



Different Cooking Methods and When to Use Them

KS3 Ages 11-14 ⌚ 3 min read

Why Do We Cook Food?

Cooking food makes it safer to eat, easier to digest, and often tastier. Different cooking methods use **heat** in different ways to achieve different results. Understanding these methods helps you choose the right technique for what you're preparing.

Boiling

Boiling means cooking food in hot water at **100°C**. It's perfect for pasta, rice, potatoes, and vegetables. Boiling softens hard foods and helps them cook evenly all the way through.

Think of it like a warm bath for your food—the water surrounds it completely and heats it from all sides.

Frying

Frying involves cooking food in hot oil or fat. There are two types: **shallow frying** (using a little oil in a pan) and **deep frying** (using lots of oil). Frying creates a crispy, golden exterior while keeping the inside tender. Use it for burgers, fish, chips, and pancakes.

Think of it like dunking a biscuit in oil instead of tea—the outside gets golden and crispy quickly.

Baking

Baking uses dry heat in an oven, usually between **150-200°C**. It's essential for bread, cakes, biscuits, and roasted vegetables. Baking is slower than frying but creates wonderful flavours and textures.

Grilling

Grilling cooks food using direct heat from below, like a barbecue. It's ideal for meat, fish, and vegetables. Grilling adds smoky flavour and creates attractive char marks. It's healthy because fat drips away from the food.

Think of it like holding your hand above a campfire—the heat comes from underneath and cooks the top.

Steaming

Steaming cooks food using hot water vapour instead of direct heat. Place food in a basket above boiling water and cover it. Steaming is very healthy because no oil is needed and nutrients stay in the food. It works brilliantly for fish, dumplings, and vegetables.

Think of it like giving food a warm, moist sauna—the steam surrounds it but the food never touches the water.

Choosing Your Method

Pick your cooking method based on what you're preparing, how much time you have, and what result you want. Quick weeknight dinners suit frying or boiling. Special occasions might call for baking or grilling. The best cooks know all these techniques!