

Knife Skills

The best-quality knives are typically made from stainless steel or carbon steel. Stainless steel knives maintain their shine and do not rust. Carbon steel knives stay sharper but tend to rust more easily.

For Your Information

Knives are invaluable kitchen tools, not toys. The more you practice your knife skills, the more efficient you'll become. Practicing knife safety will enhance your culinary success. Following is a list of safety precautions to help you avoid accidents with knives.

- Keep knives sharp. Dull knives are more likely to slip and may cause you to cut yourself.
- Always cut with the blade of the knife slanting away from you.
- Always hold foods to be cut with your fingertips tucked in.
- Always use a wood or plastic cutting board when you use a knife; other surfaces can damage the knife. Place a wet cloth or paper towel under the cutting board to prevent the board from slipping.
- Never cut foods while holding them in your hand.
- Don't leave a knife on the edge of a counter or table. If you drop a knife, step back and let it fall. Never try to catch it on the way down.
- Wash knives one at a time with the blade pointed away from your hand. Never place them in soapy water where they cannot be seen.

There are many types of knives, each serving a different purpose. The chef generally chooses the knife type based on the food being prepared. For example, chopping celery calls for a different knife than the one used for slicing bread. A brief description of the basic knives follows.

- **Paring knife:** The paring knife usually has a 2- to 4-inch blade and can be used for dicing, slicing, peeling, or chopping fruits and vegetables.



- **Utility knife:** The utility knife is an all-purpose knife and usually has a 5- to 7-inch blade. It's used for the same functions as the paring knife.



- **Chef's knife:** Also called a French knife, the chef's knife has an 8- to 14-inch triangular, pointed-tip blade and is used for chopping, trimming, slicing, and dicing. It's generally used when cutting large amounts of food.



- **Bread knife:** Bread knives have a long serrated blade, usually with a rounded tip. The serrated edge makes it easier to slice foods such as breads and cakes. Use a sawing motion when cutting with a serrated knife.



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Cutting Terms and Techniques

Always hold the handle of the knife securely when cutting food. Try to avoid placing your index finger over the blade. Always use smooth, even strokes and don't force the knife through the food. It is important to keep the sizes and shapes of the food uniform, so that they are attractive and cook evenly.

The basic knife-cutting motion is a fluid down-and-forward motion. For safety, it's best to guide the knife with one hand while firmly holding the food in place with the other hand. Use a "bear claw" position for the hand holding the food, curling your fingers under toward your palm.



- **Pare:** To pare a fruit or vegetable means to cut away the skin. Paring can be done with either a paring knife or a peeler. A peeler removes a thinner layer, leaving more of the vitamins that are concentrated just under the skin.

- **Chop and mince:** To chop food is to cut it into small, irregular pieces. The recipe may tell you what size pieces you need—coarse, medium, or fine. To mince is to chop food until the pieces are as small as you can make them. A food processor may also be used for chopping and mincing.



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Knife Skills (continued)

- **Slice:** A sharp knife and a cutting board are usually used to slice food. Steady the food with one hand or with a fork, and use the other hand to cut the food into thin, flat pieces. A food processor may be used to slice some foods.



- **Shred:** Foods such as lettuce and cabbage can be cut into shreds with a knife by placing them flat side down on a cutting board and shaving as close to the edge as possible.



- **Cube and dice:** To cube or dice foods, cut them in three directions. First, slice the food. Next, stack the slices, and cut them first in one direction and then the other. To cube, make the cuts about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch apart. To dice, make the cuts about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch apart, or as specified in the recipe.

**Ideas to Try**

- Use a potato to practice the basic knife-cutting techniques. Then cook the potatoes and create mashed potatoes with them.
- At home, select your favorite knife-cutting method and find a recipe in a cookbook or on the Internet that uses this skill.
- Research on the Internet the different types of knives and materials used to make them.
- Create an appetizer menu for a party and discuss the knives and techniques that will be utilized.

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Economical Meals

Directions: Read the recipes and complete the *Foods Lab Team Planning Form* and the *Time and Work Schedule*. Prepare the selected recipes. At the conclusion of the lab, complete the *Meal Management Appraisal Form* and the *Foods Lab/Teamwork Evaluation Form*.

What is the secret to preparing delicious low-cost meals? It's planning ahead! Well-planned meals can save time and money. By incorporating a variety of foods, economical meals can be the basis for a healthful diet. Be sure to include whole-grain breads and cereals, fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy products, and lean meats in your menu planning.

For Your Information

Creating a shopping list prior to food shopping helps you know what you have on hand and what you may need to purchase. A list also helps you avoid making expensive impulse purchases. Following are hints to help you save time and money both at the supermarket and at home.

- Once you begin shopping, stick to your shopping list!
- Clip and use coupons for foods you plan to buy. Remember, coupons save you money only if you need the product. Always check that the coupon saves more money than purchasing other brands without a coupon.
- Do not overbuy foods just because they are on sale or cost less in bulk unless you are planning on using them before they spoil.
- Take advantage of weekly supermarket specials at the stores where you shop.
- In your meal planning, plan for "leftovers" to save time and money. For example, you can prepare a recipe that makes 8 servings and freeze the leftovers for another time.
- Most supermarkets provide unit prices on shelf stickers. Comparing the unit price of similar foods will help you determine which brand and size is the best buy.
- Incorporate low-cost protein foods into your diet such as dry and canned beans. They are a good source of protein and fiber and are lower in fat than animal protein sources.
- Plan snacks that are nutritious and economical. Limit soft drinks, unhealthful desserts, and salty snacks.
- Compare the cost of convenience foods with the same foods made from scratch to determine which is more cost-effective.
- Always check for the "sell by" and the "best if used by" dates on food packages to help you choose the freshest foods with the longest shelf life.
- Always take the time to compare fresh, frozen, and canned foods to see which is most economical.
- Buy fresh fruits when they are "in season," because they generally cost less than when they are not.
- Beware of foods placed at the end of the supermarket aisle or in a special display. They may not be bargains.

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Festive Black Bean Dip

Yield: 4 servings, ½ cup each

	Vegetable oil spray
1 can (15 oz.)	Black beans, rinsed and drained
1 pkg. (8 oz.)	Low-fat cream cheese, softened
2 Tbsp.	Chopped fresh cilantro
½ tsp.	Chili powder
¼ tsp.	Ground cumin
¼ tsp.	Dried oregano leaves
¼ tsp.	Hot pepper sauce
1	Garlic clove, minced
	Fresh vegetables or tortilla chips for dipping

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. Lightly spray a 9-inch pie pan with vegetable oil; set aside.
3. Combine all ingredients in food processor with metal blade, and process for 15 to 20 seconds, or until well blended.
4. Spread mixture into prepared pie pan.
5. Bake for 15 minutes, or until hot.
6. Serve with fresh vegetables or tortilla chips.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size (165g)	
Servings Per Container 4	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 220	Calories from Fat 100
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 11g	17%
Saturated Fat 6g	30%
<i>Trans</i> Fat .28g	
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 510mg	21%
Total Carbohydrate 18g	6%
Dietary Fiber 6g	24%
Sugars 4g	
Protein 12g	
Vitamin A 10%	Vitamin C 2%
Calcium 10%	Iron 20%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.	

Vegetable Medley Salad

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

Salad		Dressing	
1 can (15 oz.)	Corn, drained	¼ cup	Vegetable oil
1 can (15 oz.)	Green beans, drained	¾ cup	Cider vinegar
1 can (15 oz.)	Peas, drained	½ cup	Sugar
1 cup	Chopped sweet onion		
1 cup	Chopped celery		
½ cup	Chopped green pepper		
1 can (4.5 oz.)	Sliced or button mushrooms, drained		

1. In a large bowl, combine corn, green beans, peas, onion, celery, green pepper, and mushrooms; set aside.
2. In a small bowl, combine oil, vinegar, and sugar, and stir until sugar is dissolved.
3. Add dressing mixture to vegetables, stirring until well coated.
4. Cover and refrigerate at least 24 hours before serving.

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Nutrition Facts

Serving Size (299g)	
Servings Per Container 6 to 8	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 230	Calories from Fat 70
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 9g	14%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
<i>Trans</i> Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 650mg	27%
Total Carbohydrate 35g	12%
Dietary Fiber 4g	16%
Sugars 23g	
Protein 4g	
Vitamin A 8%	Vitamin C 30%
Calcium 4%	Iron 10%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.	

Economical Meals (continued)

Classic Sloppy Joes

Yield: 4 servings

- 1 lb. Ground beef*
- 1 can (28 oz.) Low-sodium tomato sauce
- 2 Tbsp. Brown sugar
- ½ tsp. Garlic powder
- ½ tsp. Onion powder
- ½ tsp. Salt
- 4 Hamburger buns, split

1. In a large nonstick skillet, cook ground beef over medium-high heat, breaking it into small pieces with a spoon.
2. Cook for 3 to 4 minutes, or until it browns, stirring frequently.
3. Drain off fat.
4. Stir in tomato sauce, sugar, garlic powder, onion powder, and salt. Bring mixture to a boil.
5. Reduce heat to low and simmer 8 to 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.
6. Spoon meat mixture onto buns and serve.

*Regular ground beef is less expensive than lean and extralean ground beef, but it contains more fat. To remove excess fat from ground beef, transfer it to a colander and rinse under hot water; drain well. Continue with recipe.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size (362g)
Servings Per Container 4

Amount Per Serving	
Calories 400	Calories from Fat 90
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 10g	15%
Saturated Fat 4g	20%
<i>Trans</i> Fat 1.18g	
Cholesterol 85mg	28%
Sodium 340mg	14%
Total Carbohydrate 43g	14%
Dietary Fiber 4g	16%
Sugars 10g	
Protein 36g	

Vitamin A 40% Vitamin C 45%
Calcium 10% Iron 35%

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

Additional Serving Suggestions

- Heat up your *Classic Sloppy Joes* with some sliced jalapeño.
- Top with sliced dill pickles or sweet pickles.
- Serve with sliced Cheddar cheese.
- Substitute whole grain buns for traditional hamburger buns.

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Southwestern Chicken Salad

Yield: 4 servings

1 Tbsp.	Vegetable oil
1 lb.	Boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into bite-size pieces
½ cup	Chopped onions
1 Tbsp.	Chili powder
2 tsp.	Dried oregano
½ tsp.	Ground cumin
1 can (15 oz.)	Chickpeas (garbanzo beans), rinsed and drained
1 cup	Canned light red kidney beans, rinsed and drained
1	Medium tomato, diced
2 cups	Chopped lettuce
½ cup	Reduced-fat Cheddar cheese
	Low-fat sour cream and salsa (optional)

1. Pour vegetable oil into a large skillet and swirl to coat bottom of pan.
2. Add chicken and onion; cook over medium-high heat for 4 to 5 minutes, or until chicken is no longer pink.
3. Add chili powder, oregano, and cumin; cook for 1 minute.
4. Add chickpeas, kidney beans, and tomato. Mix gently to combine.
5. In a large bowl, combine the lettuce and cheese.
6. Spoon chicken mixture over salad.
7. Top with low-fat sour cream and salsa, if desired.

Additional Serving Suggestions

- Substitute a variety of mixed chopped greens for the lettuce.
- Use hot pepper cheese instead of the reduced-fat Cheddar.
- Exchange sliced turkey for the chicken, if desired.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size (395g)	
Servings Per Container 4	
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Amount Per Serving	
Calories 370	Calories from Fat 100
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% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 11g	17%
Saturated Fat 2g	10%
<i>Trans</i> Fat .12g	
Cholesterol 95mg	32%
Sodium 430mg	18%
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 8g	32%
Sugars 4g	
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Protein 36g	
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Vitamin A 25%	Vitamin C 25%
Calcium 15%	Iron 25%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.	