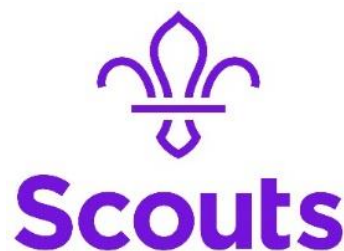


Cooking methods

Use our handy guide to learn about some of the different ways to cook food



Cooking in water – boiling and poaching

- You can put food in cold water and bring it to the boil, or add the food once your water has reached boiling point. Water boils at 100C – you'll be able to see bubbles rising to the surface. You can turn the temperature down a little for a slower, gentler cook.
- Poaching is good for foods that are more delicate, because they're likely to break up if they're cooked too fast in boiling water (for example, eggs without their shell).
- When you cook food in water, you should keep an eye on the clock. If you cook it for too long, the food will lose flavour, colour, and texture – as well as vitamins and nutrients.
- We cook lots of starchy foods like potatoes, pasta, and rice by boiling. We also cook vegetables and some meats this way too.
- Watch out! Be careful not to burn yourself (or anyone else) with boiling water or steam.

Steaming

- The easiest way to steam is to boil a small amount of water in a pan, and putting your food in a steaming basket on top.
- Steaming is a great way to make sure food keeps its flavour, colour, vitamins, and nutrients. It's especially good for cooking green vegetables, fresh fish, or chicken – you could even add a wedge of lemon or lime to the water for a flavoured twist.
- Again, you need to watch out and be careful not to burn yourself (or anyone else) with boiling water or steam.

Microwaving

- Microwaving is a really popular way to cook and reheat a variety of foods (and ready meals). You could always check the manufacturer's advice – this will be different for different products.
- Microwaves cook food quickly, because they channel heat energy directly to the tiny particles (molecules) which make up the food. They use radiation to heat the food (like radiation from the sun heats your face).
- Watch out! Never put metal into a microwave, and don't put oil in either. Microwave cooking heats the food from the inside out, so be careful – the outside may seem cool while the middle is very hot.

Grilling

- You can grill under a grill, on a chargrill, over a barbecue, or even on a campfire.
- You don't need to use oil for meats like sausages or steak, as the natural juices and fats do the job. Other foods (such as fish or vegetables) may need a little oil – but this is usually less than you'd need if you were frying. This means it can be healthier than frying or roasting (which use more oil) – but it's still OK to cook food this way too. A balance is always best.
- Be careful – it's easy to accidentally burn food when you're grilling it.

Roasting

- You can roast food in an oven or over a campfire.
- Herbs, spices, and marinades can all help make the flavours more exciting.
- Roasting is a popular way to cook meat because it locks in the juices and gives a tasty, crunchy skin. It works best with good quality meat and fish.
- Roasting is also a tasty way to cook vegetables – especially with a little seasoning and a drizzle of oil.
- Be careful – if you roast food (especially meat) too fast, or for too long, it'll end up dry and chewy.

Baking

- You bake something by cooking it with a dry heat in an oven.
- We usually choose to bake bread, cakes, biscuits, and pastry, because of the dry heat involved. We can also bake foods such as potatoes, and meat and fish.
- Be careful – dry heat can make food dry, so be careful not to overcook it.

Frying

- You fry food by cooking it in a pan with oil. The heated oil coats the food and cooks it.
- There are different ways to fry food – stir frying uses a little bit of oil, and deep frying uses a lot of oil.
- Food absorbs the oil it's fried in, so it's good to vary your ways of cooking. It wouldn't be very healthy to use deep frying as your only cooking method for everything you eat, because eating too much oil isn't good for us (and it would probably get really boring, too). Eating some fried food sometimes, alongside different foods cooked in a variety of ways, is a healthy way to live.
- Watch out! If the oil gets too hot it can set on fire. Be especially careful when using lots of oil, for example, when deep frying.

Stewing

- When you stew food, you cook it in a liquid which forms a sauce.
- Stews are often made up of meat and vegetables, which are cooked in hot liquid and juices which give flavour.
- The food is cooked gently over a long period of time, to make sure everything is cooked and soft.