STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Kitchen Knife Safety SOP

Document no.	SOP-KIT-009
Revision	1.0
Owner	Executive Chef
Effective date	September 15, 2026
Review cycle	Every 12 months

1. Purpose

To reduce cuts and injuries from kitchen knives by setting clear rules for grip, carrying, storage, sharpening and reporting incidents.

2. Scope

Applies to all knives used for prep and cooking in the kitchen. Cleaning and sanitizing knives as part of dishwashing is covered by the dishwashing SOP.

Definitions

Claw grip	Curling the fingers of the guiding hand inward so knuckles, not fingertips, face the blade while cutting.
Honing	Straightening a knife's edge with a honing steel between uses, without removing metal.
Sharpening	Grinding a new edge onto a dull knife using a stone or sharpening tool.

3. Responsibilities

Prep Cook	Uses correct cutting technique, keeps knives sharp, and stores them safely between tasks.
Line Cook	Follows safe carrying and handling rules during service and reports any cut immediately.
Kitchen Manager	Maintains the knife sharpening schedule, stocks cut-resistant gloves, and manages injury reports.

RACI matrix

Activity	Prep Cook	Line Cook	Kitchen Manager
Use correct grip and cutting technique	R	R	A
Carry knives safely around the kitchen	R	R	A
Store knives when not in use	R/A	R	I
Sharpen and hone knives on schedule	R	C	A

Activity	Prep Cook	Line Cook	Kitchen Manager
Report and respond to a cut	R	R	R/A

R = Responsible, A = Accountable, C = Consulted, I = Informed

4. Materials and PPE

Materials, tools and systems

- Assigned personal or house knife set
- Honing steel
- Sharpening stone or sharpening service
- Knife roll or magnetic knife strip
- First aid kit
- Injury report form

Personal protective equipment

- Cut-resistant glove on the guiding hand
- Closed-toe non-slip shoes

5. Procedure

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.1	**Inspect the knife before use** Check that the blade is sharp, the handle is secure and not cracked, and the knife is the right type for the task before starting to cut.	Prep Cook	☐
5.2	**Hone the blade if needed** If the knife feels dull during a cutting task, hone it a few passes on the honing steel to restore the edge before continuing.	Prep Cook	☐
5.3	**Set up a stable cutting surface** Place a damp cloth or non-slip mat under the cutting board so it cannot slide, and make sure the work area has enough space and light.	Prep Cook	☐
5.4	**Use the claw grip on the guiding hand** Curl the fingers of the hand holding the food inward into a claw shape, keeping knuckles facing the blade so fingertips stay out of the cutting path. **Checkpoint:** Fingertips of the guiding hand are tucked behind the knuckles throughout the cut.	Prep Cook	☐
5.5	**Cut with a controlled, deliberate motion** Cut at a steady pace with full attention on the task, keeping the knife tip on the board for rocking cuts and never cutting toward your body or hand. **Warning:** Never try to catch a falling knife. Step back and let it fall.	Prep Cook	☐
5.6	**Carry a knife safely through the kitchen** Carry the knife point down and blade facing behind you, held close to your body, and call out "knife" or "behind" when passing another person. **Checkpoint:** The knife point faces the floor and the blade is angled away from the body while walking.	Line Cook	☐

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.7	**Hand off a knife safely** Never hand a knife directly blade-first to another person. Set it down on a clear surface within reach, handle toward them, and let them pick it up. **Warning:** Never toss, slide across a wet surface, or hand a knife blade-first to a coworker.	Line Cook	☐
5.8	**Store knives when not in use** Return knives to a knife roll, block or magnetic strip as soon as a task is finished, and never leave a knife loose in a sink, under a cloth, or on the edge of a counter. **Warning:** Never place a knife in a sink full of water or soapy suds where it cannot be seen.	Prep Cook	☐
5.9	**Sharpen knives on schedule** Sharpen each knife on the schedule set by the kitchen manager, using a sharpening stone or a professional sharpening service, and check the edge before returning the knife to use.	Kitchen Manager	☐
5.10	**Use a cut-resistant glove for higher-risk cuts** Wear a cut-resistant glove on the guiding hand for tasks with higher injury risk, such as slicing meat off the bone or working with a mandoline.	Line Cook	☐
5.11	**Stop and report any cut immediately** If a cut happens, stop work, apply first aid, and report it to the kitchen manager right away so it can be documented and the wound properly covered before returning to food. **Checkpoint:** Any cut is reported to the kitchen manager the same shift it happens.	Line Cook	☐
5.12	**Review knife safety incidents** The kitchen manager reviews cut reports periodically to spot patterns, such as a specific task or dull knives, and adjusts training or equipment as needed.	Kitchen Manager	☐

6. Quality checks

- Knives in use are sharp and in good condition, not dull or damaged.
- Staff carry knives point down and call out when passing coworkers.
- No knife is left loose in a sink, under a cloth or on a counter edge.
- Every reported cut is logged and reviewed by the kitchen manager.

7. Records

- Knife injury report log
- Knife sharpening schedule and sign-off
- First aid kit inspection log

8. KPIs

- Number of knife-related injuries per quarter
- Percent of knives passing the sharpness check
- Days since the last knife safety refresher training
- Time from cut to first aid and reporting

9. Common mistakes

- Leaving a knife submerged in a sink full of soapy water.
- Trying to catch a knife that is falling off the counter.
- Cutting with fingertips extended instead of using the claw grip.
- Handing a knife to a coworker blade-first instead of setting it down.
- Continuing to cut with a dull, unstable blade instead of honing or replacing it.

10. Revision history

Revision	Date	Description	Reviewed by
1.0	September 15, 2026	Initial release	Ilia Pirozhenko

Approval

Prepared by	Approved by	Date

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