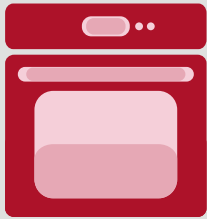


# Nutrition for Life: Healthy Ways to Cook and Season Your Food

Healthy eating is about how we eat, what we eat, and the ways we prepare our food, including the cooking method and the seasoning we use. Knowing a little about cooking methods goes a long way.

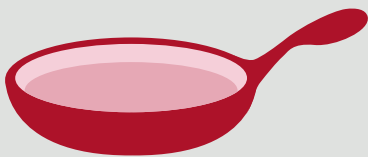
The healthiest way to prepare our food is by using little or no fat and adding flavor without too much salt or sugar. Cooking methods include baking, roasting, steaming, sautéing, stir-frying, poaching, braising, broiling, and grilling.

Let's explore these cooking methods:



**Baking** — Food is cooked in the oven slowly with gentle heat.

**Roasting** — Food is cooked uncovered in the oven. It is useful to brush or spoon liquid over meat (baste) to add flavor and prevent it from drying. The best way to do this is to use fat-free liquids like water or low-sodium broth.



**Steaming** — Food is cooked in a double pan or cooked in a steamer basket over boiling water in a covered pan.

**Sautéing** — This method is used to cook food quickly in a small amount of liquid or oil over direct heat. Try using low-sodium broth to keep it low in fat.

**Stir-frying** — This method is ideal for cooking small pieces of meat and/or vegetables over very high heat while stirring continuously. It's best to use oils that don't burn easily, such as sesame, canola, safflower, or avocado oil.

**Poaching** — With this method, you place food in a simmering liquid over direct heat. Try it with fish or eggs.

*Continued >>*

## Nutrition for Life: Healthy Ways to Cook and Season Your Food



**Braising/stewing**— This method cooks food slowly in the oven, on the stove, or in a slow cooker. It is useful to add liquid such as water or broth.



**Grilling**— When grilling, you are cooking the food directly on a rack over a heat source. Use lean cuts of meat and add plenty of vegetables to the grill.

Deep frying is one of the unhealthiest ways to cook. Frying creates trans fats which have been shown to cause heart disease and stroke. Often, frying requires the use of flour or breading which also adds carbohydrates. If you like the taste of fried food, **try using an air-fryer instead.**

Be mindful of the oils, sauces, and seasonings you add while cooking. **Use herbs and spices to flavor your food** rather than prepared marinades or spice mixes. Avoid using ketchup, barbecue sauce, and teriyaki sauce in large amounts due to the added sugar and high sodium levels. Instead, try flavoring with juices, spices, and herbs. **Be mindful of spice blends that can have added sugar and salt**, like taco seasoning. Instead combine and create your own spices!

### Remember:

- Trim all visible fat on meats before cooking.
- Cook vegetables until tender, but still crisp to keep the nutrients.
- Drain and rinse any canned foods to reduce the amount of salt.
- Avoid adding sugar to recipes. Use caramelized onions, slow-simmered crushed tomatoes, or roasted peppers to enhance natural sweetness.

**Enjoy your meals and be adventurous in the kitchen!**

This publication was supported by Cooperative Agreement Number NU58DP006364-03-00, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Department of Health and Human Services.