



COOKING

for Health

How a food is prepared and cooked is important when trying to select healthy choices. For example, a potato that has been fried in shortening will have much more saturated and trans fat than a plain baked potato. Let's take a closer look at some cooking methods and how they can affect foods.



GRILLED FOODS

When we refer to grilled foods, we are talking about foods that are cooked on an outdoor gas or charcoal grill or an indoor portable grill. This process uses heat to cook the food and does not require the use of additional oils or fats. Sometimes people marinate a food prior to grilling. As long as the marinade is low in fat, sodium, and sugar, the food will still be prepared in a healthful manner. Choosing a skinless grilled chicken breast from a restaurant menu can often be a healthy choice.

Baked Foods

Baked foods are generally prepared in the oven. If you bake meat or vegetables in the oven, it is not necessary to add oils or fats, particularly if the food has natural juices. Once again, healthy marinades or seasonings can also be added to the foods to enhance the flavor. Baked chips or fries are definitely healthier than fried versions.



FRIED FOODS

Foods fried in unhealthy fats, such as shortening, butter, stick margarine, or pork fat (lard), absorb trans and saturated fats. People that eat foods high in saturated and trans fats run the risk of increasing their cholesterol levels. Studies have proven that a high fat diet is often associated with high cholesterol and heart disease.

For people that like fried foods, a healthier alternative is to sauté the food in a very small amount of healthy oil, such as olive or canola oil. Although the food absorbs the oil and fats, these types of fats actually offer some health benefits to the body.



Discussion Questions

- What are your favorite baked foods?
- Which grilled foods do you like best?

Activities



1. In groups, determine which foods on your school lunch menu are baked or grilled. Are there any fried foods on the menu this week? If so, ask a food service representative to speak to your class about the methods used to prepare fried foods in your district.



2. As a class or in groups, compare and contrast a variety of baked and/or fried chips. What are some of the biggest nutritional differences between them?

3. Create an informative display in your classroom that compares unhealthy fats to healthy fats. Do further research on fats, if necessary, and use real examples and any items or information that are helpful in teaching about fats. Be creative!

4. Obtain a few restaurant menus. In groups, pick one member to be the waiter and then perform skits that show your group members ordering and selecting healthy choices from the menu.



5. Locate or create a recipe for a healthy baked food. Share the recipe with your classmates.



Home Connection

As a family, discuss the foods you regularly consume that could be prepared in a healthier manner. Describe a preparation method that would result in a healthier recipe. Share this information with your classmates.