

Onibasus.com Health & Nutrition Blog

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The dangers of cooking in stainless steel

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Is stainless steel cookware safe? This perennial topic sprung up again recently on the WAPF Chapter Leaders mailing list.

Generally speaking, it's the nickel in stainless steel that concerns people. Nickel is a well known toxin and some people are even allergic to skin contact with metals that contain nickel. The rule of thumb is that magnetic stainless steel is ok because it does not contain nickel, and non-magnetic stainless steel should be avoided because it contains nickel. (See [this thread](#) from WAPF Chapter Leaders for an example.)

More detailed information can be found on the [Stainless Steel Information Center's faq](#) which explains that: "The 300 series (which contains nickel) is NOT magnetic. The 400 series (which just contains chromium and no nickel) ARE magnetic." (But 300 series steel can be made magnetic according to [this page](#).)

The faq also explains that 18/10 and 18/8 stainless steel means 18% chromium and 10 or 8% nickel. Unfortunately, 18/10 stainless steel seems to be the most common material for stainless steel pots in stores around here.

But as Bill Sanda [points out](#), the leaching of nickel from cooking in stainless steel pots has not been well studied. A quick search in Pubmed finds conflicting reports about the level of nickel leaching into food. Of the ones that found nickel in food, you might find "[Stainless steel cookware as a significant source of nickel, chromium, and iron](#)", and "[Nickel in foods and the diet](#)" to be interesting.

posted by onibasus at 9:26 PM

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1 Comments:

[TheDon](#) said...

I have been looking for stainless steel standards and am sure that they exist somewhere on the web, but so far have found very little. One site shows the composition for several types of ss, with the most

extreme case detailing over 30% of the components. The balance, if my limited metallurgical knowledge is correct, must be iron. With nearly 70% iron, how can it not be "magnetic"; i.e. how can it not attract or be attracted to a magnet?

I understand your comments about nickel being toxic. Is there any way to determine the nickel vs chromium content of cooking utensils? Few items state their composition other than as "stainless steel" or just "stainless". Even the ones that boldly say "18/10 stainless steel" are not all the same, as evidenced by the magnet test. I have noted that, almost without exception, products from India fail the magnet test, while most other sources pass. Any info you can provide would be appreciated. In return, I intend to use serious technical information to lobby wholesalers, retailers and governments about the lack of standards. Right now is a particularly good time to do so; and with luck, the window may remain open for another couple of years.

[2:24 PM](#)

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