



Is Parchment Paper Toxic? What You Need to Know

By Mary Margaret Chappell
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Lately, there's been a lot of buzz about ditching nonstick pans due to concerns over PFAS—those notorious “forever chemicals” linked to potential health risks. But did you know that your parchment paper could be another hidden source of these same toxins? Many brands use PFAS to enhance parchment's nonstick and moisture-resistant properties, potentially leaching chemicals into your food and the environment.

To help you make safer choices in the kitchen, we turned to Leah Segedie, founder of the consumer advocacy site [Mamavation](#) and [dubbed The PFAS Hunter by Consumer Reports](#). Read on to learn which parchment papers are truly PFAS-free—and how to reduce unwanted chemical exposure when baking, cooking, and storing food.

What Is Parchment Paper?

Parchment paper, aka baking paper, is a thin, vegetable-based product that is used in cooking and baking to prevent foods from sticking. The earliest food-grade parchment papers were made by treating paper with sulfuric acid to seal its cellulose pores, making it nonstick, waterproof, and resistant to high temperatures. (The technique is called [parchmentizing](#).)

You can still find this basic, uncoated, sulfurized (and

reusable) [parchment paper](#). But nowadays, many parchment paper brands are coated or treated with additional substances to further enhance the paper's moisture-resistant, grease-proof, and nonstick qualities. These include PFAS, the same synthetic “forever chemicals” that are used in everything from nonstick cookware to electronics. As awareness around the risks of PFAS exposure grows, more and more parchment paper brands are clearly labeled as both “untreated” and “PFAS-free,” making it easier to find safer options to use in the kitchen.

What Are PFAS?

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are synthetic chemical substances used in food packaging (among many other applications) since they were invented in the 1940s. PFAS do not break down easily. They infiltrate our food and water systems and can accumulate in our bodies, potentially causing [long-term health issues](#). A [2024 CDC report](#) estimates that nearly all people in the United States have measurable levels of PFAS in their blood.

Are PFAS Toxic?

PFAS have been linked to long-term health risks, including kidney and testicular cancers, hormone disruption, liver and thyroid issues, and reproductive harm, [according to](#) the National Resources Defense Council. The Environmental Working Group [states that](#) PFAS are “highly toxic.”

PFAS Testing

The sheer number of PFAS makes testing for them a difficult task. “There have been over 15,000 PFAS chemicals released into the environment, but we only have the testing capability to identify fewer than 1% of them,” Segedie says. To determine if products contain PFAS, she and her team use organic fluorine testing, a test process used by many states and certification organizations. “Organic fluorine testing is a good

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indicator test because all PFAS contain organic fluorine,” Segedie says.

Because PFAS are so ubiquitous, trace amounts make their way into products without manufacturers intentionally adding them. Parchment paper and other food-grade paper products that contain fewer than 100 parts per million (ppm) of PFAS are generally considered to have no intentionally added PFAS. In identifying the best parchment paper options, Segedie looks for brands that have no more than 10 ppm of PFAS.

The Best Parchment Paper Options for Avoiding PFAS

Not all parchment papers are treated with PFAS. Here are the best options.

Uncoated Parchment Paper

Segedie’s top recommendation is to opt for uncoated parchment paper. Uncoated parchment paper can also safely be used again and again without leaching toxic substances and remains also one of the safest toxic-free choices for take-along food (like lunchbox sandwiches) and food storage.

One brand we like is [Baar Patapar Cooking Parchment Paper](#)

Silicone-Coated Parchment Paper

Another option is silicone-coated parchment paper, which is treated with silicone, a food-grade synthetic polymer that is waterproof, greaseproof, and [nonstick](#), as well. “Our tests found that silicone-coated parchment paper has non-detect results for organic fluorine at 10 ppm (parts per million), so you are unlikely to find PFAS in silicone-based parchment,” says Segedie.

Brands to try:

- [If You Care Parchment Baking Paper and Baking Sheets](#)
- [King Arthur Natural Half-Sheet Baking Parchment Paper](#)
- [Katbite Parchment Paper Sheets](#)

Certified Compostable Parchment

Another way to find parchment paper that is relatively low in PFAS is to look for a “certified compostable” label. Compostable certification organizations usually allow only [up to 100 ppm total organic fluorine in paper products](#).

Can You Reuse Parchment Paper?

Parchment paper manufacturers often highlight the fact that their baking paper is reusable multiple times. While it’s safe to reuse uncoated parchment paper, such as Baar, Segedie advises against reusing coated parchment. “Because reused parchment paper is continuously exposed to heat, and food acids, it will continue to leach out the substances it has been coated with.”