
Your Guide to Food Preparation

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Deep fried eggplant, grilled salmon and stir-fried chicken and pea pods have one thing in common: they all have the potential for causing cancer. In this case, it isn't the type of food that is worrisome, it is the cooking method.

Some cooking methods are better than others when it comes to providing safely cooked foods, while other methods can create an excess of free radicals (highly reactive molecules that damages cells and initiate cancer). Read on to learn more about which types of food preparation are best for you.

Boiling not only makes vegetables dull in color and limp in structure, but also strips them of valuable nutrients. You'd be better off drinking the water and throwing out the broccoli! In fact, it is estimated that up to 70% of thiamine in vegetables and up to 100% of vitamin C are lost in the boiling process. If you do boil, do so for a short time only in the smallest amount of water necessary.

Crockery cooking involves stewing and simmering foods in a liquid base for extended periods of time. Make sure you serve the cooking liquid along with the rest of the dish to derive maximum nutrient benefit. Because vitamins and mineral loss increases with temperature, this method is fairly good at preserving both water and fat soluble nutrients. Crock pot cooking tenderizes meat, making it more digestible and easier to eat.

Frying and **stir-frying** are essentially the same thing--both add fat to foods at a high temperature and cause nutrients to be depleted and free radicals to be formed from the oils in or around the food. Additionally, high fat foods cause inflammation and immune suppression. Browning foods by frying them, or burning them, is correlated to an increased risk of lung and throat cancer. Both fat and water soluble vitamins are lost during shallow and deep frying methods. To help reduce the temperature of stir

frying, add vegetables or broth immediately to a small amount of cooking oil. By the way, butter is the safest type of fat for frying because it the most heat-stable and won't generate adverse breakdown products like oils do.

Grilling just isn't for summer anymore--some folks barbecue all year round. Charring of meats and fish lead to free radical formation and an increased risk of some gastrointestinal tract cancers. To decrease high heat exposure time, precook your flesh foods in the microwave to partially cook them.

Microwaving cooks foods by molecular action and heat production. The main advantages to this cooking method is that most nutrients are retained and foods can be reheated in a short period of time.

When you are feeling particularly tired, it may be best to pop something into the microwave rather than settling for something easier, like fast food.

Pressure cooking allows you healthy food fast. You can shave nearly 30 minutes off the cooking time for brown rice! The cooker seals in juices and nutrients, so particularly those vitamins that tend to be lost in oxygen environments (vitamins A, C, D, E and biotin) are retained. Cooking odors are almost nonexistent and the food comes out tender and easy to swallow. These qualities can be extremely important for those cancer patients who develop odor sensitivities or who have dry or sore mouths.

Steaming foods is another efficient way of preserving nutrient content and water-soluble flavors and vitamins are not lost to boiling water. Foods that are lightly steamed (al dente) retain their nutrients, color, and fibrous structure. Again, foods are moist and easy to swallow.

Roasting meats and vegetables can contribute to as much as a 25% loss of B vitamins. You need to be careful not to burn your foods to prevent possible carcinogenicity.