

## GUIDELINES FOR USE OF STEAM COOKERS

Use of steamers in quantity food preparation can save cooking time, labor, help maintain appearance of food, and preserve nutrients normally lost by other cooking methods. Steamers are ideal for batch preparation. Foods may be steamed and served in the same pan, if steam table pans are used for preparation.

Steamers are either 5 lb pressure or 15 lb pressure (high speed) type. When food is steamed at 5 lb pressure, the internal temperature of the steamer is 225° F. to 228° F. At 15 lb pressure, the temperature is 245° F. to 250° F.

Most canned, fresh or frozen vegetables, in addition to other foods such as rice, pasta, poultry, meats, fish, and shellfish, can be cooked in steamers.

Foods may be steamed in perforated or solid pans. Perforated pans are usually used, particularly for vegetables, unless the cooking liquid is retained or manufacturer's directions specify solid type pans. Pans are normally filled no more than 2/3 full to allow steam to circulate for even cooking.

Cooking times will vary depending on the type steamer, food, and temperature and quantity of the product. For best results follow the manufacturer's cooking times and directions. Cooking time should be scheduled to include bringing food up to cooking temperature, as well as steaming time. Timing begins when the pressure gauge registers 3 lb on the 5 lb steamer and 9 lb on the 15 lb steamer. Be sure to use timer, if available, to prevent overcooking.

After cooking is completed, the steam should be exhausted slowly for safety and to preserve skins of vegetables such as peas. Leave steamer doors ajar for cooling and to preserve door gaskets.