting, braising, or stewing.

Steaming

This is the best method to cook vegetables and grains since fewer nutrients are lost in cooking.

Oven - A two-pan setup with water in the bottom pan and a pan with holes on top of it can make a useful oven steamer. Here is an example for preparing 50 servings of a vegetable.

1. Preheat oven to 350 °F.
2. Place quantity to yield 50 ¼-cup servings of fresh or frozen vegetable in a perforated 12 x 20 x 2 inch pan. Then place the pan in a 4-inch deep counter pan that contains 2 cups of water.
3. Cover both pans tightly with foil.
4. Place the covered pans in the preheated oven until the vegetable is fork tender. (Times will vary with vegetables.)
5. Drain the excess liquid from the cooked vegetable.
6. Season with herbs and spices. (Limit salt to ¼ teaspoon for 50 servings.)
7. Serve the vegetable at once.

For flavorful steamed vegetables use vegetable stock and crushed cloves of garlic in the bottom hotel pan to give more flavor.

Stove Top and Flat Top - The same two-pan setup can be used on the stove top or flat top as long as the pans are covered or wrapped to trap the steam. If a pot is used, be careful to not overload the vegetables or the bottom will cook more than the top. A steamer is also an option.

Braising and Stewing

Braising and stewing are methods often used for tougher cuts of meat to make them tender.

Oven - Preheat the pan in the oven to sear the meat and then lower oven temperature. Add other items and liquid and wrap pan with foil to trap in moisture and slowly cook all items.

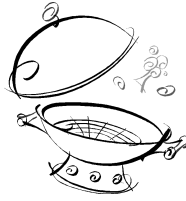
Stove Top and Flat Top - Preheat pan. Sear meat and then lower heat and add other items and liquid. Cover and cook slowly until fork tender.



Stir Frying and Sautéing

You use very little oil with stir frying and sautéing. Cooking the food quickly helps keep the nutrients in the food.

- Use bite sized food items.
- Add food that takes longer to cook first (e.g. fresh carrots before corn kernels or mushrooms).



Stove Top - Preheat pan with a little oil and use a high heat. Add food to hot pan, stirring constantly, until all items are cooked.

Flat Top - Preheat flat top with a little oil and with high heat. Stir items constantly until all food is cooked.

Roasting and Baking

Oven - Preheat the oven as indicated in recipe. Use a pan that is wide and less than 4 inches tall. Rotate during cooking to make sure food bakes evenly. Use a rack if roasting meat so it does not sit in the food drippings and air can circulate around the food.

Reheating

Always bring food to an internal temperature of 165 °F.

Oven - In a preheated oven reheating foods can cause drying of items unless liquid is added or the pan is covered with foil.

Stove Top and Flat Top - When reheating canned or frozen foods on a stove or flat top, use a low to medium flame to prevent burning.

Microwave - Using a microwave to reheat food can be useful for small quantities, but make sure the container is safe for use in the microwave and no metal is used. Stir contents to make sure all food is heated evenly.

Poaching and Simmering

Good for large cuts of meat, chicken breast, and fish (also fruits such as apples, pears and plums). The food is covered by liquid. The temperature is even and just below the boiling point. (Poaching is between 180-185 °F and simmering between 185-200 °F.)

Oven - Preheat the oven and use a thermometer to check the temperature until it reaches 230 °F (oven heat is not direct like the flame from a burner). Place a pan

in the oven with a flavorful poaching liquid, allow the liquid to come to 185 °F, add food and cook until done.
Stove Top and Flat Top - Use a shallow pan for poaching; add a flavorful poaching liquid and when the liquid comes to 185 °F add the food.

Boiling

Oven - Preheat the oven using a thermometer to 300 °F. Place a pan in the oven with liquid to boil and when liquid reaches 212 °F begin cooking.

Stove Top and Flat Top - Use the right size pan for boiling based on the amount of item being cooked. First allow the water to reach 212 °F then add the food for cooking unless the recipe says otherwise.

When a recipe calls for blanching, dip the food into boiling water for a very short time to partially cook the food to the desired doneness. Place in ice water to chill quickly and stop cooking.

Maintenance

- Check external and internal equipment thermometers.
- Calibrate equipment as needed - including thermometers. (Check out *Thermometer Information Resource* at http://www.nfsmi.org/Information/thermometer_resource.html for specific instructions on calibration.)
- Clean all equipment after each shift.
- Make sure to check all units for safety concerns regularly.

Additional Resources for Cooking with Limited Equipment

Culinary Techniques: Cooking with Flair and recipes
<http://www.nfsmi.org/interactive/culindex.html>
<http://www.nfsmi.org/interactive/recipes/index.html>

Food Storage
<http://www.nfsmi.org/Information/Newsletters/meme2005-4.pdf>

Sources:

National Food Service Management Institute. (2002). *Serving it safe (2nd ed)*. University, MS: Author.

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