

Knife Safety

Introduction

Knives are essential tools in commercial kitchen operations. They are used by a variety of employees for a variety of tasks and can cause serious injury if not handled properly or used inappropriately. While professionally trained culinary employees have typically been trained in the correct use of knives, often employees in entry level kitchen positions had not had the benefit of such training. It is the responsibility of the Executive Chef or Kitchen Manager that all employees receive initial and periodic refresher training in knife safety.

Safety Tips for Knives

Every kitchen employee should be aware of and follow these tips. Supervisors should remind employees of the importance of these items in departmental and shift meetings, and with a variety of tools to continually reinforce basic knife safety issues.

1. Keep Knives Sharp. One of the most frequent causes of knife-related accidents stems from using dull knives. When a knife does not cut easily through food products, the user typically responds with more pressure, causing a lack of control of the knife blade. Should the knife suddenly slip, the applied force can carry the blade through or cause it to slip off the product. This will often result in a cut or stab wound to the user or someone standing close by. Always keep knives sharp to ensure that all cutting and chopping can be done easily without undue applied force.

2. Use Knives for Intended Purposes. Using kitchen knives to cut cardboard or to separate frozen product will dull them or could easily break them. Knives should be used only for their appropriate use. Butcher knives should not be used for salad prep or vice versa. Employees should be trained on which knives are used for which purpose.

3. Use Cutting Boards. Cutting boards are not only used for sanitary purposes, but they provide a stable cutting surface upon which to cut and chop food products. Using knives on stainless steel surfaces will dull them and the food product may slip while being cut.

4. Do Not Use a Cutting Motion Toward the Body. All cutting motions should be away from the body to eliminate injury should the food product slip.

5. Never Attempt to Catch a Falling Knife. Odds are that you will cut yourself trying to do so. The knife can always be cleaned and re-sharpened.

6. Knives Should Be Cleaned Immediately Upon Use. Never put a dirty knife in a kitchen sink where someone else may reach in and cut themselves. Do not leave knives laying around unattended. They are inherently dangerous instruments and should either be in use or properly stored.

7. Always Store Knives Properly. When not in use, knives should be stored in proper knife racks.

Safety products include knife racks, sharpening steels or stones, cut resistant gloves, professional cutlery, and cutting boards.

