

Extension

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Bake it - Don't Fry it!

Sheila Gains, Family & Consumer Science Agent, Arapahoe County

Most of us know that fried foods contain more fat and calories than we should eat on a daily basis, but they taste so good. There is no need to avoid all fat to have a healthy diet. Adults and children need some fat for proper growth and development. The goal is to eat healthy fats in moderation.

Fat enhances the flavor and texture of food and helps you feel full longer. Because we develop lifelong preferences for foods in childhood, now is a great time to expose children to the taste of some lightened-up versions of traditionally fried foods.

Here are some tips for re-creating the crunch and flavor of some favorite fried foods with less fat and calories.



Tips:

- A breading of flour, corn starch, corn meal, or bread crumbs, a light mist of vegetable oil or cooking spray and a hot oven is the key to many oven fried foods.
- For a really crispy crust, add crispy ingredients to the breading (crushed corn flakes, crisp rice cereal, or toasted bread crumbs).
- Oven fried potatoes, sweet potatoes and egg rolls only require a light brush of vegetable oil or mist of non-stick vegetable spray, and a hot oven to create a crisp crust.
- Marinating chicken and other meats in buttermilk helps the meat stay moist and juicy on the inside, while developing a crispy crust.
- Some hard-to-brown foods might need a few minutes under the broiler to add color and a crisp texture.

Let's Talk

Children enjoy fried foods (French fries, potato and corn chips, donuts, chicken nuggets, etc.), as much as adults do. Providing them with a healthier version of some of their favorite fried foods might feel challenging. Introducing new foods will require some cooperation on your child's part and experimentation on your part to find the oven-fried foods the family will enjoy. To increase cooperation and acceptance, make children part of a taste test panel in your house, as you find the healthier version of foods you love.



Recipe for Health:

Oven Fried Chicken Tenders

Ingredients:

- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken tenderloins, or chicken breast, cut into long strips
- 1 cup fat-free buttermilk
- 2 ½ cups crispy rice cereal
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper (optional)
- Non-stick vegetable spray

Instructions:

1. Place chicken in a re-sealable gallon size plastic bag. Pour buttermilk over chicken and seal bag. Refrigerate chicken and buttermilk bag for 2 to 24 hours.
2. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.
3. Spray a wire cooling rack with vegetable cooking spray and put it on top of a baking sheet.
4. Combine rice cereal and the rest of the ingredients. Crush the cereal with hands as you mix with spices.
5. Remove chicken pieces from the buttermilk, shaking lightly to remove excess liquid. Roll each chicken piece in rice mixture. Use your hands to press extra mixture onto chicken.
6. Place coated chicken on wire rack and coat lightly with cooking spray.
7. Bake chicken for 10 minutes.
8. Remove tray from oven and turn chicken pieces over. Coat the second side with cooking spray. Return to oven and cook another 10-15 minutes, or until chicken is cooked through and the coating is a golden brown.

Baked Zucchini Fries

Ingredients:

- 2-3 small zucchini, sliced into fry shapes
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ cup low-fat buttermilk
- 1 cup dry bread crumbs (I like to use Panko bread crumbs)
- Non-stick vegetable spray

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 420 degrees F.
2. Lightly spray a cooling rack with nonstick cooking spray. Place on a baking tray.
3. Put flour and spices in one bowl, buttermilk in another and breadcrumbs in a third bowl.
4. Toss each zucchini piece in flour mixture, then dip in buttermilk and finally roll in breadcrumbs.
5. Place coated zucchini on the cooling rack.
6. Mist zucchini with cooking spray.
7. Bake 18-20 minutes, or until desired crispiness is reached.

