

How to Use an Air Fryer to Make Deliciously Crispy Food Without All the Oil

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Slice your favorite potato into sticks and pop it in the air fryer for a crisp snack that rivals your go-to fast food joint.

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Ask any foodie about an air fryer, and they'll sing nothing but praises about this counter-friendly gadget. After all, it

can be used to cook anything from crispy buffalo cauliflower wings to tender salmon fillets.

And while this impressive gadget helps cook frozen fries and gives kale chips some crispy texture, you may be wondering if it works much like a deep fryer, which is associated with its fair share of health risks — after all, fried foods are tied to type 2 diabetes, heart problems and a shorter life, according to the Mayo Clinic.

Thankfully, air fryers work a lot differently than their deep-frying counterparts. We tapped four kitchen pros to provide the full breakdown on the advantages and disadvantages attached to this popular appliance and how to use it properly.

From nutritional benefits to flavorful meal (and snack!) ideas to try, read their expert advice ahead.

What Is an Air Fryer and How Does It Work?

An air fryer is similar to a convection oven. It circulates hot air around the food, which helps create that crunchy texture we crave.

And because they're small, the hot air is able to remove moisture from the surface of food and crisp it up much

faster than a traditional oven. Simply put, the rapid circulation of hot air replaces submerging your food in oil.



An oft-ignored yet crucial step is to wipe your air fryer right after using it to prevent the stuck-on messes that are hard to clean later on.

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The Benefits of Using an Air Fryer

Air fryers definitely have many culinary advantages for cooks of all levels, as executive chef and owner of countless acclaimed restaurants, David Burke, says these appliances are available in a range of different prices and fit nicely on any countertop. This makes it a win-win for your kitchen and your wallet.

It's speedy: Probably the biggest benefit of all is speed, as these mini convection ovens speed up the long cooking and preheat times associated with traditional wall ovens, Burke says.

"Air fryers offer speed, especially with frozen foods and crisping things," Burke adds. "In short, they are basically a crisping oven, because of the way the hot air circulates on both sides."

It adds great texture: Aside from faster cooking times, chef and nutritionist [Serena Poon, CN](#), says that air fryers can also add some exciting texture to your meals, as they can crisp up chicken and kale in no time.

And since these appliances don't require the use of butter and oil, you can also whip up more heart-healthy recipes in the process.

Is Air-Fried Food Healthy?

Air-fried foods (such as air-fried vegetables) can be healthier when compared to deep-fried foods — but this requires being cautious about what kinds of foods you cook inside of it, Poon says.

For example, you'll want to avoid using your air fryer to make things like sweet treats. While air-fried doughnuts may have less fat than a traditional recipe, they aren't necessarily healthier by any means, she explains.

How to Use an Air Fryer

Using an air fryer can be very simple if you follow these steps, according to dietitian Leah Kaufman, RD, CDE.

1. **Read the manual:** Some air fryers have settings for different types of food, making it important to take the time to learn more about your air fryer before you use it, Kaufman says. "Air fryers also come with a guide on recipe examples, and how to use the air fryer for each recipe, so be sure to understand how the air fryer works before using it."
2. **Season food for flavor:** Once you've read the manual, the first step is to season whatever you are planning on making, Kaufman suggests. "While the air fryer will add crunch, there is some flavor lost due to the high heat, so it is recommended to season before using the air

fryer."

3. **Make sure the grater is in the air fryer:** Making sure that the grater in the air fryer is a crucial step before placing your food inside the air fryer, according to Kaufman. "The air fryer has a grater that you put your food on top of, which collects any excess water or oil that may drip during the process," she adds.
4. **Place your food in the air fryer:** Yes, this step really is that simple, Kaufman says. "Just make sure that the button is turned on, and the timer is working before leaving the air fryer to do its job."
5. **Check on your food while it's cooking:** Once your food is in the air fryer, you'll want to check on it and move it around frequently, as Kaufman says this ensures that whatever you are cooking is cooked thoroughly.

"Remember that the air fryer cooks faster than the oven, so check regularly to make sure you aren't burning the food," she explains. "Also, remember the air fryer cooks for about one to two people, so if you are cooking for a large family, be sure to allot time to make enough for everyone."

6. **Remove your food from the air fryer:**

When removing your food from the air fryer, Kaufman recommends making sure not to pour it out of the grater as the excess oil from the bottom may leak out. "Using a spoon to take out the food is the best way to do this," she explains.

7. **Clean your air fryer as soon as possible:** This is the last but equally important step. Food contents can dry up and make it harder to clean the longer you wait, according to Kaufman. "To clean your air fryer, pull out the grater, and clean in the sink then take a towel and wipe down the area below the grater," she suggests.

Do You Need to Use Oil in an Air Fryer?

A traditional oven or deep fryer recipe may call for the use of oil to help cook and texture food ingredients. However, Kaufman suggests that oil is optional, as the device's hot air circulation allows items placed inside to be completely cooked through.

"Air-fried foods cook perfectly without any oil," Kaufman says. "If you are using oil for any reason, I would recommend using an oil spray like Pam to limit the amount of oil used."

What to Cook in an Air Fryer

Although a trusty air fryer can be used to reheat leftovers and toast up bagel buns, Burke suggests these devices work best to prepare potatoes or anything frozen and flash-fried.

This also includes chicken dishes as they, too, can be made particularly healthy in an air fryer if you don't use too much oil.

"You can make healthier fried chicken in an air fryer because you'll use just a very little bit of oil and the coating won't soak up as much," Burke explains.

"My favorite use for the air fryer is cooking vegetable fries and chips, as they usually turn out so delicious — so much so that even the most vegetable-averse guests enjoy them," Poon says. "People also love to cook crispy chicken, coconut shrimp, egg rolls and french fries in the air fryer."

You can also fry eggs in an air fryer (yeah, seriously!). Here's how to do it:

1. Preheat your air fryer to 325 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. Crack an egg (or two) on a lightly oiled air fryer tray.
3. Slide the tray into your air fryer for about seven minutes.

Tip

Although Poon recommends setting your air fryer timer to seven minutes, she warns that the timing can depend on your specific air fryer and preferred consistency. This makes it important to practice first, should you want easier breakfast ideas for your busy mornings.

Believe it or not, hamburgers are also very easy to cook in an air fryer, as the appliance can cook beef patties in just 10 minutes, according to Poon. Here's how to do it:

1. Preheat your air fryer to 375 degrees Fahrenheit and then season your burger patties.
2. Place them in the air fryer for about 10 minutes, flipping the burgers halfway through.
3. Serve with your favorite toppings.

If you like your meat well-done, Burke warns against air-frying burgers, because they won't become brown and caramelized like they would on the grill.

What Should You Avoid Cooking in an Air Fryer?

Poon warns against using your fryer to make foods that contain a liquid batter, as they won't cook homemade pancakes or cakes the way the stovetop or oven would.

Similarly, cooking your rice and pasta inside an air fryer also

isn't encouraged, as these items will need to be cooked beforehand in order to lend them that good texture from your oven.

Is It Worth Buying an Air Fryer?

Air fryers are a great no-fuss appliance to have on hand in your kitchen if you want to roast vegetables or cook simple meat dishes quickly.

This is a result of the appliance's hot air circulation, which helps speed up preheat and cooking times associated with traditional ovens, making it a must-have tool for any beginner and master chef Poon says.

However, they aren't exactly ideal appliances for those who have larger families and for people who like to meal prep in large batches, as there's a limited amount of space inside many air fryer baskets.

Also, it's good to note that you won't get the same exact results a deep fryer provides. "You might be able to recreate the same crunchy texture from your favorite fried chicken dish, but you may not get quite the same rich flavor without the added fat from the oil," Poon says.

All in all, air fryers are a great tool to have on hand in your kitchen, Poon says. They're available in different sizes and

prices, making them attractive appliances to any kind of budget.

Best Air Fryers to Buy

Philips TurboStar Technology Air Fryer, 2.75-quart
(\$224.99, Amazon)

Ninja 4-Quart Air Fryer (\$119.99, Home Depot) COSORI
Air Fryer, Max XL 5.8-quart (\$119.99, Amazon)