

FAQ: Cooking Safety

How often does cooking cause house fires?

Cooking is the leading cause of home fires. Smoking is the leading cause of home fire deaths.
www.nfpa.org/assets/files/PDF/Homesfactsheet.pdf

Why do most house fires start in the kitchen?

The leading cause of kitchen fires is unattended cooking. The person cooking gets distracted, leaves the room, forgets they are cooking, or falls asleep. Eventually the food or liquid overheats and catches fire.

What is the best way to help avoid a cooking or kitchen fire?

- Stay near the stove or in the room at all times when cooking.
 - If you must leave the room, remove the food from the heat and turn off the stove.
- Keep all loose material and objects that can catch fire, including clothing, away from the heat and the stove.
- Cook only in appliances approved for cooking.
- Keep the oven, stove, toaster, and grill clean – a buildup of fat, crumbs, or grease can easily catch fire. Keep all metal or metallic items out of the microwave.
- When you have finished cooking, make sure to turn off all cooking appliances.

<http://www.nfpa.org/assets/files/PDF/Public%20Education/CookingSafety.pdf>

What should I do if food catches fire?

- If a pan catches fire, don't take risks, get everyone out and call 9-1-1. It is vital to get the fire department on the way as soon as possible. Any delay can be a deadly one.
- If you have a lid and an oven mitt try placing the lid over the pan which will smother the flames.
- Turn off the heat under the pan (if it's safe to do so) and allow it to cool completely.
- Get out and wait for the fire department.
- Don't move the pan and never throw water on it. Water will cause the grease to explode, spreading the fire or possibly burning you.
- If there is a fire in the oven, leave the door shut and turn off the oven so the fire will die out, call 9-1-1, and get out.

<http://www.nfpa.org/assets/files/PDF/Public%20Education/CookingSafety.pdf>

What kind of smoke alarm should I have in the kitchen?

Generally, it is not a good idea to have a smoke alarm in the kitchen itself because cooking smoke can activate it. However, having one in the hallway or near the kitchen is a good idea. The recommended type of smoke alarm to use is a photoelectric smoke alarm. (Look for a "P" on the package when you are shopping or the word "photoelectric".) Photoelectric smoke alarms are less likely to be set off by normal cooking smoke.

Should I keep a fire extinguisher in my kitchen?

A fire extinguisher is a good idea, but only if you know how to use one before the fire breaks out. During a fire is not the time to learn how to use an extinguisher. Contact your local fire department for more information on fire extinguishers.