Cooking Methods

There are many healthy ways to cook food that are free of added fat or use just a little oil. Keep reading to learn more about healthy cooking methods.

Roasting

Roasting is used for larger cuts of meat, fish, and poultry, and for fruits and vegetables. It is similar to baking in an oven.

You can roast meat, fish, and poultry on a rack or sheet pan. Using a rack allows fat to drip away from the food. To keep the meat, fish, or poultry moist, brush it with marinade from time to time as it roasts.

You can also roast potatoes, peppers, carrots, and other vegetables on a sheet pan. Roasting brings out their natural flavor.

Grilling

Grilling is used for meat, chicken, fatty fish (like tuna and salmon), and vegetables. The food is cooked by the heat underneath it.

Grilling caramelizes the natural sugars in foods, which causes browning and provides delicious flavor. It also allows the fat to drip off, making grilling a healthy cooking method.
**Broiling**

Broiling is done in an oven or a broiler. It uses high heat from above to cook foods such as thinner cuts of meat (like steak), chicken, and fatty fish (like tuna or salmon). Broiling is also used to finish cooking dishes with crispy or browned toppings.

The broiling time and the placement of the food relative to the heat source will vary. To brown the topping on a casserole, place the pan close to the heat for just a few minutes. A thick piece of fish or chicken takes longer to broil and should be placed farther from the heat source.

**Sautéing**

Sautéing is a quick-cooking method that prevents vitamins from being destroyed by heat. It is used for small pieces of meat, fish, poultry, or vegetables.

To sauté, use a shallow pan. This allows the food to brown and release its natural flavors. To keep food from sticking, add a small amount of oil (about 1 teaspoon) to the pan or spray the pan with nonstick cooking spray or an oil spritzer. When the pan is hot, add the food you want to sauté and stir occasionally. You can add broth, a splash of wine, herbs, and spices to bring out flavor without adding lots of calories and fat.

**Stir-Frying**

Stir-frying quickly cooks food over high heat for a short period of time. It is used to cook small pieces of meat, poultry, fish, vegetables, and tofu. This cooking method is traditionally used for Asian dishes. It helps preserve vitamins and the crisp texture and bright color of vegetables.

To stir-fry food, add a small amount of oil (about 1 teaspoon) to a wok or nonstick frying pan. Heat over high heat. When the oil is hot, add foods and stir frequently until the foods are cooked. (Cooking will take just a few minutes.)
Poaching

Poaching uses water or a flavorful liquid (like stock, broth, or wine) to gently cook fish, poultry, eggs, or whole fruits (like apples and pears). Some vitamins are lost when foods are poached, but poaching does not use oil or added fat.

To poach a food, choose a skillet or saucepan that is large enough to fit the food you will poach when it is covered by liquid. To this pan, add the cooking liquid and bring it to a boil. Then lower the heat and add the food. It should be completely immersed in liquid. Simmer over low heat until the food is cooked. For more flavor, you can add herbs, spices, or vegetables like carrots, onions, and celery to the poaching liquid.

Steaming

Steaming is a quick cooking method that helps retain the vitamins, moisture, and flavor of foods. It does not use any oil or added fat, which makes it a healthy cooking method.

You can steam vegetables, fruits, fish, shellfish, and chicken in a steamer basket or insert. Boil a few inches of water in a pot that is large enough to hold the steamer. Add the steamer to the pot. Fill the steamer with food and cover tightly. A boneless piece of fish or chicken breast will take 15 to 30 minutes to steam. Steam vegetables for just a few minutes. They should be tender but not mushy.

You can also steam vegetables without a steamer. Add them to a pan with a small amount of boiling liquid that does not completely cover the food. Cover tightly and cook until tender.