



Safety Note

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KITCHEN KNIFE SAFETY

Information provided here is intended for use by program representatives, master food preservers, and those they train.



U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission data indicate from 1990 through 2008, an average of 434,259 people of all ages were injured while using knives with 36% of the injuries from kitchen knives. Most injuries occurred to the fingers (66%) followed by hands (20%), forearms (4%), and wrists (2%). Nearly all of the injuries were lacerations with a relatively small number of puncture wounds. Many of the injuries were caused by the knife user being careless or inattentive and could have been prevented by taking several simple precautions.

General Knife Safety

- Always keep your knives sharp. Dull knives are more dangerous than sharp knives.
- Never run or climb while carrying a knife with an unprotected blade.
- When using a knife, cut in a direction away from your body and fingers, hands, arms, and legs.
- Use knives in well-lit work areas.
- Never engage in horseplay with knives.
- Only use knives for their intended cutting/slicing/carving purpose. Do not use knives for prying, screwing, hammering, or pounding.
- Never throw a knife.
- Do not attempt to catch a dropped knife. Let it fall and then pick it up.
- Never use a knife on live electrical cords or equipment like appliances.
- Always pass a knife handle first to another person.
- Focus on the task at hand when using a knife. Stop using the knife if you need to look away.
- Always use a cutting board when slicing food.
- When using a chef's knife to slice smaller food items (carrots or celery), hold the knife handle with your last three fingers and grasp the blade with your index finger and thumb. Place the knife tip on the cutting board and slice downward using a continuous rocking motion. Use your other hand to stabilize the food being cut and guide the knife. Protect your fingers by keeping them curled and your thumb by tucking it behind your curled fingers.
- When using a chef's knife to slice larger food items (potatoes or onions), hold the knife as described above. Start the cut with the tip end of the knife and force the knife down and forward across the food until the knife heel encounters the cutting board. Use your other hand to hold the food while protecting your fingers and thumb as described above.
- When not being used, keep knives in sheaths or holding racks.
- If you suffer a cut or puncture wound, wash the wound with soap and water and cover with a clean bandage. Seek medical attention if needed.