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Essential Kitchen Tools for Beginner Cooks



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Walk into a kitchen supply store and you'll encounter a vast collection of gadgets and goodies. But what kitchen tools do you need if you're a novice home cook? This collection of cooking essentials for your kitchen will help you prepare healthful and delicious meals at home.

Mixing bowls: Look for glass or metal mixing bowls in various sizes. Plastic bowls hold odors, are harder to keep clean and can bend out of shape.

Strainer and salad spinner: A strainer is perfect for draining pasta, washing fruits and vegetables, and for sorting and rinsing legumes such as lentils and beans. Strainers also can be substituted for salad spinners to dry lettuce and other leafy green vegetables.

High-quality knives: Start with a paring knife, small and medium chef's or Santoku knives, and a serrated knife. Don't forget to buy a sharpener.

Several cutting boards: Whether they are wooden, bamboo or plastic is less important than keeping them clean and dry. Use separate boards for meats and produce.

Wooden spoons: Wooden spoons are best because they don't transfer heat and they won't scratch the surface of pans. Plus, they are inexpensive.

A small and large whisk: Contrary to common belief, whisking some ingredients with a fork won't incorporate enough air. Use a small whisk for vinaigrette and dressing, and a large one for aerating flour and beating eggs.

Heat-resistant spatula: Any spatula may scrape a bowl, but not all are appropriate for hot pans.

Long tongs: Keep hands safe by using tongs to lift or turn foods over heat or in an oven.

Grater: You can use a box grater for cheese, garlic, ginger or citrus fruit zest.

Glass measuring cups: Liquid volume measuring cups should be clear so you can see the meniscus, and glass will not bend or warp like plastic.

Basic pots and pans: Everyone has their personal preferences when it comes to cookware, but instead of buying a large, expensive set to start, purchase individual pans as you need them. Perhaps begin with a pair of large and small saute pans, a soup pot, a sauce pan and a Dutch oven — used on the stove or in an oven, and some call a "French oven."

Electronic scale: While not necessary for cooking, it can help you familiarize yourself with portion sizes. Also, some recipes call for ounces instead of a cup measure.



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Help Your Kids Maintain a Healthy Lifestyle



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When children are young, parents and other caregivers are responsible for providing an environment that helps them maintain a lifestyle that is beneficial to their health. You can help your child by doing the following:

- Be a positive role model for healthful eating and activity habits.
- Provide a calm, reassuring atmosphere at regular meal and snack times.
- Set appropriate limits on screen entertainment like television, tablets and video games.
- Involve the whole family in fun physical activities.
- Help children develop and maintain a positive body image.
- Avoid restrictive diets and excessive exercise regimens.

When it comes to nutrition and fitness, the role of parents is the same no matter the size of their children. Not all slim kids have healthful eating habits or active lifestyles. And not all overweight children develop risk factors for diabetes or heart disease.

A healthy weight for kids is about much more than numbers. It is about healthy behaviors, such as enjoying a variety of foods and activities for strength, flexibility and aerobic capacity.

Diets Are Not the Answer

Putting children on diets or forcing them into exercise programs can, in many cases, do more harm than good. Research suggests kids who diet end up weighing more than non-dieters, with lower self-esteem and greater risk for eating disorders. Do not put your child on a diet, especially without consulting your doctor and a registered dietitian nutritionist.

Here are some simple actions adults can take to help children develop positive lifestyle habits. These strategies have been shown to promote a healthy weight for adults too.

- **Be active by playing together.** Kids need 60 minutes of daily physical activity. Play with your kids every day. It's fun for them and fun for you too. Consider checking out your local community center for kid-friendly activities. Plan family activities that get everyone moving such as biking, after-dinner walks, basketball or soccer at the park.
- **Make family mealtimes a special time together.** Eating more meals together can make a big difference in your family's health, happiness and finances. Dinners made at home are less costly than eating out and easier to prepare than you might think.
- **Eat breakfast.** Go beyond cereal and milk and try a breakfast burrito made with a scrambled egg, cheese and salsa wrapped in a flour tortilla. Also, teach kids to use the blender to make their own breakfast smoothie or serve a yogurt bar with plain or vanilla-flavored yogurt. Add toppings like granola, dried fruit and nuts.
- **Don't forbid foods or use food as a reward.** Forbidding foods only increases a child's desire for that food. Instead of saying no to your child's favorite food, limit the portion size. Use non-food rewards for good behavior such as stickers or allowing your child to have a friend over to play.
- **Dine out responsibly.** When dining at a restaurant, look for nutritious options on the children's menu such as a grilled chicken wrap, carrots with dip and fruit. If you order takeout or home delivery, remember that you can add to the meal by serving a glass of low-fat milk or adding a side salad.
- **Enjoy a rainbow of fruits and vegetables.** Most children need at least 1½ cups of fruit and 2 cups of vegetables a day. Serve juicy, crunchy, delicious fruits and vegetables at every meal and snack. Fresh, frozen, dried and canned — all types of produce contribute to good health. You can make produce fun by serving frozen grapes, vegetable kebabs or strawberry-topped frozen yogurt. Some kids dislike bitter or strong flavored veggies so keep it simple by serving steamed broccoli or cauliflower. Expand raw veggies and dip choices by steaming green beans and zucchini and serving them cold along with baby carrots, celery and cucumbers.
- **Encourage mindful eating.** Ban screens at meal time and help kids focus on their food by being present at the dinner table. Ask your kids what it feels like to be very hungry, a little bit hungry, comfortably full and uncomfortably full. Discuss the importance of trusting and listening to internal body cues.
- **Limit sugar-sweetened beverages.** Soft drinks, fruit punch and fruit drinks contain added sugars which could be displacing nutritious beverages such as low-fat milk. Move away from soft drinks and try homemade lemonade or iced tea with half the sugar as prepared drinks. Slice fresh oranges and drop them in a pitcher of cold water for a refreshing drink.
- **Remove televisions and video games from bedrooms.** Kids who get enough sleep are more likely to maintain a healthy weight and perform better in school. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no television in children's rooms to reduce screen time and promote healthy sleep habits.

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Vegetarian Glossary of Terms



Karissa/Thinkstock

A vegetarian diet can include foods that may be unfamiliar to you. Below is a glossary of terms that are a common part of a vegetarian diet.

Casein: A milk protein sometimes used in otherwise non-dairy products such as soymilk, soy cheese and non-dairy creamer. Vegans do not consume casein.

Legumes: The vegetable family that includes beans, lentils, peas and peanuts, all of which are great sources of vegetable protein.

Nutritional Yeast: A health supplement grown on molasses, sugar beets or wood pulp. May be used as a condiment or added to recipes to provide a cheese-like flavor.

Rennet: An enzyme from the stomach of slaughtered calves, used to coagulate cheese. Found in many, but not all dairy cheeses.

Seitan: A vegetarian replacement for meat, made of the protein gluten extracted from wheat.

Soybean: A legume, which is an excellent, inexpensive vegan source of protein and iron. Soybeans are used to make a number of vegetarian and vegan substitutions for meat, dairy and eggs.

Non-dairy cheese: A cheese-like product made from soybeans, other legumes or nuts. Non-dairy cheeses come in most of the same varieties as dairy cheeses, such as parmesan, mozzarella and cheddar. However, some lactose-free cheeses are not vegan as they contain the animal protein casein.

Plant milk: A milk-like product made from soybeans, nuts, seeds, grains or coconut. While soy milk is most similar to cow's milk in terms of protein content, most plant milk nutrient profiles are different than that of dairy milk. Some plant milks are fortified with nutrients such as calcium, vitamin D and vitamin B12.

Tempeh: A replacement for meat, made from fermented soybeans.

Textured Vegetable Protein: Derived from soy flour, TVP commonly is used in vegetarian restaurants as a substitute for ground beef.

Tofu: A replacement for meat, eggs and cheese, made from curdled soy milk and pressed into blocks. Tofu can be eaten fresh or cooked in many different ways and is an excellent source of protein.

Types and uses of tofu:

- Extra-firm tofu: frying, roasting, grilling or marinating
- Firm tofu: stir-frying, boiling or to use as filling
- Soft tofu: pureeing
- Silken tofu: pureeing, simmering, egg substitution, used in vegan desserts and smoothies

Information provided by Vegetarian Nutrition, a dietetic practice group of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

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Food Safety – Start at the Store



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Food shopping is the first step in providing safe and healthy foods for your family. It is important to carefully select, package and transport food from the grocery store to home to keep it safe. Knowing how to select produce, dairy, meats and seafood can reduce your chance of foodborne illness. Follow these tips for a safe shopping experience:

Make Cleanliness a Priority

- Check for cleanliness and only buy food from reputable businesses that follow food safety regulations. Determine the general impression of the facility and make sure it looks and smells clean.
- If provided, use the hand sanitizer at the store's entrance. Wipe hands and the handle of the shopping cart.
- Clean hands before sampling food. Either bring moist towelettes or carry a bottle of hand sanitizer to use before you taste any samples.
- If you use reusable grocery bags, wash them often.

Shop in Order

- Gather non-perishable items first. Then, select refrigerated and frozen items.
- Stop at the deli counter last. Place deli meats near the other cold items in your grocery cart.

Pick Your Produce

- If you go to a farmers market, go early in the morning to avoid produce that has been sitting out all day.
- Choose loose produce rather than packaged so you have more control over what you select.
- Don't purchase produce with mold, major bruises or cuts.
- Purchase only the amount of produce you will use within a week.
- Buy only pasteurized juices that have been kept refrigerated.

Inspect Food Packages

- Check food packages. There should be no holes, tears or openings. Frozen foods should be solid with no signs of thawing. Refrigerated foods should feel cold.
- Check safety seals. A loose lid on a jar means the vacuum has been lost and the product may be contaminated. Don't buy a food product whose seal seems tampered with or damaged. Report a defective cap to the store manager.
- Avoid buying any cans that are deeply dented (one that you can lay your finger into), bulging, rusting or have a dent on either the top or side seam. Deeply dented or bulging cans may be a warning sign of botulism, while cans with a sharp dent may damage the seam and allow bacteria to enter the can.

Check Dairy and Milk Products

- When buying dairy products, choose cartons and containers that are cold.
- Make sure the eggs are clean and aren't broken or cracked.
- Buy milk and other dairy products toward the end of your shopping trip. This will lessen the time these items are out of refrigeration.

Be Selective with Fish and Seafood

- Buy fish only from reputable sources like grocery stores and seafood markets.
- Check for proper refrigeration of fresh fish. Look to see that flesh is shiny and firm, not separating from the bone, and the odor is fresh and mild, rather than overly "fishy."
- Make sure packaged seafood is well-packed in ice and that packages are tightly sealed and free of dents and tears. Avoid packages containing ice crystals. This is a sign the seafood has previously thawed.
- Buy unwrapped cooked seafood such as shrimp, crab or smoked fish only if it is displayed in a separate case or a physically separated section from raw fish. Bacteria on raw fish can contaminate cooked fish.

Look Over Meats and Poultry

- Make sure packaging is tightly sealed and is very cold to the touch.
- Choose packaged chicken that looks pink, not gray.

- Always look for the Safe Food Handling label on packages of bacon and fresh sausage. This label means the meat has undergone safe processing and includes handling and cooking tips.
- Select meats and poultry after shopping for non-perishable items.

Separate Certain Foods

- Put raw meat, poultry and seafood in plastic bags before placing them in your cart. This keeps packaging from leaking and dripping onto ready-to-eat foods like bread or produce. When checking out, place raw meat, poultry and seafood in separate bags from ready-to-eat foods.

At Home

- Take groceries home immediately and store them right away. If you must run errands and will be out longer than 30 minutes, bring a cooler with chill packs for perishable foods. The temperature of refrigerated food can go up 8 to 10 degrees Fahrenheit on a typical trip home from the store. Perishable foods must be refrigerated within two hours and only one hour if it is over 90°F outside.
- Keep perishable foods out of the hot trunk in summer and place in the air-conditioned car instead.
- Promptly refrigerate or freeze perishable items as soon as you get home.



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Losing Weight While Breastfeeding



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Breast-feeding requires extra nutrition, making healthy eating just as important post-pregnancy. Women who are exclusively breast-feeding use about 650 calories daily to make the full amount of milk most babies need from birth to 6 months. Two-thirds of those calories should come from meals and snacks containing foods from all five food groups. The remaining calories come from the weight gained during pregnancy. While many women find breast-feeding helps them lose weight, weight loss varies among mothers depending on physical activity, the amount of weight gained during pregnancy and how much breast milk is produced.

A slow, gradual weight loss of 1 pound per week or 4 pounds per month is a safe goal for breast-feeding moms who want to return to their pre-pregnancy weight. Women who eat less than 1,800 calories per day may reduce the amount of milk their bodies make. Stress, anxiety and fatigue also can decrease milk production. Do yourself and your baby a favor — relax and sit down to eat three meals per day. Be sure to drink plenty of fluids and choose healthy snacks between meals. Moderate physical activity, such as walking, also is good for you and will not reduce milk volume.

Choosing the Right Foods

Eating right while breast-feeding is not complicated, and it does not need to be bland. Mothers from many cultures breast-feed successfully on a diet of widely varied foods. Follow these guidelines to reach a healthy weight while keeping your baby well-nourished.

- Eat a variety of foods from all five food groups. Visit ChooseMyPlate.gov to get a personalized eating plan for breast-feeding women.
- For protein, choose lean meat, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, nuts and seeds. Eat no more than 12 ounces per week of fish and shellfish and no more than 6 ounces per week of albacore tuna, halibut and mahi mahi. Avoid fish with high mercury levels, such as shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish.
- Eat colorful fruits and vegetables. Fill half your plate with vegetables and fruit at lunch and dinner, and include fruit and vegetables in snacks. Whole fruit is better than juice, so limit juice to 1 cup per day and make sure it's 100-percent juice.
- Include three servings of low-fat or fat-free milk, yogurt or cheese each day. If you don't think you can tolerate milk, try lactose-free milk or calcium-fortified soy milk.
- Choose whole-wheat bread, brown rice and whole-wheat pasta more often than refined grains.
- Use healthful oils, such as olive and canola oil, but in small amounts since they can amount to extra calories.
- Drink enough water and decaffeinated unsweetened beverages to quench your thirst. While you are breast-feeding, your need for fluids increases. Limit caffeine-containing beverages — including coffee, tea and soft drinks — to one or two 8-ounce cups a day.
- Make smart food choices that are low in "empty calories." Empty calories are found in foods high in added sugars and fats including soft drinks, desserts, fried foods and fatty meats.
- Vitamin and mineral supplements cannot replace a healthy diet. Talk with your doctor before taking any vitamin or mineral supplements.
- If you have special nutrition needs, consult a [registered dietitian nutritionist](#) for a customized eating plan.

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Chicken Breast vs. Thighs – Which Is More Nutritious?



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For more than a decade, the preference for poultry, especially chicken, has been increasing in the United States. Eating away from home more often has been cited as one reason. For others, the choice was made for health reasons. Poultry (without the skin) is often recommended as a substitute for red meat, since it is lower in saturated fat. Although leaner cuts of beef and pork are available.

There are many options when it comes to chicken. It's sold whole or in parts as chicken breasts, thighs, or wings and is available skinless and boneless.

Price can be an influence when choosing a thigh over a breast, but taste and how the chicken is prepared rank high as well.

Tastier...But Is It Healthier?

Some people prefer the taste of dark meat over white meat and consider it to be more tender and flavorful.

Both chicken thighs and breasts are good sources of lean protein. However, they differ in the amount of calories, fat and saturated fat. For example, a 3-ounce skinless, chicken breast provides about 140 calories, 3 grams of total fat and just 1 gram of saturated fat.

The same amount of dark chicken meat without the skin would provide three times the amount of fat for a total of 9 grams of fat, 3 grams of saturated fat and 170 calories. This difference may not seem like much, but depending on the portion size it can really add up.

Another option is to choose dark turkey meat, which has fewer calories and fat compared to a chicken thigh. A 3-ounce portion has about 134 calories, 5 grams of total fat and 1.5 grams of saturated fat.

It's also a good idea to look at the Nutrition Facts label. Some poultry products are injected with salt, which helps to keep it moist. Most Americans get too much salt from the foods they eat, so finding ways to reduce sodium by reviewing the nutrition facts can help.

Cooking Matters, Too!

Of course, how the poultry is prepared will also make a difference in the amount of calories and fat. Chicken and turkey can be baked, grilled, roasted or fried; seasoned, stuffed or coated with breading. Baking, grilling and roasting are considered healthier options, so look for these descriptions when eating out and limit all types of fried and deep fried foods, including poultry. At home, keeping the skin on while cooking will help keep chicken and turkey moist and removing the skin before eating will help reduce calories and fat.

Keep it Safe

No matter which type of poultry you choose to buy and prepare at home, remember to handle it properly. Raw chicken and turkey should not be rinsed before cooking, but be sure to wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling raw poultry.

Chicken and turkey that is purchased frozen should be thawed on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator. Use separate utensils, containers, and cutting boards for the raw and cooked foods. All poultry, regardless of the cooking method, should be cooked to an internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit. A thermometer inserted into the thickest part will help determine if it's reached the appropriate temperature.

Storing foods safely is also important and will help to reduce the risk of foodborne illness. Perishable foods, like poultry, should be refrigerated within two hours and within one hour if the temperature is above 90 degrees. The same is true for leftovers when eating out, and they should be reheated to 165° F and eaten within three to four days.

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Heart Health and Diet



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Heart disease is the leading cause of death in America. About 92 million people in the United States have some form of heart/cardiovascular disease — that's about 29 percent of the population. Many of these deaths and risk factors are preventable, and food choices have a big impact on your heart's health, even if you have other risk factors.

Only a few risk factors, such as age, gender and family history, cannot be controlled. You can prevent and control many risk factors of heart disease, such as high blood cholesterol and high blood pressure with lifestyle changes and medications.

Lifestyle Changes

A healthy lifestyle — following a healthy eating plan, maintaining a healthy weight, regular physical activity, quitting smoking and managing stress — can lower your risk for heart disease and may prevent current heart disease from worsening.

A Heart-Healthy Diet

To lower your risk of heart disease, follow these recommendations directly from the [2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#):

1. "Follow a healthy eating pattern across the lifespan."
2. "Focus on variety, nutrient density, and amount."
3. "Limit calories from added sugars and saturated fats and reduce sodium intake."
4. "Shift to healthier food and beverage choices."
5. "Support healthy eating patterns for all."

For helpful tips on incorporating these guidelines into your diet, see [Heart-Healthy Cooking Tips](#) at <http://www.eatright.org/resource/food/planning-and-prep/cooking-tips-and-trends/heart-healthy-cooking-tips>. If you are at high risk for heart disease or already have heart disease, your first step should be to meet with a registered dietitian nutritionist. Together with your health-care provider, your RDN can help you lower your risk or improve your existing condition by developing a personalized eating and lifestyle plan.

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What Is Iron?



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Iron is a mineral, and its main purpose is to carry oxygen in the hemoglobin of red blood cells throughout the body so cells can produce energy. Iron also helps remove carbon dioxide. When the body's iron stores become so low that not enough normal red blood cells can be made to carry oxygen efficiently, a condition known as iron deficiency anemia develops.

When levels of iron are low, fatigue, weakness and difficulty maintaining body temperature often result. Other symptoms may include:

- Pale skin and fingernails
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Glossitis (inflamed tongue)

Even though iron is widely available in food, some people, like adolescent girls and women ages 19 to 50 years old may not get the amount they need on a daily basis. It is also a concern for young children and women who are pregnant or capable of becoming pregnant. If treatment for iron deficiency is needed, a health-care provider will assess iron status and determine the exact form of treatment — which may include changes in diet and/or taking supplements.

Babies need iron for brain development and growth. They store enough iron for the first four to six months of life. A supplement may be recommended by a pediatrician for a baby that is premature or

a low-birth weight and breastfed. After six months, their need for iron increases, so the introduction of solid foods when the baby is developmentally ready can help to provide sources of iron. Most infant formulas are fortified with iron.

How much iron do you need? While your body is very good at adapting to lower or higher levels by absorbing more or less iron as needed, the recommended levels are set to meet the needs of the greater majority of the population. Here are the current Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs) for iron:

Gender/Age	Iron RDA
Children 1-3	7 mg
Children 4-8	10 mg
Children 9-13	8 mg
Males/14-18	11 mg
Females/14-18	15 mg
Males/19+	8 mg
Females/19-50	18 mg
Females/51+	8 mg

Iron in food exists as two types, heme and non-heme. Animal foods such as meat, seafood and poultry provide both types and are better absorbed by the body. Non-heme iron is found in plant foods, such as spinach and beans, grains that are enriched, like rice and bread, and some fortified breakfast cereals. To increase the absorption of iron from plant sources, it's recommended to eat them with meat, seafood, or poultry or a good source of vitamin C, such as citrus fruits, kiwi, strawberries or bell peppers. A good way to improve your iron intake is by eating a balanced, healthy diet that includes a variety of foods.

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What Is Magnesium?



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Magnesium is an important part of the more than 300 enzymes found in your body. These enzymes are involved in processes that help to regulate many bodily functions, including the production of energy, body protein and muscle contractions. Magnesium also plays a role in maintaining healthy bones and a healthy heart.

Magnesium is a major mineral, meaning higher amounts are needed compared to trace minerals, like zinc or iron. The amount of magnesium required daily depends on a person's age and gender. For example, females who are 19 years and older (and not pregnant) need 310 to 320 milligrams (mg) daily; whereas males of the same age should strive for 400 to 420 mg per day.

It's best to get nutrients, like magnesium, from food sources whenever possible, since they provide other health benefits, too. Many of the foods that are good sources of magnesium are underconsumed by most Americans. Foods rich in magnesium include green leafy vegetables, whole grains, beans and nuts. Milk and yogurt also provide magnesium, as do fortified foods, such as some breakfast cereals.

Because magnesium supplements can interact with some medications, it's important to discuss the need for a dietary supplement with a health care provider before taking one.

People with certain health conditions, like celiac disease or type 2 diabetes, may have lower levels of magnesium in their diets. Working with a registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) can help with the management of those conditions. Plus, an RDN can develop a personalized eating plan that meets your nutrient needs.

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Wild Greens



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What used to be reviled by many gardeners is now considered gourmet — weeds (some of which are actually wild greens) are showing up on restaurant menus and at farmers markets, and in recipes for main dishes, soups and sides.

People have historically eaten wild greens and more commonly in rural areas, but now ingredients such as dandelion, lamb's quarters and nettle are also catching the attention of chefs and people looking to eat locally.

And for good reason. Edible wild greens are tasty, low in calories and high in vitamins — plus other nutrients, depending on the type of plant.

Wild greens are also versatile — they taste great sautéed in olive oil and in soups and casseroles, and some can be tossed raw into salads and piled on sandwiches. It's best to experiment with small amounts initially until you find which recipes work best based on your taste preferences.

Even though some edible greens are still grown in the wild, it's best to buy them from a reliable source, such as a supermarket or a farmer's market. Picking them yourself can be dangerous, especially since plants that look similar may exist and be unsafe to eat. Plus, you don't want to risk eating a plant that has been treated with chemicals, which is often the case for dandelions and other common weeds that grow on their own in neighborhoods and parks.

These are a few edible wild greens and how you can add them to a healthy eating plan.

Lamb's quarters

Lamb's quarters is related to spinach and often described as being similar to it. The leaves are considered to be bitter and become milder when cooked. One cup of cooked lamb's quarters has 464 milligrams of calcium, and is a rich source of vitamins A and K. It also packs in more than 500 milligrams of potassium and is an excellent source of vitamin C.

Dandelion

Enjoy the roots, leaves and even the flowers of this common weed that's hated by lawn owners and loved by cooks. The leaves are commonly found in salad mixes, such as mesclun, and are described as having a slightly bitter taste. The roots can also be added to salads or roasted and ground to make a coffee substitute. From a nutritional standpoint, a cup of cooked dandelion greens boasts almost 150 milligrams of calcium and is an excellent source of vitamins A, C and K.

Amaranth

The amaranth plant is more commonly known for its seeds, but its leaves are edible, too. The leaves taste slightly sweet and can be eaten raw or cooked. A cup of cooked amaranth leaves provides approximately 3 milligrams of iron, 275 milligrams of calcium, 850 milligrams of potassium and almost 3 grams of protein — for only 28 calories.

Nettles

Nettles, also known as "Stinging Nettles," can't be eaten raw, and you need to be careful when handling them. Using tongs or durable gloves is even recommended, because the raw leaves can sting the skin. Once cooked, a cup of nettles boasts six grams of dietary fiber and close to 430 milligrams of calcium. It's a good source of magnesium and offers some iron and potassium as well.

Purslane

This super-hardy weed grows almost anywhere from the garden to gravel and reproduces rather easily. While it is despised by many gardeners, purslane is actually a rich source of vitamin A, a good source of potassium and has a little bit of several vitamins and minerals — including magnesium, calcium, folate and iron — all for only 21 calories per cup cooked. It's known to impart a slightly tart or citrusy flavor, and the stems and leaves can be added to salads or slightly cooked and enjoyed as greens or in soups.

Sorrel

This perennial herb with leaves that look similar to spinach can taste sour due to its oxalic acid content. Young leaves, which have a milder flavor, can be used in salads and the older, larger leaves work best in soups and stews. Sorrel is high in vitamin A, and it also provides some magnesium, potassium and calcium.

As is the case with other dark green, leafy vegetables, wild greens can be high in vitamin K. If you're taking an anticoagulant medication (blood-thinning drug), eating consistent amounts of vitamin K is extremely important. Too much or too little can affect how your blood clots. Check with your doctor or registered dietitian nutritionist before making any changes in your diet if you are taking an anticoagulant medication.



Build a Healthy Salad



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Do you build a healthy salad and then top it with a lot of extra high calorie ingredients? What you sprinkle over your greens, as well as the amount can make or break a salad. Here, we give you the scoop on a few unexpected toppings that will boost the flavor and healthfulness of your salad. Using small amounts and different combinations of ingredients can help add variety to your salads but without all the extra calories.

Salads in Bloom

Your salad has greens, veggies, even fruits — so why not go further into the garden and add flowers too? Edible flowers, which include marigolds, violets, roses, nasturtiums, chive blossoms and pansies, can add color and flavor to your salad. Just be sure to use flowers that are labeled as edible, like the ones you can find in the produce section at the grocery store. Other blooms, which are sold at nurseries and florists may be toxic or grown with dangerous pesticides. Kitchen herb gardens also work well as a way to produce both flowers and plants for edible purposes.

Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme

Herbs, whether fresh or dried, are another way to add flavor to salads. Many supermarkets offer fresh herbs already packaged or as plants. Both fresh and dried herbs can be sprinkled on top as garnishes or used to make flavorful vinegars or salad dressings. Try experimenting with different combinations, but start out small. It's also important to know that if a recipe calls for dried herbs, and you want to substitute fresh — one teaspoon of dried is equal to one tablespoon (3 teaspoons) of fresh snipped herbs.

Going Green

Avocados not only taste great, but they are also a good source of heart-healthy monounsaturated fat and contain several vitamins and minerals, including vitamin E and potassium. They also provide a decent amount of dietary fiber, which most Americans don't get enough of. Avocados are also very versatile. For example, they can be chopped up and added as a salad ingredient or pureed into a dressing. It's best to prepare them right before serving, because once an avocado is sliced, it will start to discolor. A little squeeze of lemon or lime juice can also help prevent it from browning.

Texture You Can Sink Your Teeth Into

Nuts and seeds not only add interesting flavors to foods, but the crunch they provide can be just what a salad needs sometimes. Sprinkle small amounts of nuts and seeds, such as walnuts, pecans, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, or even pine nuts. They will provide unique flavors and textures when used as salad toppings.

Another ingredient that can really make a salad more satisfying are beans. There are so many varieties to experiment with, but more common types used in salads include black beans, chickpeas (also known as garbanzo beans), and edamame. Cooked beans whether they are purchased frozen, dried, or canned are all good options and a convenient way to get a plant-based source of lean protein.

Croutons typically get a bad rap, but if you make your own and use whole grain breads they can help you meet your daily goal for dietary fiber. Another option is to serve a scoop of cooked whole grains, like quinoa or bulgur, over a mixture of salad greens. It's a great way to get the best of both food groups at one meal.

Looking for ways to get more calcium and vitamin D in your diet? A sprinkle of shredded cheese, such as mozzarella or Parmesan, or crumbled feta can add a lot of flavor with just a small amount. Plus, they are good sources of calcium. Eggs provide vitamin D and when hard boiled, make a great topping for salads.

A Touch of Sweetness

We all know that berries, apples, oranges and pears taste great on their own, but paired with salad greens, the combination of flavors can be extraordinary. Dried fruits, like cherries, cranberries, apricots or raisins can also liven up a salad and may be more convenient to use at certain times of the year. Plus, their flavor has been concentrated, so a smaller amount of dried fruit will provide the same intense flavor as its fresh, whole form.

Dressing It Up

It's hard to imagine salad without dressing, especially with so many options, yet so many calories from fat. Oils, which are considered a healthier form of fat, are needed on a regular basis but only in small amounts. They provide important nutrients and help with the absorption of others, like vitamins A, D, E and K. Fats also help promote a feeling of fullness. Depending on which type of salad dressing you choose, the recommended serving size is just one to two tablespoons – one for mayonnaise-based dressings and two for oil-based ones.

Variety is Key

Try experimenting with different recipes and an assortment of different colored vegetables to keep the salad combinations exciting and healthful. Being mindful of portions and choosing ingredients that pack a lot of flavor and texture but in small amounts will also help. Plus, it will prevent your taste buds from becoming bored.



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Tips for a Healthy Post-Partum Weight Loss



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As if there weren't enough to think about with a new baby, many moms experience anxiety about losing pregnancy weight after childbirth. While women may be hard on themselves in a world of instant gratification and celebrity obsession, it's best to concentrate on planning for healthy post-partum weight loss.

Not surprisingly, prevention is the best strategy. Mothers still in the planning stages should strive to gain a healthy amount of weight during pregnancy (25 to 35 pounds), making it a little easier to rebound post-partum.

The first several months post-partum, however, is not the ideal time for a drastic weight-loss program. Recovery should be the priority the first month after pregnancy. Staying hydrated and eating nutritious meals and snacks will help the body rebuild after the trauma of childbirth.

The most healthful and sustainable strategy to return to pre-pregnancy weight is by making gradual, permanent changes in eating habits.

Choosing Right

As a new mom, or even if this isn't your first rodeo, you'll need plenty of energy to take care of baby. Choosing the right foods — fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein and dairy — is especially important if you are breast-feeding. To ensure adequate milk supply, you'll need to meet your energy needs and include essential nutrients. Moms who breast-feed exclusively need about 600 to 700 more calories a day, some of which comes from the body's fat stores that built up during pregnancy.

Rather than count calories, focus on choosing foods that are nutrient-rich. If you find yourself losing more than one pound per week, you probably should add a few nutritious calories into your diet. If you gained more than 35 pounds during your pregnancy, it may take up to a year or more to lose the weight, but you can do it!

6 Tips for Mom's Healthy Meal Plan

- Don't skip meals.
- Drink at least 6 to 8 glasses of water. If breast-feeding, get into the habit of filling a tall glass of water to keep with you all day.
- You need 1,000 milligrams of calcium daily. You can get this easily by consuming three servings of low-fat or fat-free dairy throughout the day.
- Consume at least 2 cups of fruits and 2½ cups of vegetables.
- Include protein at each meal.
- Plan healthy snacks (fresh fruit, nuts, Greek yogurt with granola, hummus with vegetables, or a protein bar).

Getting Back to Exercising

After recovering from delivery (which may take a couple months), walking may be the perfect post-partum activity because it's easy to do, not strenuous and can include baby. You can incorporate weightlifting or a resistance routine (such as yoga or using exercise bands) once you regain your strength and your baby is a little older, but to start, aim for a daily 2- to 4-mile walk with your baby and stroller.

Avoiding Weight Loss Fads

After bringing your baby home from the hospital, it's easy to slip into the "I want to lose weight fast!" mentality. Some quick weight loss plans may be tempting as you stand (often sleep-deprived) in the grocery store check-out line and see images of thin celebrity moms on magazine covers. Just say no to fad diets! Prioritize your health and your baby's health by nourishing your body with a variety of nutrient-dense foods and plenty of hydrating fluids.

Reviewed January 2018 by Rosanne Rust, MS, RDN, LDN. Published January 17, 2018. To learn more healthy tips, visit www.eatright.org and consult a registered dietitian nutritionist. Info obtained from www.eatright.org.



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5 Tips to Curb Your Late-Night Snacking



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After-dinner and before-bedtime snacking when not hungry can result in consuming unneeded calories. Often this may be due to boredom, stress or tiredness. Try these tips to banish evening cravings and curb after-dinner snacking; and, if you must snack, go for nutritious options.

End Mealtime Madness

Spend a little time planning ahead and grocery shopping for nutritious meals, including breakfast, and snacks throughout the week. When you eat a variety of foods throughout the day according to your hunger and fullness, you're less likely to overeat at night. "Eating balanced meals and snacks throughout the day provides your body with a steady source of energy to fuel daily activities," says Torey Armul, MS, RD, CSSD, LD, who is a spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. "It also helps to maintain blood sugar levels and ensure greater intake of nutrients that are important for your health."

Boost Protein and Load up on Fiber

Armul advises individuals to try to eat 20 to 25 grams of protein at each meal, although needs vary by person.

For instance, a breakfast of oatmeal with a cup of low-fat or fat-free milk, small handful of nuts and fruit can provide approximately 20 grams of protein. At lunch, a couple of tablespoons of peanut

butter (7 grams of protein), half a can of tuna fish (16 grams of protein), half a cup of black beans (7 grams of protein) or a small 4-ounce salmon filet (25 grams of protein) can help push up protein. At dinner, most people actually get too much protein because portion sizes of popular protein sources are too big. Go for recommended serving sizes such as a small — the size of a deck of cards — 3-ounce chicken breast (27 grams of protein) or a 3-ounce lean top sirloin steak (26 grams of protein).

Dietary fiber also helps us feel full, in addition to being protective of intestinal and heart health. Find fiber in whole grains, legumes such as beans and lentils, vegetables, fruits, nuts and seeds. The Institute of Medicine recommends women strive for 25 grams of dietary fiber each day while men should get 38 grams.

Get Sleep

"Research shows that sleep deprivation can impair glucose metabolism and affect hormones linked to hunger, appetite and body weight regulation," says Armul "We often confuse hunger and tiredness, especially at night. If you're tempted to keep snacking after a balanced dinner, your body may be signaling that it needs rest." Adults should strive for 7 to 9 hours of sleep every night.

Turn off the Screen before You Pick up Your Fork

Screen time has been linked to mindless eating and increased food intake. Eating in front of the TV, while playing video games or surfing the Internet can distract attention from what and how much is eaten, reduce satiety signals sent to the brain and lessen memory of snacking.

"Eating in front of a TV or mobile device makes it harder to detect your body's satiety signals," says Armul. "It also can reduce the enjoyment and mindfulness of your meal. Avoid these types of distractions during mealtime, and sit down at a table to eat so you can focus on your food and practice mindfulness. You also may feel a greater satisfaction with your food and notice satiety cues that are otherwise missed when you're distracted."

Still Starving after Dinner?

People often eat out of boredom, or because of stress, or just out of habit rather than from true hunger. Consider asking yourself the following questions before eating: Am I hungry? Am I thirsty? Am I tired? Am I bored? Am I sad?

If you ate a balanced dinner, go for lighter snacks. "If you're still hungry after dinner and have ruled out other factors, it's OK to have a small snack," says Armul. "Opt for something with protein or fiber to provide satiety and nutrients. Good choices are Greek yogurt, fruit, nuts, veggies with hummus and air-popped popcorn. If you're craving dessert, keep your portion small and eat slowly and without distractions."

Reviewed December 2017 by Penelope Clark, MS, RDN, CDN. Published January 19, 2018. To learn more healthy tips, visit www.eatright.org and consult a registered dietitian nutritionist. Info obtained from www.eatright.org.