



3 Expert Tips on How to Cook Without Oil

By Darshana Thacker Wendel
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Many people are surprised to learn that it's easy to cook great food without oil or butter. Besides being healthier, it's not hard to make the switch to oil-free cooking. You'll still steam, poach, boil, and stew your dishes the same way. Here is a breakdown of how to sauté, stir-fry, bake, and roast without added fat.

Why Cook Without Oil?

Some oils are advertised as health foods. But no oil is really healthy, not even [coconut oil](#), flaxseed oil, or olive oil. Oil is purely fat (with all other nutrients stripped away) and contains more calories per gram than any other food. Read more on this subject from the FOK experts [here](#).

Choose the Right Cookware

It's extremely easy to cook without oil using **nonstick pots and pans**, because the food doesn't stick. If you want to avoid Teflon, then use a good-quality, heavy-bottomed stainless steel pan. Enamel-coated cast iron and ceramic titanium pans are also good options.

Use nonstick or **silicone ovenware** for easy release when roasting vegetables or baking preparing oil-free desserts. Or you can line your standard bakeware with **parchment paper**, as nothing sticks to it.

When cooking a dish that requires the final result to be dry, use a **flame diffuser** (aka flame tamer), which provides even heat without creating burn rings at the edge of the pan as the food cooks down. A diffuser is also useful when you want to cook something on the stove without giving it your full attention, so you can

focus on other tasks. It is also useful when your pans are not of good quality or you're making a dish that requires a low, steady heat.

Choose Your Oil-Free Cooking Method

- **Sautéing and stir-frying**—The most common question I get on this topic is how to sauté or stir-fry without butter or oil. The trick is to use small amounts of water or broth, adding just a small amount (1 to 2 tablespoons) at a time. Do this as often as needed to cook and brown the food, without steaming it. Also, remember to toss and stir the food periodically with a wooden spoon so that it doesn't burn.
- **Baking**—You can use a fruit purée as a healthy (and delicious!) substitute for fats like oil, butter, or shortening. Some of my favorites include applesauce, mashed bananas, and puréed dates. In some instances, nut flour or nut butters can serve as substitutions or additions.
- **Roasting**—There's no need to coat your vegetables or other foods with oil before roasting them in the oven. They might take a little longer, but they will eventually brown and roast nicely. Before placing them in the oven, I like to season my vegetables with spices, herbs, and either a little vegetable stock or a light water-soy sauce mixture.
- **Deep frying alternative**—It may take a little getting used to, but I'm confident that you will come to enjoy the not-greasy but still delicious (and far healthier) choice to bake your potatoes and veggies instead of deep frying them. You can even bake up delicious (eggless) breaded patties or veggies by lightly dipping them in a slurry of arrowroot powder or cornstarch mixed with either water or unsweetened, unflavored plant milk, and then coating them with whole-grain bread crumbs or cornmeal. Use nonstick, silicone, or parchment-lined baking sheets to achieve a crispy outer crust.

Experiment with Oil-Free Condiments

- **Sauces**—For dishes that normally use butter or heavy cream, you can create plant-based versions

(continued)

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by puréeing beans, lentils, or vegetables like cauliflower, carrots, or potatoes, along with nut or soymilk, nutritional yeast, miso, and/or nut butter.

- **Salad dressings**—For tasty oil-free salad dressing, you can whisk or blend some vinegar, spices, and herbs with fruit juice and a bit of pulp (for sweet dressings), or with nut or seed butter (to add a little creaminess to savory dressings). Here are three recipes to get you started: [Cheesy Caesar Dressing](#), [“Magical” Applesauce Vinaigrette](#), [Classic Dijon Dressing](#).

How to **ROAST** WITHOUT OIL

THERE'S NO NEED TO COAT YOUR VEGETABLES WITH OIL BEFORE ROASTING TO ACHIEVE NICE BROWNING. JUST FOLLOW THESE STEPS.

1 | PREHEAT
oven to 425°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

2 | PREP VEGGIES
Choose one kind, or mix and match. Cut veggies into similar-size pieces, and place on prepared baking sheet.

3 | DRESS & SEASON
Drizzle veggies with vegetable stock, lemon juice, or balsamic vinegar. Toss to coat well. Season with pepper, garlic powder, and any other herbs and spices you like. (Save salt for the end.)

4 | SPREAD 'EM OUT
For even heat exposure, arrange veggies in a single, roomy layer. Use a second baking sheet if needed.

5 | ROAST
Follow the cooking times below. If mixing tender veggies with firmer ones, separate them on two baking sheets to accommodate different cook times. Stir halfway through. Veggies are done when tender and browned but not charred. Salt to taste.

20min

Time it right

TENDER VEGGIES
15–20 minutes
▶ Asparagus
▶ Bell peppers, cut into chunks
▶ Mushrooms
▶ Whole green beans
▶ Zucchini/summer squash, cut into ½-inch thick rounds

FIRMER VEGGIES
20–25 minutes
▶ Broccoli florets
▶ Brussels sprouts, halved or quartered
▶ Cauliflower florets
▶ Onion wedges

FIRMEST VEGGIES
30–35 minutes
▶ Baby carrots, halved lengthwise
▶ Butternut/winter squash, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes
▶ Parsnips, cut into 1-inch chunks
▶ Potatoes, cut into 1-inch-thick wedges
▶ Sweet potatoes, cut into 1-inch-thick wedges

HOT TIP:
When roasting starchy veggies (potatoes, yams, yuca), try wrapping them in a tightly sealed foil packet for the first half of the roasting session. They'll steam and soften to tender perfection. Remove the foil halfway through so they can finish crisping and browning on the outside.

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