WEST VIRGINIA BUREAU OF SENIOR SERVICES

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Heart-Healthy Cooking Methods

Using proper cooking techniques is essential for maintaining a healthy heart. While the individual foods you eat matter, the way you prepare them is just as important for long-term cardiovascular health. A heart-healthy diet focuses on reducing unhealthy fat and salt consumption. Cooking methods such as roasting, grilling, steaming, and sautéing help preserve vital nutrients while minimizing the intake of harmful saturated fats. Following are some cooking methods that help deliver the maximum benefits to your heart.

Roasting and baking—while these two might seem similar, they do have some differences. Roasting refers to cooking at a higher temperature, 400°F or above, to achieve a caramelization or crispness on solid foods. Baking refers to cooking up to 375°F and creates more even cooking for foods with structure. Roasting is commonly used for meats and vegetables, and baking is more often used for batters and doughs. These methods use dry heat to cook and do not require much, if any, butter or oil. While the methods are similar, roasting meats and vegetables with herbs and spices instead of salt creates a rich flavor that baking does not provide. Either method promotes heart health depending on what you are cooking and your desired outcome.

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Heart-Healthy Cooking Methods (continued)

Grilling and broiling—These methods are good choices because they allow excess fat to drip away from foods. Grilling and broiling work well for lean meats, fish, and vegetables. When using such high heat, take care not to overcook or undercook these foods. Flip foods frequently to help them cook evenly.

Steaming, boiling, and poaching—These methods are very easy to use. Steaming requires the food to be placed in a steamer basket or steamer pan positioned above boiling water, covered with a lid. Steaming can also be done in a microwave: place the vegetables into a microwave-safe container with a little water, and cover to cook until tender. Boiling requires complete submersion in liquid characterized by rapid, rolling bubbles (212°F for water). Poaching is like boiling but is usually used for delicate foods such as eggs, fish, and fruit. Poaching requires simmering water at a lower temperature than boiling. Steaming is the best method for keeping the vitamins and minerals intact in vegetables without needing added fat. Boiling typically used for whole grains and beans. The ideal technique depends on the food being prepared.

Stir-frying and sauteing— When done right, these methods can be heart-healthy. Stir-frying uses very high heat with constant stirring to ensure an even cook, whereas sauteing uses a medium-high temperature and requires less stirring. Both methods require a small amount of fat and maybe a splash or two of water. Minimize the use of butter, oils, and heavy sauces to reduce saturated fat intake and protect heart health. Limit frying to maintain optimal cardiovascular function. Air-frying foods is a good way to avoid deep-fat frying, yet it still provides a crispy texture. It is important to note when air frying certain foods — specifically premade items like chicken tenders — they often have been fried once before and may already contain significant fat from the manufacturing process. The takeaway is to reduce the amount of fat and sodium in your cooking methods for better heart health.

Stocking a heart-healthy kitchen

Heart Foundation

This guide will help you check what heart-healthy ingredients you already have and give ideas for affordable, everyday foods to stock in the kitchen. Pick options that fit your needs and budget. Aim to keep a mix of these items in your fridge, freezer, and pantry to have heart-health options available when you need them.

Fridge

Fruits & vegetables

- ☐ Fresh fruit and vegetables (buy in season to save money)

Protein

- ☐ Tofu or tempeh
- ☐ Eggs
- ☐ Fresh fish (if available)
- ☐ Lean meats (buy bulk packets and freeze in smaller portions to save money in long-run)

Dairy*

- ☐ Milk
- ☐ Cheese (look for lower-sodium choices)
- ☐ Unflavoured yoghurt

Fats

- ☐ Avocado
- ☐ Olives
- ☐ Plant-based spreads (olive oil or canola spreads)

Flavour

- ☐ Lemon or lime juice
- ☐ Fresh herbs, chilli, ginger, garlic (great for flavouring meals without added salt!)

Freezer

Fruits & vegetables

- ☐ Frozen fruit
- ☐ Frozen vegetables (like peas, corn, mixed vegetables, broccoli, spinach)

Protein

- ☐ Frozen fish fillets (budget friendly option)
- ☐ Frozen poultry and lean meats

Pantry

Fruits & vegetables

- ☐ Canned fruit (choose varieties in natural juice)
- ☐ Canned vegetables (look for no added salt)

Wholegrains

- ☐ Rolled oats
- ☐ Wholegrain breakfast cereals (lower-sugar options)
- ☐ Wholegrain bread (can also be stored in the freezer)
- ☐ Brown rice and other grains (like quinoa, barley, buckwheat, or polenta)
- ☐ Wholemeal pasta, couscous
- ☐ Wholemeal noodles (like brown rice or soba noodles)
- ☐ Wholemeal flour

Protein

- ☐ Canned legumes (chickpeas, lentils, beans with no added salt)
- ☐ Canned fish (like tuna, salmon, or sardines in olive oil or water)
- ☐ Dried beans, chickpeas, lentils (cheaper if bought in bulk and soaked before cooking)

Dairy*

- ☐ Powdered milk (affordable and lasts a long time)
- ☐ Long-life (UHT) milk

Fats

- ☐ Healthy oils (such as olive, canola, peanut, sunflower oil)
- ☐ Nut butters (unsalted and no added sugar options)
- ☐ Unsalted nuts and seeds

Flavour

- ☐ Dried herbs and spices (adds flavour instead of salt)
- ☐ Pepper
- ☐ Vinegars (like apple cider, balsamic, or white)
- ☐ Condiments like mustard, salt-reduced sauces (keep these in the fridge after opening)

*Those with high cholesterol or heart disease should choose reduced fat dairy products.

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Herbs and Spices—Cilantro

Cilantro is a well-known bright green herb with a very distinctive flavor — one that people either love or despise. Cilantro grows from the same plant as coriander seeds but is used very differently.

Cilantro has a citrusy and peppery taste and is most often used fresh. It pairs well with many foods but is most often associated with Mexican, Latin American, Asian, and Middle Eastern cuisines. Commonly used with tacos, salsa, rice, beans, soups, and more, cilantro used in small amounts provides an abundance of flavor.

Because cilantro is typically eaten in small quantities, it provides relatively few nutrients to the overall diet. It does contain vitamins A, C, and K, as well as folate, potassium, and manganese. Cilantro is low in calories and also contains antioxidants that protect the body's cells from damage.

Adding cilantro to dishes is a great way to add flavor without adding extra salt or fat. Cilantro is packed with flavor and is an easy way to add a boost of freshness to a dish.

What Pairs Well With *Cilantro*

Fruits & Veggie

Avocado, tomato, potato, cabbage, cauliflower, cucumber, zucchini, carrots, green beans, lemon, limes, garlic, onion, green peas, tomatillo, bell peppers, strawberry, blueberry, watermelon, raspberry, blackberry, jalapeno, lettuce, cayenne, winter squash, pumpkin, orange, scallion, coconut, spinach, chard, arugula, broccoli, broccolini, beetroot, pineapple, brussels sprout, jicama, mango, peach, radish, daikon, turnip, parsnip, celery, celery root, mushrooms, sweet potato, leek poblano, corn, bok choy, ginger, grapes, papaya, grapefruit, eggplant, apple, kohlrabi

Herbs, Nuts & Spices

Mint, parsley, cumin, basil, lemongrass, za'atar, tarragon, garam masala, Kadai masala, curry masala, black pepper, clove, nutmeg, bay leaf, cinnamon, oregano, chives, dill, chervil, thyme, Cashew, peanut, almond, pine nuts, pecans, walnuts, macadamia, hazelnut

Protein & Dairy

Shrimp, chicken, paneer, tofu, Greek yogurt, chickpeas, butter, egg, egg white, steak, lamb, swordfish, beans (black, red, kidney), clams, squid, pork, turkey, halloumi, ricotta, cream cheese, goat cheese, feta cheese, beef, bacon, Mussels, prawn, salmon, mozzarella

Recipe—Mexican Black Beans

Ingredients

- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1/2 cup chopped onions
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 (16 oz) can black beans, do not drain
- 1/4 cup chopped cilantro
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Recipe received from: https://belleofthekitchen.com/mexican-black-beans-recipe/

Instructions

1. In a small sauce pan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onions and garlic and cook for 3-4 minutes, just until the onions begin to soften .
2. Add the undrained black beans, cilantro, cumin, and salt. Stir well and reduce heat to medium low. Allow to cook for 15-20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Taste and adjust seasonings to your liking .Serve sprinkled with more chopped cilantro and cotija cheese if desired. Enjoy!

NUTRITION INFORMATION: *calories:* **193kcal**, *carbohydrates:* **29g**, *protein:* **10g**, *fat:* **4g**, *sodium:* **293mg**, *potassium:* **449mg**, *fiber:* **10g**, *vitamin c:* **2.1mg**, *calcium:* **44mg**, *iron:* **2.7mg**

Brain Exercise

Don't just exercise your body — work out your brain!

Valentine's Day Word Scramble

DIRECTIONS: Unscramble the letters to form the names of 11 different Valentine's Day words. Then unscramble the shaded letters to answer the riddle.

LIRANGD

HAETR

OLCHAOTEC

DICPU

MOEP

LSWROFE

BOLEDEV

ANDCY

ORSSE

EOEVNPLE

RRABYUFE

What did the boy bear say to the girl bear on Valentine's Day?

!

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February 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 National Freedom Day	*2* Ground Hog Day	*3* National Carrot Cake Day	*4* National Homemade Soup Day	*5* National Weather-man's Day	*6* Bubble Gum Day	*7* National Fettuccine Alfredo Day
8 Super Bowl Sunday	*9* National Pizza Day	*10* National Flannel Day	*11* Make a Friend Day	*12* National Lost Penny Day	*13* Friday the 13th	*14* Valentine's Day
15 Singles Awareness Day	*16* President's Day	*17* Random Acts of Kindness Day	*18* Ash Wednesday	*19* National Chocolate Mint Day	*20* Cherry Pie Day	*21* National Sticky Bun Day
22 National Margarita Day	*23* National Tootsie Roll Day	*24* National Tortilla Chip Day	*25* National Clam Chowder Day	*26* National Pistachio Day	*27* No Brainer Day	*28* Public Sleeping Day

MONTHLY OBSERVATIONS

- ***American Heart Month***
- ***Black History Month***
- ***Canned Food Month***
- ***Children's Dental Health Month***
- ***Creative Romance Month***
- ***Grapefruit Month***
- ***Great American Pie Month***
- ***National Bird Feeding Month***
- ***National Cherry Month***
- ***Weddings Month***

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY

SOLUTION

LIRANGD	D A R L I N G
HAETR	H E A R T
OLCHAOTEC	C H O C O L A T E
DICPU	C U P I D
MOEP	P O E M
LSWROFE	F L O W E R S
BOLEDEV	B E L O V E D
ANDCY	C A N D Y
ORSSE	R O S E S
EOEVNPLE	E N V E L O P E
RRABYUFE	F E B R U A R Y

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at did the boy bear say to the girl bear on Valentine's Day?

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B E A R Y M U C H !

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