

Cooking Tips and Recipes

Cooking healthy recipes can be fun, exciting, and delicious! Included here are basic recipe ideas for cooking some of the healthy plate staples. For more recipe ideas, visit the Kaiser Permanente Food for Health site at foodforhealth.kaiserpermanente.org.

Basic Cooking Tips

- Always read through the whole recipe before starting.
- Prep your ingredients before cooking.
- Use fresh, good tasting, high-quality ingredients. The fewer ingredients there are in a recipe, the more important this is.
- In general, when using fresh herbs and spices, use about 1½ times more fresh ingredients than you would dried.
- Garlic's health benefits increase when exposed to air. Crush or chop garlic first and set aside as you prep the rest of the ingredients to give it time to gain its maximum benefits.
- Never add food to a cold pan or pot of water (there are rare exceptions to this, like when boiling eggs or potatoes).
- To get a nice sear on your poultry and fish, pat dry with a paper towel before seasoning and cooking. Let it rest for about 5 minutes after cooking before cutting into it or serving. This will hold in the juices.
- Never overcrowd your pot, pan, or baking sheet.

How to Cook Dry Grains

Dry grains are cooked by boiling them in water or low-sodium broth. Grains expand as they cook, so you will end up with a larger amount than you started with.

Note: Serving sizes are always given for cooked grains; however, labels will give you nutritional information for the dried product.

To 1 cup of this grain	Add this much water or broth	Bring to a boil, then simmer for	Amount after cooking
Amaranth	2 cups	15–20 minutes	2½ cups
Barley, hulled	3 cups	45–60 minutes	3½ cups
Buckwheat	2 cups	20 minutes	4 cups
Bulgur	2 cups	10–12 minutes	3 cups
Cornmeal (polenta)	4 cups	25–30 minutes	2½ cups
Farro	2½ cups	25–40 minutes	3 cups
Millet, hulled	2½ cups	25–35 minutes	4 cups
Oats, steel cut	4 cups	30 minutes	3 cups
Pasta, whole-wheat	6 cups or more	8–12 minutes (depending on size), and then drain	Varies
Quinoa	2 cups	12–15 minutes	3 cups
Rice, brown	2½ cups	25–45 minutes (varies)	3 cups
Rye	4 cups	Soak overnight, then cook 45–60 minutes	3 cups
Sorghum	4 cups	25–40 minutes	3 cups
Spelt berries	4 cups	Soak overnight, then cook 45–60 minutes	3 cups
Teff	3 cups	20 minutes	2½ cups
Wheat berries	4 cups	Soak overnight, then cook 45–60 minutes	2½ cups
Wild rice	3 cups	45–55 minutes	3½ cups

Grains: a great source of fiber



Never had some of these whole grains?

Try one next time you see it on a restaurant menu.

Make beans your healthy protein or starch choice



Don't want to use the stovetop?

Look online for recipes for cooking your beans in a slow cooker.

How to Cook Dry Beans

- Measure out the amount you want to cook. One cup will expand to 2½ to 3 cups when cooked.
- Remove any stones and damaged or broken beans.
- Place beans in a colander or strainer and rinse well under cold water.
- Most beans need several hours of soaking (see chart below). For every 1 cup of dry beans, add 3 cups of cold water and let sit. Toss water when done (beans will have released enzymes into the water that may cause gas).
- Place soaked beans in a heavy pot. For every cup of soaked beans, add 3 cups of water.
- Bring to a boil and reduce heat to medium-low.
- Simmer for 10 minutes. Skim off and discard any foam.
- Cover beans and simmer on low for the appropriate time (see chart below).
- If more water is needed during cooking, add a small amount. Beans should be covered by water throughout cooking time.
- For more flavor, add seasonings during simmering or at the end of cooking. Seasoning ideas: diced tomatoes, onion, chili powder, cumin, garlic, cilantro, parsley, rosemary, sage, savory, and thyme.

Bean Type	Soaking Time	Cooking Time	Pressure Cooking Time
Adzuki beans	4 hours	45-60 minutes	15-20 minutes
Black beans, turtle	4 hours	45-60 minutes	15-20 minutes
Black-eyed peas	None	60 minutes	10-11 minutes
Garbanzo beans (chickpeas)	6-8 hours	1½-2 hours	20 minutes
Lentils	None	45-60 minutes	Not recommended
Green split peas	None	35-45 minutes	Not recommended
Kidney beans, dark red	6-8 hours	1½-2 hours	20-25 minutes
Navy beans	6-8 hours	1½-2 hours	20 minutes
Pinto beans	6-8 hours	1½-2 hours	20 minutes
Small red beans	6-8 hours	1½-2 hours	15-20 minutes

How to Cook Vegetables

Thoroughly wash your vegetables before cooking. To help vegetables cook evenly:

- Always chop into even slices.
- Start by cooking the hardest vegetables first. Add in those that take less time to cook later.



Stovetop:

METHOD 1

Cover the bottom of a pan with water or low-sodium broth. Heat until bubbling. Add chopped garlic or other spices, if desired. Heat liquid over medium heat. Add vegetables and cover. Cook about 6 to 8 minutes or until tender. Stir occasionally to prevent sticking or burning.

METHOD 2

Steam vegetables in a steamer basket over boiling water. Add lemon, herbs, and spices to water, if desired (this will add mild flavoring to the vegetables).

Oven-roasted:

Place cut vegetables in a bowl or bag. Toss with a small amount of oil, adding a little at a time and mixing to evenly coat without adding too much oil. Season as desired. For crispy roasted vegetables, preheat a baking sheet. Add vegetables cut-side down. Bake at 400 to 500°F and rotate halfway through. Vegetables should be golden brown when done. (Times will vary depending on the vegetable.) Transfer from the baking sheet to a serving platter immediately to stop vegetables from continuing to cook.

Grill:

Place cut vegetables in a bowl or bag. Toss with a small amount of oil, adding a little at a time and mixing to evenly coat without adding too much oil. Season as desired. Place directly on a hot grill, turning halfway through. Cook thicker vegetables with the lid down to help cook through. You can wrap vegetables in foil to prevent the outside from burning if thicker (like corn on the cob) or to prevent losing pieces if smaller (like a pepper and onion mix).

Suggested seasonings

Artichokes

Bay leaf, parsley, oregano, thyme, lemon, garlic

Asparagus

Garlic, lemon, onion, chives, sesame seeds, tarragon

Broccoli

Caraway, oregano, red pepper

Cabbage

Caraway, celery seed, mint, tarragon

Carrots

Basil, bay leaf, ginger, mint, oregano, thyme, cinnamon

Cauliflower

Marjoram, nutmeg, chives

Corn

Cumin, curry powder, paprika

Cucumber

Dill, mint

Green beans

Basil, cloves, marjoram, savory, garlic

Potatoes

Basil, caraway, chives, dill, marjoram, parsley, paprika

Salad greens

Basil, chives, marjoram, mint, tarragon, thyme

Spinach

Dill, nutmeg, tarragon, garlic

Squash

Curry powder, ginger, nutmeg, rosemary, sage, basil, oregano

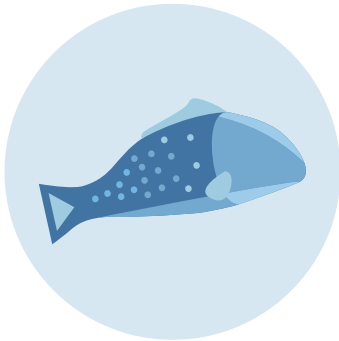
Tomatoes

Basil, bay leaf, cloves, dill, marjoram, nutmeg, oregano

How to Cook Chicken

The healthiest ways to cook chicken are to bake, poach, steam, grill, or broil. To help you get started, here are some tips for cooking healthy and delicious chicken.

- Remove the skin before preparing.
- Always thaw and marinate in the refrigerator, not at room temperature.
- Put a chicken breast into a resealable plastic bag. Use a meat pounder or rolling pin to pound the chicken until it is an even thickness all around. This will help it cook more evenly.
- Always pat the chicken dry before seasoning. This will help it sear properly.
- To keep juices in and prevent the meat from drying out, sear first at a high temperature and then lower the heat to cook through.
- Only turn pieces over once, midway through cooking.
- Cooking times will vary depending on the thickness of the chicken and whether it has bones. Always check that meat is cooked all the way through with a cooking thermometer (165°F) or by cutting into its thickest part to make sure there is no pink left.



How to Cook Fish

Use your favorite spices to crust your fish. Some ideas:

- Freshly ground pepper and herbs
- Citrus zest (lemon or lime)
- Parsley, dill, chives, and lemon zest
- Mustard, lemon zest, and finely chopped pistachio
- Chili powder

Suggested fish choices

- Salmon
- Cod
- Tilapia
- Trout

Limit these fish choices
(potentially high levels of mercury)

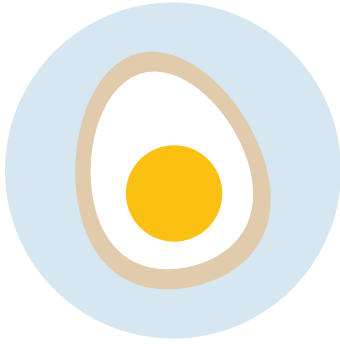
- Halibut
- King mackerel
- Orange roughy
- Swordfish
- Bluefin tuna

Directions:

Liberally cover the fish with seasonings. Heat 2 teaspoons or less of oil in a nonstick skillet over high heat. Add fish and cook on one side. Turn fish over and cook until done. Most fish will cook in 4 to 6 minutes on the first side and slightly less on the second side. Remove from heat and serve.

Times may vary depending on thickness. For best results, do not move the fish as it cooks (other than to flip it) to get a nice crust.

How to Cook Eggs



Hard boiled:

Put eggs in pan in a single layer. Cover with cold water at least 1 inch above eggs. Cover saucepan and heat to boiling. Immediately remove from heat. Let stand covered 15 minutes, and then drain water. Immediately place eggs in cold water until completely cooled.

Scrambled:

Cook in a nonstick pan on very low heat with a small amount of milk (oil and butter are not needed; if using, reduce amount by putting oil on a paper towel and wiping the pan with it). Create more volume and nutrition by adding in your favorite chopped vegetables.

Poached:

Make sure to use really fresh eggs. Bring a pot of water to a simmer and add a small amount of vinegar. Crack each egg individually into a small cup or ramekin. With a spoon, create a gentle whirlpool in the water and slowly pour the egg (white first) into the center of the whirlpool. Cook for 3 minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon and allow to drain on a paper towel.

Microwaved:

Mix 2 eggs with 2 tablespoons of milk, salt, pepper, and cooked vegetables (if desired) in a microwave-safe bowl. Microwave on high for 45 seconds. Remove and stir. Microwave 30 to 45 seconds longer or until eggs are almost set. Note that eggs cooked this way do not store well.

How to Cook Tofu

Excess water should be drained from tofu before cooking. Wrap tofu in a dish towel or paper towel. Put it on a plate with a heavy pan on top to press it down and squeeze out water for 5 to 10 minutes.

Tofu has a very mild taste and will take on the flavors of whatever it's cooked with. After cooking, add more flavor by tossing pieces in a low-sodium soy-, citrus-, or vinegar-based marinade or seasonings.

Tofu has different firmness options. Use the right tofu for your method of cooking.

- Soft: raw, pureed, boiled
- Medium: stir fried, baked
- Firm and extra firm: baked, boiled, stir fried

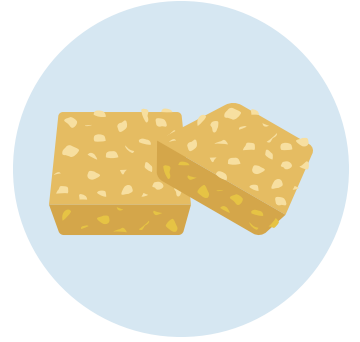


Ideas for cooking tofu

- Crumble firm tofu and cook like scrambled eggs. Don't forget to add vegetables!
- Slice extra-firm tofu into ½-inch strips and place in a heated nonstick pan until crispy on both sides (no oil needed). Add to a sandwich, salad, or in place of the protein in any main dish.
- Cube medium tofu and add to your favorite soup or stew.
- Puree soft tofu to make a dairy-free ice cream.

How to Cook Tempeh

Tempeh is a fermented soy product with a slightly nutty flavor. It is a great source of protein. Much like tofu, it will take on the flavor of whatever it is cooked with.



How to cut it:

- Slice into ¼-inch-thick strips for baking and barbecuing.
- Chop into bite-size pieces for soups and salads.
- Shred it or chop it finely for tacos.
- Use thin slices for burgers, sandwiches, or paninis.
- Crumble, grate, or cube it for spaghetti sauce, sloppy joes, “chicken” salad, stews, chilis, or curry.

How to season it:

MARINADE

- Mix marinade (try vinegar, garlic, ginger, citrus juice, herbs, and spices).
- Place the chopped or sliced tempeh in a container and cover with the marinade.
- Cover the container and marinate for 20 minutes or overnight in the refrigerator.
- Cook as desired.

DRY SEASONING

Cover tempeh pieces liberally in fresh or dried herbs and spices before cooking. Try coriander, cilantro, thyme, oregano, paprika, black pepper, cayenne, or turmeric. Cover in a blackening spice or Cajun-style seasoning for a flavorful experience.

How to cook it:

BAKE

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Place pieces in a single layer on a lightly greased baking sheet. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes or until the edges are golden brown.

SAUTÉ

Heat a drizzle of oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. When the oil is hot, lay the tempeh strips or cubes in the oil. Cook evenly until golden brown and crispy, flipping or turning as needed (about every 3 minutes).

GRILL

Heat strips on the barbecue or on a hot griddle until golden brown.