

Cooking to Preserve Nutrients

Cooking has an impact on the nutrient content of the foods we eat. For example, as soon as a fruit or vegetable gets picked, it begins to lose nutrients. Generally, the best way to get the most nutrients from fruits and vegetables is by eating them raw, however, that's not always realistic for all foods.

Other foods like grains, legumes, animal proteins, and dense vegetables are best consumed after they've been cooked. While it's true that cooking can destroy some nutrients, it can also make other nutrients more easily absorbed and used by the body. The cooking process can also:

- Make high-fiber foods and animal proteins easier to digest
- Make foods that are hard or tough in their raw form easier to chew
- Destroy parts of plants that can be harmful

Because there are benefits to both cooked and raw foods, it's best to eat a variety of both every day. This will help you maximize your intake of beneficial nutrients.

Cooking tips:

- When it comes to maximizing nutrient content, gentle cooking methods are generally better. So, use as little heat, liquid, and time as possible to cook your food. For example, baked or roasted foods are gently cooked using hot dry air, usually in an oven. Because no additional liquid is added to food during this method, most vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients remain in the food.

- Making soups and stews is a good way to maximize the nutrient content of your food. During the cooking process, nutrients that leech out of individual foods end up in the cooking liquid, which is eaten as part of the meal.

- When cooking with fats and oils, make sure to choose the right one for the job. Foods cooked on high heat should be cooked in a fat or oil with a high smoke point. Fats and oils heated beyond their smoke point (that is, the point at which they smoke and burn) can be harmful.

- If cooking or re-heating food in a microwave, use glass or ceramic containers, as harmful chemicals can leech out of plastic containers and into your food.

For additional information please view this link from the Institute for Functional Medicine: <https://www.ifm.org/learning-center/>

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