

Kitchen Safety



Safety for Visitors, FOH, and BOH

Whether in your home kitchen, or a commercial kitchen, all kitchens are full of hazards and dangerous elements. For these reasons, it is paramount that you remain alert and aware while entering any commercial kitchen. Not all kitchens operate the same, but here are examples of some typical attires, behaviors, and pieces of equipment that you might see when entering a home or commercial kitchen.

Visiting the Kitchen

- **Look** before you step! There are various surfaces on kitchen floors ranging from dry, greasy, to wet, be careful when walking in the kitchen.
- **Listen** to what is going on around you. People may call out warnings such as 'Corner' or 'Behind' to give warning that they are near you, and possibly with something very full or hot in hand.
- **Ask** someone if you are not sure about something in the kitchen. There are a lot of moving parts in a kitchen, and slowing down just enough for clarification can alleviate large train wrecks further in the future.

Please realize that this is not a complete list, but maintaining a polite and alert attitude while visiting the kitchen will help to ensure the safest experience possible.



Cooking Safety in the Kitchen

Attire

Many accidents may be prevented by using proper equipment and attire in the Kitchen. The following is strongly recommended, and required in commercial kitchens.

- Long sleeves to reduce burns
- Closed toe, skid-resistant shoes to reduce falls and injuries from hot liquids
- No loose-fitting or dangling sleeves or clothing items.
- Hair should be pulled away from the face and secured.

Cooking

- Use large oven mitts – preferably ones that cover your forearms.
- Closely watch anything you're heating on a stove or in an oven, especially when cooking with grease or oils.
- Make sure there's enough ventilation for stoves (to prevent grease fires in the exhaust ducts).
- Keep stoves, ovens and all cooking appliances clean.
- Never turn up a burner or oven to a higher temperature than is needed.
- Make certain that overhead duct baffles are in place and the hood fan is on while grill is hot.
- **Know where all fire extinguishers are and how to activate the fire suppression system in your kitchen!**

Dangerous cooking elements

- Steam –
 - Steam can build up under a lid, plastic wrap or anything used to cover hot or cooking food. Use oven mitts to lift a lid, beginning with the side farthest away from you, letting the steam escape. When removing plastic wrap or foil from a dish, prick the wrapping with a knife or fork and keep your fingers and face clear as the steam escapes.
- Grease and oils –
 - Avoid carrying uncovered pans of hot cooking oil or grease. They can easily flare up or be spilled.
- Foods –
 - Avoid letting your fingers or hands encounter hot food. Don't leave hot food anywhere it could be spilled.
- Heat –
 - Never leave hot items near the edge of a table or on a tablecloth that can be pulled off. Always wear oven mitts when touching hot plates, pots, pans or utensils.
- Hot Water –
 - Hot water is dangerous because the water as well as its steam can cause serious scalds. Never carry boiling water. Never put your hands into water until you know its temperature

Knife Handling

- Take time to train new employees on proper knife handling.
- Keep your knives sharp, handles secure and store with the blades covered.
- Only allow trained employees to operate electric slicers.
- All slicing machine guards should be kept in place and in good working condition.
- Always carry knives pointed down toward the ground.

Preventing Slips and Falls

- Safeguard against slippery floors by keeping floors clean and uncluttered and, where necessary, treating floors with slip-resistant coatings or chemical treatments.
- When spills occur, clean them up immediately and post "caution" or "wet floor" signs until the floor is dry.
- Ice machines can also create fall hazards because of the large volume of water involved. Select an ice scoop with a size and shape that minimizes spills. Place rubber or fabric-faced mats in front of the ice machine unless they introduce an additional tripping hazard. Make sure that all ice machines and freezer doors seal properly to prevent water from leaking or freezing on the floor.
- Encourage professional language when employees are moving through crowded areas. Phrases such as "behind you," "hot," "and "corner" help prevent collisions and falls.

Moving Heavy Loads

- It is common for foodservice employees to need to move loads of up to 50 lbs.
- Employees should know how to safely lift heavy loads in order to reduce potential back injuries.
- Train employees to lift with their legs, take small steps, and change direction by moving their feet, not twisting, when handling heavy items. Use a cart or dolly to lift extra heavy loads.
- Aisles should be wide enough for employees to lift and carry cases without hitting shelves. When possible, store heavy loads at waist height. Load trays with the heaviest items in the center.

Please realize that this is not a complete list. Knowing this information will help keep you and others around you safe!

