Healthy Cooking

Healthy cooking doesn't mean you have to become a gourmet chef or invest in expensive cookware. You can use basic cooking techniques to prepare food in healthy ways and cut fat and calories. Creating meals using spices and herbs is also a great way to add color, taste and aroma to foods without adding salt or fat.

Healthier Cooking Methods

**Baking**
Besides breads and desserts, you can bake seafood, poultry, lean meat, vegetables and fruits. For baking, place food in a pan or dish surrounded by the hot, dry air of your oven. You may cook the food covered or uncovered. Baking generally doesn't require that you add fat to the food.

**Braising**
Braising involves browning the ingredient first in a pan on top of the stove, and then slowly cooking it covered with a small quantity of liquid, such as water or broth. In some recipes, the cooking liquid is used afterward to form a flavorful, nutrient-rich sauce.

**Broiling and Grilling**
Both broiling and grilling expose food to direct heat. To grill outdoors, place the food on a grill rack above a bed of charcoal embers or gas-heated rocks. If you have an indoor grill, follow the manufacturer's directions. For smaller items such as chopped vegetables, use foil or a long-handled grill basket to prevent pieces from slipping through the rack. To broil indoors, place food on a broiler rack below a heat element. Both methods allow fat to drip away from the food.

**Sautéing**
Sautéing quickly cooks relatively small or thin pieces of food. If you choose a good-quality nonstick pan, you can cook food without using fat. Depending on the recipe, use low-sodium broth, cooking spray or water in place of oil.

**Steaming**
One of the simplest cooking techniques is steaming food in a perforated basket suspended above simmering liquid. If you use a flavorful liquid or add seasonings to the water, you'll flavor the food as it cooks.

**Stir-frying**
A traditional Asian method, stir-frying quickly cooks small, uniform-sized pieces of food while they're rapidly stirred in a wok or large nonstick frying pan. You need only a small amount of oil or cooking spray for this cooking method.

**Roasting**
Like baking, but typically at higher temperatures, roasting uses an oven's dry heat to cook the food. You can roast foods on a baking sheet or in a roasting pan. For poultry, seafood and meat, place a rack inside the roasting pan so that the fat in the food can drip away during cooking. In some cases, you may need to baste the food to keep it from drying out.