

Technique Tip Sheet - Frying 101

Frying food may be the most intimidating cooking technique, especially for beginners. It is cooking food in hot oil, after all. To prevent the oil from spattering, don't overheat your oil. Use a [deep-frying/candy thermometer](#) to make sure the oil's between 350° -375° F. Pat food dry before adding it to the hot oil. It will brown evenly and the water won't cause the oil to pop. Don't drop food into hot oil. For sautéing and pan-frying, take advantage of your pan's sloped sides to slide the food gently into the oil. If you're deep-frying, use tongs to carefully lower the food into the oil. Don't release it until it breaks the surface of the oil and it won't splash.

The key differences between the different variations of frying are the amount of oil used and the temperature of the oil.

🔪 Sauté

Sautéing is cooking food quickly at a high temperature in a small amount of oil – just enough to cover the bottom of the pan. The pan and the oil should be hot before the small or thin pieces of food are added in one even layer. Sautéed foods should be tossed or turned occasionally to promote even cooking.

🔪 Stir-Frying

Stir-Frying is a variation of sautéing. Food is cooked with minimal oil over high heat in a wok. The wok's curved sides help conduct heat evenly and make it easy to toss or stir the food as it cooks.

🔪 Pan-Frying

Pan-frying is the middle-ground of frying, right between sautéing and deep-frying. To pan-fry, cook food in a moderate amount of oil over moderate heat. The oil should come about a third of the way up the sides of the food. Make sure your oil's not too hot or your food will be overcooked on the outside and undercooked inside. If the oil is not hot enough, the food will absorb the oil. Pan-fried foods are often coated or breaded to help seal in juices and create a crisp texture.

🔪 Deep Frying

Deep-fried foods are cooked by submerging them in hot oil. The standard deep-frying temperature is 350° F. Deep-fried foods are usually coated in a breading or batter, which not only taste great, but also helps keep food from absorbing too much oil. Always place deep-fried foods on a plate or tray lined with paper towels after cooking to allow excess oil to drain away.

🔪 Choose the Right Oil

There are two key things to consider when selecting an oil for frying - flavor and smoke point. Smoke point is the temperature or point at which oil, when heated, literally starts to smoke. If you're looking for an oil to sauté or deep-fry with, make sure it's a refined or processed oil with a high smoke point like vegetable, canola, peanut oil or a light olive oil. These oils are usually light in color and less expensive than their purer, more flavorful counterparts. Never deep-fry in extra-virgin olive oil. It has a very low smoke point and it's also expensive.