

NUTRITION

Is Cooking with an Air Fryer Healthy?

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Medically Reviewed by [UPMC](#)

October 23, 2019



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Air fryers are one of the newest kitchen gadgets to win the attention of health-conscious home cooks. But are foods cooked in an air fryer healthy, or is it all just a gimmick?



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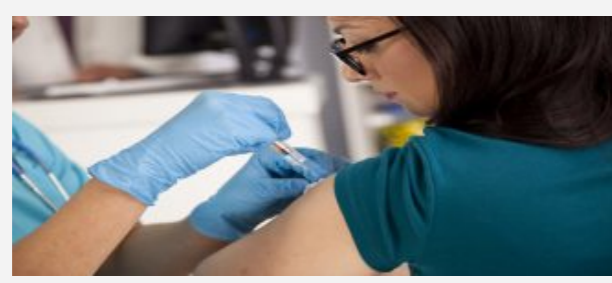
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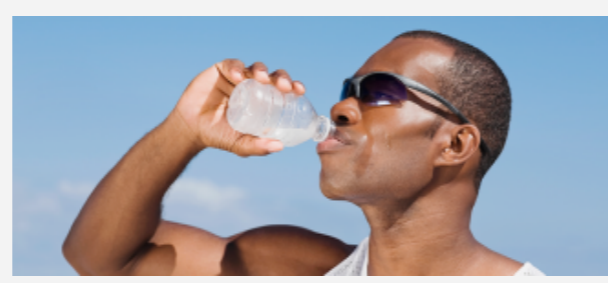
How Do Air Fryers Work?

Air fryers don't actually fry food — instead, they circulate hot air at high temperatures around the food, similar to a convection oven. The device still uses some oil to aid in the cooking process, but only a tablespoon or two. Since the food sits in a basket, any fat cooking off the food drips through the basket to the bottom of the machine.

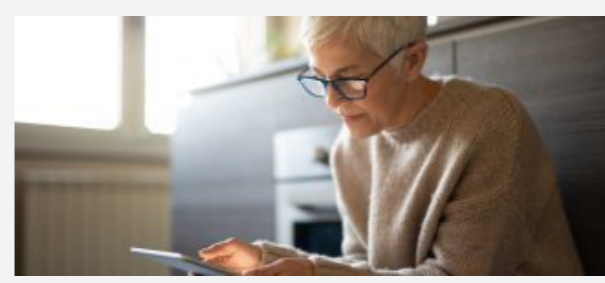
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Is Air-Fried Food Healthy?

The answer isn't a clear-cut yes or no.

Air fryers tend to be a healthier option than traditional frying methods. A study published in the [International Food Research Journal](#) indicated that potato strips cooked using an air fryer absorbed less oil and moisture than ones that had been deep-fried. Because air fryers reduce the oil absorbed by a food, they also lower its overall fat content and calories. In fact, some manufacturers claim that using their air fryers can reduce the fat content of some foods by up to 75 percent.

However, healthier doesn't necessarily mean healthy. [Women's Health](#) warns that, while food cooked in an air fryer tends to be healthier than fried alternatives, you shouldn't eat it for every meal. Instead, use your air fryer to whip up a more wholesome version of a comfort food recipe you love or give a nutritious ingredient, such as vitamin- and antioxidant-packed [sweet potatoes](#), extra crunch.

The body converts complex, [healthy carbs](#), such as those found in vegetables and whole grains, into glycogen that it can use as an energy source. As you look for recipes for your air fryer, keep an eye out for dishes that feature these healthy complex carbs to reduce the dietary fat in your diet.

Healthy Air Fryer Recipes

Since air fryers can transform some not-so-good-for-you foods into better versions, it's a useful gadget for people who want to eat healthier. Here are four healthy air fryer recipes:

- Hot wings and fried chicken.** Most people think of hot wings as bad bar food, but the air fryer can give hot wings that crispy fried texture without all the oil. Toss chicken wings in a bowl with one or two tablespoons of oil and your favorite seasonings. Place in the air fryer in one layer, making sure not to overfill. Cook at 380 degrees for 25 minutes, shaking the basket halfway through. Serve with your favorite buffalo sauce.
- Fries.** Craving French fries? Heat the air fryer to 380 degrees. Chop large russet potatoes into 1/4-inch sticks and toss in a bowl with 1 tablespoon oil and 1 teaspoon salt. Transfer to the air fryer and heat for 12 to 15 minutes, tossing halfway through. Cooking French fries in the air fryer produces up to 90 percent less acrylamide — a known carcinogen released when deep frying potatoes — according to a study in the [Journal of Food Science](#).
- Avocado fries.** For a healthier snack, swap potatoes for fresh avocado. Gather three bowls: one for bread crumbs, another for eggs, and a third for flour seasoned with salt, pepper, and paprika. Slice an avocado into sections and dip each one into the flour, egg, and breadcrumbs. Lay in the air fryer and spray with cooking spray, preferably olive oil. Cook at 400 degrees for 10 minutes, flipping halfway through and spraying again.
- Cauliflower buffalo bites.** For an extra healthy snack, try making in an air fryer instead of the oven to reduce the amount of butter or oil needed. As an added bonus, your food may even cook faster.

So cooking in an air fryer a healthier option? Just like most good things, it can be — in moderation. While an air fryer won't change the fact that many fried foods have less nutritional value than recipes geared toward health, it can reduce the fat, calories, and carcinogens in certain dishes. If you're hoping to find wholesome replacements for some of your favorite tasty treats, an air fryer can help put better food choices within reach.

To learn more about good nutrition or how to develop a healthy diet plan, visit [Nutrition Services at UPMC](#) or email a question to AskADietitian@upmc.edu.

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