

HEALTHY PREPARATION

Fruits and vegetables have many nutrients that are good for our bodies. But cooking methods that add saturated fat, like deep frying or using heavy creams, can turn healthy ingredients into unhealthy meals. To have better control over the nutritional content and the overall healthfulness of the foods you eat, prepare meals at home using healthier methods, such as:

Baking: Bake foods slowly in the oven in covered cookware with a little extra liquid.

Blanching: After boiling 30 seconds in water, plunge the food into ice water to stop the cooking. This keeps it tender-crisp.

Boiling: Cook food in water or broth that's bubbling vigorously.

Braising or stewing: Cook food slowly in the oven or on the stovetop with a little liquid (water or broth).

Broiling: Place food directly under a heat source at high temperature.

Grilling: Cook food on a rack or skewers directly over a heat source.

Poaching: Immerse the food in simmering liquid.

Roasting: Cook food uncovered in the oven.

Sautéing: Use a nonstick pan so you will need little or no oil. Or use a nonstick vegetable spray, a small amount of broth or wine, or a bit of healthy oil rubbed onto the pan with a paper towel.

Steaming: Steam food in a covered basket over simmering water.

Stir-frying: Use a wok to cook food quickly over high heat in vegetable stock, wine or a small amount of healthy oil.

These cooking methods can help your veggies and fruits retain flavor, color and nutrients. Here are a few more important tips:

Avoid salt and high-sodium seasonings like teriyaki and soy sauce. Instead, use herbs, spices, salt-free seasoning blends, flavored vinegars, peppers, garlic and citrus juice or zest to enhance flavor.

Use healthier oils such as olive, canola, corn or safflower oil as your primary fats for cooking. Try to avoid using butter, lard, shortening, partially hydrogenated oils and products containing trans fat.

Drain and rinse canned vegetables and beans to remove excess salt or oil.

Cook vegetables just long enough to make them tender-crisp. Overcooked vegetables can be less tasty and less nutritious.

