

Play it safe when cooking

The kitchen is host to many hazards, so know the risks and manage them

Your kitchen is a functional space for cooking, a gathering place when friends come over, and a hub of household activity. But it also has some of the most significant fire risks in your home.

Don't cook under the influence

Hungry after a long evening out at the bar? Don't cook after you've had a few. You'll be more likely to make an error in the kitchen, or you may forget to check timers and stir when needed. Save yourself the visit from the fire department and order a pizza instead.

Watch that pot

Don't leave the kitchen while your food is cooking on the stove. Boil overs can happen quickly, and those can easily become a fire risk. Be ready with a lid for your cooking pot or pan in case there's a fire, and watch for signs and smells that something may be about to burn. Oil in the bottom of a hot pan can turn from room temperature to hot fast.

Timer is on your side

If you have a smartphone, you have a timer. Set it to make sure you don't forget that roast in the oven while you're busy cooking the vegetables.

Keep it clean

In order for a fire to burn, there needs to be fuel. Caked on grease, food dropped under burners and residue from spills can all catch fire from the intense heat coming from the element. Keep the oven and stove top clean, and don't use your range as a food prep surface.

Dress for success

Long, flowing sleeves may look great when you're out on the town, but they're a problem in the kitchen or while grilling outside. Dangling sleeves and other fabric pose a significant fire risk when moving pots around hot elements on the stove or when reaching for something in the oven. Choose clothes without any hanging fabric that could be exposed to heat as you reach over the cooktop. Also keep long hair away from sources of heat.

Get your mitts on

When you take something out of the oven, it's going to be hot. You're better off using oven mitts or heat-resistant gloves instead of pot holders, as mitts give you greater control and grip over the dish or tray. Just remember that some oven mitts are better than others at keeping out steam, which can easily burn you.

If a fire does happen ...

If something in a pot on the stove catches fire, slide the lid onto the pot to deprive the fire of air, which should smother the flames. Do not pour water on it, especially if there's any oil involved, as this could spread the fire.

If something in the oven catches fire, turn off the oven and keep the oven door closed. Standard kitchen ovens are designed to withstand a considerable amount of heat.

Microwave fires can and do happen, and the best response is to keep the door closed and disconnect the power.