

Kitchen Cautions

Ray was a good cook with all the right utensils, from the best pots and pans to the finest cutlery. He took his prized set of carving knives to every family cookout and even on summer vacation. He kept the blades sharp and clean and wielded them with an artist's skill. Unfortunately, Ray's wit was as sharp as his knives. While preparing his favorite chicken dish one evening, he also engaged in a heated discussion with his guests. Good-natured disagreement led to raised voices and soon a howl from Ray who, having taken his eye off his work, inadvertently took a slice off his thumb.

The kitchen is often the center of activity in a home, and no other room contains as many potential hazards. Here are a few precautions to protect yourself from menaces lurking in the cozy kitchen.

For Starters

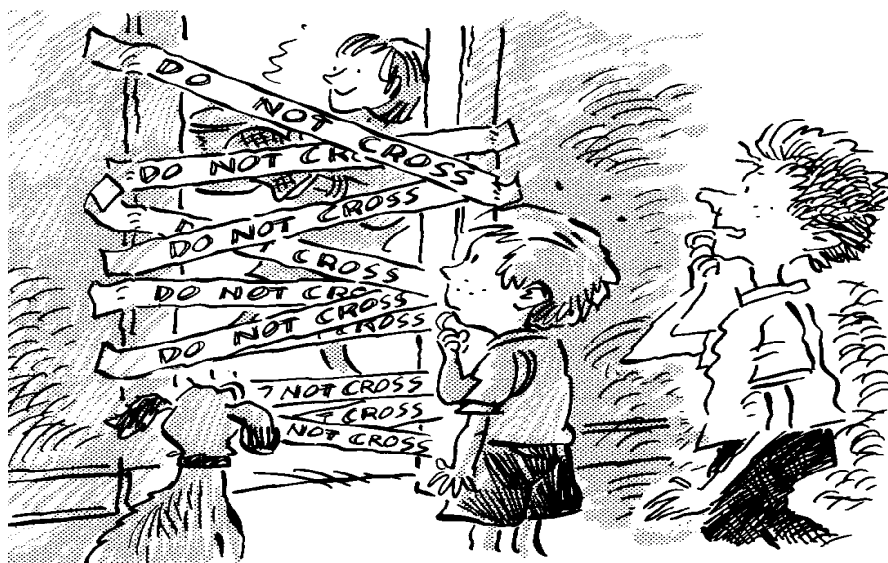
A safe kitchen requires 3 essentials - safe planning, safe equipment and safe habits.

- Clear counters of unnecessary items before cooking.
- Focus on the meal. Keep toddlers, guests and pets out of the kitchen during the busiest times of meal preparation. Haste and distractions can make you careless.
- Make sure there is ample light.
- Clean up spilled water, grease, or food peelings immediately.
- Use a sturdy stool or ladder with treaded steps to reach high shelves. Never stand on a chair.
- Keep doors and drawers closed.

Now You're Cooking

Cooking is the primary cause of residential fires in the U.S., killing more than 400 people annually, and injuring over 4,500.

- Wear short or tight-fitting sleeves when cooking. Floor-length robes and floppy slippers are hazardous in the kitchen.
- Always watch food being heated.



The leading cause of home cooking fires and injuries is unattended cooking.

- Use the proper size burner. The exposed part of a larger burner could ignite your clothing.
- Do not pick up a hot pan unless you have an insulated spot where you can put it easily.
- Always keep dry potholders or mitts handy to hold hot objects. Wet holders carry the heat to your hand.
- Use potholders or mitts, not towels, to handle food in the oven, and to remove items from the stove or microwave.
- Do not place potholders, plastic utensils, towels or unnecessary items near the stove.
- When lifting a lid from a pan, tilt the far side up first so the steam will be directed away from your face and hands.
- Keep a pot lid near the stove. If a grease fire starts on the stove, use the lid as a shield and slide the lid over the fire. If a grease fire starts in the oven, close the oven door. Be sure to turn off the heat.
- Keep a fire extinguisher handy. An "ABC" type is most practical for home use. Check its pressure gauge regularly. Know how to use it.

- After cooking, make sure all knobs are turned completely off.
- Use microwave-safe containers for microwave cooking.

Getting Right To The Point

Fires and burns may cause more serious injuries, but cuts are the most common kitchen injury. **In fact, more than 400,000 emergency room visits occur each year in the U.S. due to injuries associated with knives.**

- There is no such thing as an "all-purpose" knife. Purchase the size and style appropriate for the kind of cutting you intend to do.
- Always use a sharp knife and a cutting board that provides a clean, flat surface. A dull knife requires a lot of pressure, so it is more likely to slip and cut someone.
- Angle knives down when you cut, and cut away from your fingers.
- Hold food down with your knuckles to prevent cutting a finger.
- Have a special rack or compartment to store knives.
- Wash and dry knives and put them away immediately. Don't leave knives to soak in soapy water. You may find them the hard way. ■