

# All about cooking

The biggest meal of the year is coming up and cooks all over are gearing up to show off their culinary skills. Whether it's one person providing a Thanksgiving meal for many or individuals bringing dishes to share at a common table, it is traditionally a large feast for sure. It seems like a good time of year to share some cooking efficiency and safety tips—for the Thanksgiving meal, holiday baking, and every meal you prepare at home.

## Efficiency Tips

- Choose the most efficient cooking method. You don't have to steam veggies on the stovetop or bake yams in the oven just because your grandma prepared them that way. A toaster oven uses 1/3 less energy to operate than an oven. And a microwave or slow cooker will use even less.
- Look at your pans. Copper-bottom pans heat up faster on the stovetop; make sure they make good contact with the burner, warped-bottom pans take longer to heat up.
- Defrost your food in the fridge before you cook.
- Don't preheat the oven for recipes that will bake longer than an hour.
- Cook multiple things together in an oven but stagger pans so the air and heat can flow around items.
- Don't peek! Opening up the oven door wastes energy by lowering the temperature up to 25 degrees.
- Turn off the oven/stove top during the last 5-10 minutes. The heat will remain to finish cooking your food and you will save a little energy too.

## Safety Tips

- Kitchen fires are the number one cause of home fires (the number of fires doubles on Thanksgiving).
- Try to stay in the kitchen; use a timer if you are baking or roasting to remind yourself you are cooking.
- Keep anything that could catch fire away from the stove such as oven mitts, towels, curtains, wooden utensils, recipe books and food packages.
- Don't cook while wearing loose sleeves or clothing.
- Keep a fire extinguisher in the kitchen but away from the stove.

- If you have a fire in the oven, keep the door closed and turn it off.
- If you have a grease fire on the stovetop, place a lid over the pot and turn off the burner. Leave the pan covered until it has completely cooled.
- In case of fire leave the area and call 911. If you do fight the fire with a fire extinguisher make sure your family is leaving and you have a clear way out.
- Kitchens (and baths) should have GFCI outlets installed. Remember to test yours monthly.
- Unplug appliances that are not in use and make sure all cords are in good condition.



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## 5th Annual Together We Save & Together We Serve Food Drive

This page is full of helpful cooking information, but imagine if your concerns this holiday season weren't over efficiency or safety, but instead on having enough food.

You can participate in our 5th Annual Together We Serve & Together We Save Food Drive to help other cooks prepare meals for their families this holiday season and beyond.

From December 1-December 19 bring in a non-

perishable food item to our office and we will donate it to the Menard County Food Pantry.

We will also give you an LED light strand (*while supplies last, limit one per membership*) to help you save on your holiday bills this year.

Our office is located at 14300 State Hwy 97 in Petersburg, just one mile south of New Salem State Park. Hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 pm. Monday through Friday.