



*Developing Top-Notch CNAs, One Inservice at a Time*

*A Client Care Module:*

## Food Preparation & Safety Tips

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## WHAT'S COOKING?

If you work in your clients' homes, you may be responsible for fixing snacks or meals for your clients. You may even do their grocery shopping.

If you work in a health care facility, you are probably responsible for serving food to your clients. And, you may spend time helping them eat their meals.

Either way, it's important for you to know the basics about how to prepare, serve and store food. *And*, how to do it safely.

Remember...the kitchen is one of the most dangerous rooms in any house or workplace. Why? The answer is simple: **GERMS!**

Keep in mind that infectious bacteria can sometimes be found *in* and *on* raw foods. Germs can also be spread by people as they are preparing foods.

Keep reading to learn more about basic food preparation and safety. You'll learn the answers to questions like these:

- How can I tell if a dish is safe to use in the microwave?

### Let's Start With a Joke!

A lady was picking through the frozen turkeys at the grocery store, but couldn't find one big enough for her family. She asked a stock boy, "Do these turkeys get any bigger?"

The stock boy replied, "No, ma'am, they're dead."

- How can I keep a pot from boiling over?
- What three items in a kitchen contain the most bacteria?
- What's the best way to thaw food?
- What are the symptoms of a food allergy?
- How can I protect my clients from food-borne illnesses?

Remember...you should follow the guidelines in this inservice during your work with clients. But, do yourself a favor, and follow them at home in your own kitchen, too.



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## Types of Cookware

### Glass

Glass cookware can often be used in the microwave and in the oven and is great for food storage. Glass is not usually recommended for use on top of the stove.

### Cast Iron

Once they're heated, heavy cast iron pans remain hot for a long time. Foods cooked in cast iron pans absorb some iron—which is a good thing! It's important to "season" cast iron with oil to keep foods from sticking.

### Aluminum

Aluminum conducts heat very well, making it a good choice for cookware. Some people are turning away from aluminum cookware after hearing about how aluminum may be connected to Alzheimer's disease. However, the FDA has found no proof of a link between the use of aluminum cookware and Alzheimer's disease.

### Stainless Steel

Stainless steel cookware is easy to clean. Foods cooked in stainless steel may need to be stirred frequently so they heat evenly. People who are allergic to the metal, nickel, should avoid using stainless steel pans.

### Non-Stick

There are many different types (and price ranges) of non-stick cookware. Many of them require the use of plastic spatulas and spoons so that the non-stick surface won't be scratched. Most non-stick surfaces are easier to clean if they are allowed to cool down first.

### Ceramic

Pottery or ceramic cookware should only be used if it was *specifically made* for cooking. If not, the decorative glaze on the pottery might "leach" into the food. Since most glazes contain lead, this could make the food unsafe to eat!



If you work in clients' homes, you may run into all different kinds of cookware.

### Some Common Cooking Abbreviations

**T** = *tablespoon*

**t** = *teaspoon*

**c** = *cup*

**oz** = *ounce*

## A Few Basic Cooking Terms

**Sauté** means to brown vegetables or meat quickly in a small amount of fat.

**Sear** means to brown the outside of meat *quickly* at a high temperature.

**Braise** means to brown meat, then cook slowly in a small amount of liquid.

**Scald** means to heat milk just to the point that steam rises from it, but *before* it boils.

**Marinate** means to soak food in a liquid to tenderize or add flavor to it.

**Simmer** means to cook in liquid over low heat—without boiling the food.

**Rolling Boil** means to boil food or water until it won't stop boiling when it's stirred with a spoon.

**Doubling a Recipe** means to multiply all the ingredients of the recipe by two so the finished product serves more people.

**Halving a Recipe** means to divide all the ingredients of the recipe *by two* so you end up making fewer servings.



**Dice** means to chop food up into small pieces.

## Using a Microwave

- Microwaves cook with extremely high-frequency radio waves. As these waves travel inside the oven, they enter food from the *outside*, heating and cooking as they go.
- Because microwaves bounce unevenly around an oven, food may be left with cold spots. That's why it's important to stir the food and/or turn the dish several times during the cooking process.
- Only use cookware that has been specially made for the microwave. "Leftover" containers such as margarine tubs should not be used in the microwave. These containers can warp or melt, allowing harmful chemicals to get into the food.
- If you're not sure that a particular dish is safe for the microwave, try this test. Fill a glass measuring cup with 1 cup of water. Place it in the microwave. Put the empty dish you are testing next to it. (But don't let the two dishes touch.) Turn the microwave on "high" for one minute. If the empty dish gets hot, it is *not* safe for cooking. If its temperature doesn't change, it is safe for use in the microwave.
- When defrosting, remove food from its packaging first and place it in a microwave safe container. (The foam trays and plastic wraps used to package meat are *not* stable at high temperatures.)
- Never use thin plastic bags, grocery bags, newspaper or aluminum foil in the microwave. These items could catch on fire!
- When cooking in a microwave, arrange food items evenly, with the thinnest part of the food toward the *center* of the dish. Cover the dish loosely.
- Always start out by using the *lowest* cooking time given in a recipe. It's easy to overcook food in the microwave.
- In general, *one cup* of refrigerated food takes *two minutes* to warm up in the microwave.
- Most foods require very little water for cooking. For example, only a tablespoon or two of water is needed when cooking vegetables.
- Do you work with infants? Avoid heating baby food or baby formula in the microwave—because of the uneven heating and the risk of getting it too hot for the baby.
- Be careful not to burn yourself when removing dishes from the microwave. You may need to use pot holders.
- Remember to be careful when removing the cover from a microwaved dish. A lot of steam may suddenly rush out of the dish.
- Let food sit for a few minutes after the microwave finishes. For example, the instructions for a food might say, "Let stand for 1 minute after cooking." Never skip this step! (Microwaved food continues cooking as it sits, distributing the heat more evenly.)



Remember that the power of microwaves vary, so some microwaves take longer to cook than others.

*Did you know that more than 90% of American households have at least one microwave oven?*



Never operate a microwave oven when it is empty.