

How to Choose Healthier Fried Foods

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While fried foods are very tasty, they're also not especially healthy.^[1] Despite this, fried foods are extremely popular around the world. Fortunately, there are several things you can do to choose healthier fried food. By thinking about the frying process, considering what fried food you're eating, and deciding on healthy fried recipes, you'll be better able to choose healthier fried foods.

Method 1

Method 1 of 3: Focusing on the Frying Process



1 Choose food fried in healthy oil. At its very base level, the healthiness of a fried food depends on the type of oil you use. Thus, you need to make sure you pick the healthiest oil possible. Healthier oils typically have less saturated fat and little to no trans fats, which is linked to heart disease and other health risks.^[2] Some healthy oils include:

- Sunflower oil
- Safflower oil
- Olive oil (though this is only suitable for low-temperature frying)
- Unhydrogenated coconut oil. This oil is high in saturated fats, but also contains lauric acid, which increases levels of "good" cholesterol.^[3]
- Avoid partially hydrogenated oil or oil with a lot of trans fats, such as palm oil or hydrogenated coconut oil. Coconut oil labels do not always give you the information you need, but avoid any that are liquid at room temperature or have any color other than clear (as a liquid) or white (as a solid).^[4]



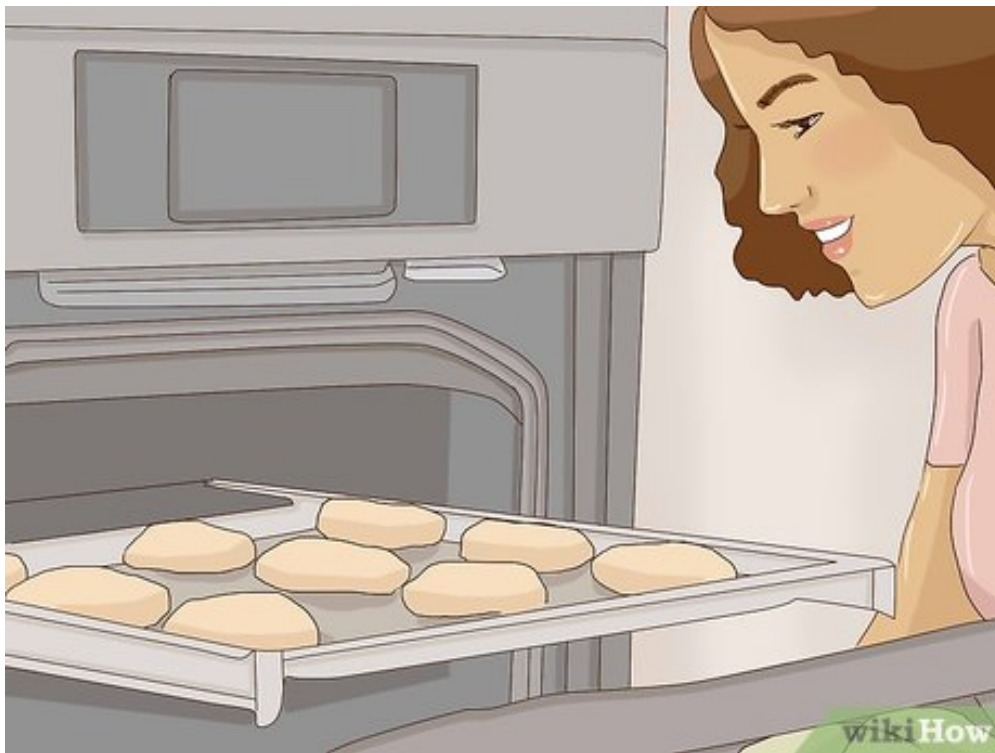
2 Choose an oil with an appropriate smoke point. Each oil has its own smoke point, the temperature when the oil starts to smoke. Smoking oil produces bitter, sometimes toxic fumes, and degrades its flavor, shelf life, and nutrients.^[5] Whenever possible, choose an oil with a smoke point lower than the temperature you plan to fry at.

- Canola oil, clarified butter, and refined safflower, sunflower, or coconut oils all have high smoking points.^[6] Olive oil and most unrefined oils should only be used in low-temperature frying.
- Refined oils have a higher smoking point than their unrefined counterparts. These tend to be less healthy than unrefined oils, unfortunately, but some refinement processes are less damaging than others.



3 Understand the effect of temperature. There is a common myth that low-temperature oil will make your food absorb more oil. Surprisingly, although these foods can *taste* greasier or soggy if they fail to develop a crisp exterior, they actually contain *less* fat than food fried at higher temperatures.^[7] This doesn't mean you should lower the temperature of all your fried dishes (since this has a major effect on taste and texture), but it does mean that recipes with longer, lower-temperature frying methods contain significantly less fat than standard fried recipes.

- If you aren't following a recipe, it's generally best to preheat the oil between 365 to 375 degrees Fahrenheit (185 to 190 degrees Celsius), or wait until the oil is shimmering but not smoking.
- Foods should be properly defrosted. For example, do not ever fry frozen food.
- Try using a frying thermometer to gauge the temperature of your oil. ^[8]



4 Try oven fried food. Oven frying is done in the oven and uses much less oil than deep frying. Thus, oven fried food contains less saturated fat and usually has more nutritional value.

- Bread your chosen food.
- Coat a baking sheet or tray with a cooking oil.
- Place your food in the oil and bake it until the bottom side is golden brown. You might have to check it every few minutes.
- Flip the food and bake until the other side is golden brown. [9]



5 Make sure the food is drained properly. Some people tend to overlook the importance of draining fried food. Ultimately, by draining a fried food properly, you not only remove excess oil, but you improve the taste of the food.

- Take the food out of the oven or fryer and place it in a metal colander over a plate.
- Allow the food a couple minutes to drain properly before removing it from the colander.
- Dab the fried food with a cotton paper towel or something similar to sop up any extra oil.^[10]

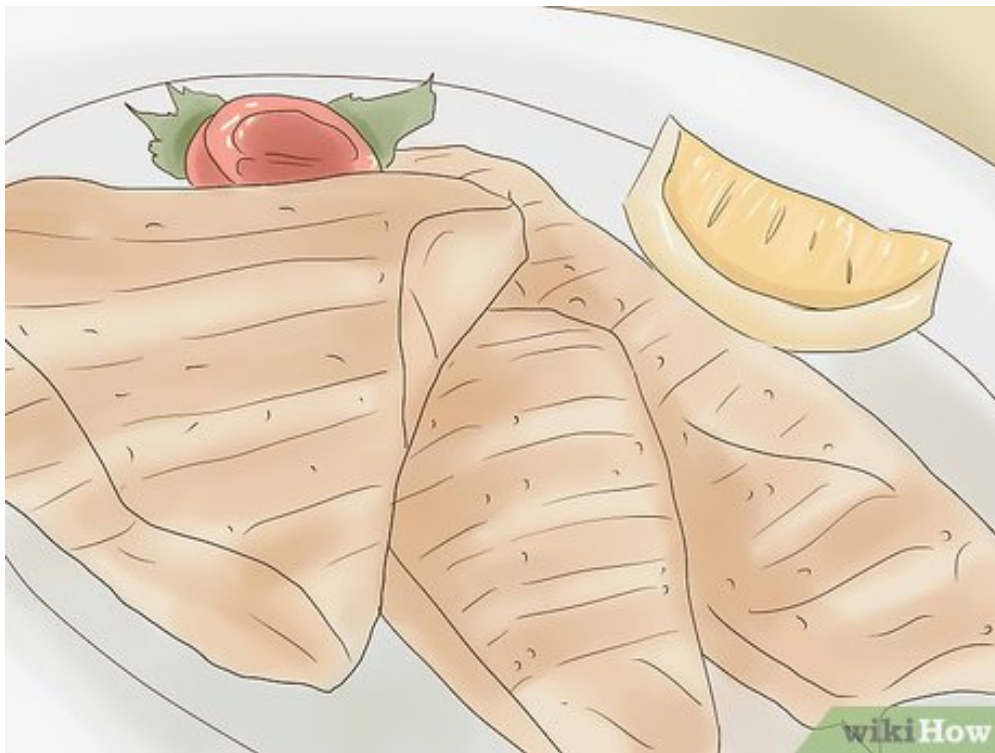


6 Discard leftover oil. Heat lowers oil's smoke point, the temperature at which beneficial fats start to break down, and the oil becomes more vulnerable to turning rancid.^[11] Because of this, it's a bad idea to reuse oil that's already been heated. Tip the contents of the pan or fryer into the trash can, then store the bottle of oil in a cool, dark place.



1 Eat fried vegetables. While frying a food necessarily decreases the healthiness of it, by picking a healthy fried food, you'll help come to a compromise between health and tastiness. Thus, make a list of your favorite vegetables and consider eating fried versions of them. Try fried:

- Eggplant
- **Okra**
- Green tomatoes^[12]



2 Consume fried lean meats. When you eat meat that is fried, make sure it is lean. Ultimately, eating fatty fried food hurts your health doubly since you're consuming extra fats. Thus, make sure you pick the fried meat you eat carefully.^[13]

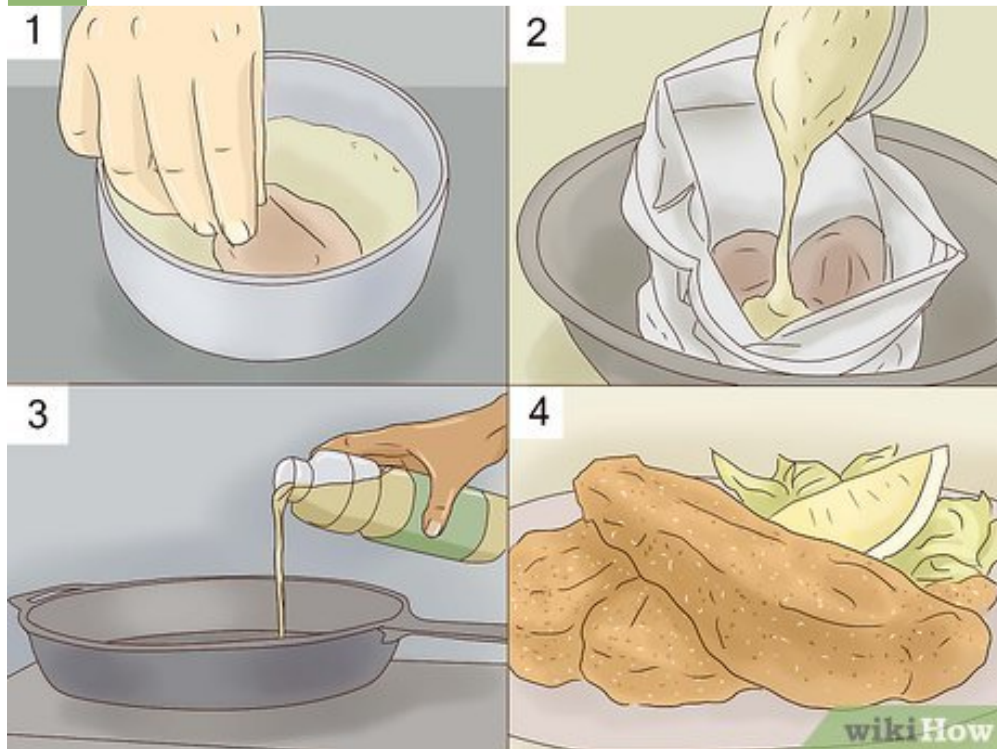
- Think about eating fried poultry like chicken or turkey.
- Try to choose fried meats that are unprocessed. For instance, chicken nuggets made with fillers are usually not very healthy.
- Foods like corn dogs are unhealthy because of the frying process, the batter, and the meat.^[14]



3 Think about the breading or batter. Next to what you're frying and the oil itself, the batter you choose to use has a big impact on the healthiness of the food. At the end of the day, picking a healthier batter can drastically improve the healthiness of your fried food.

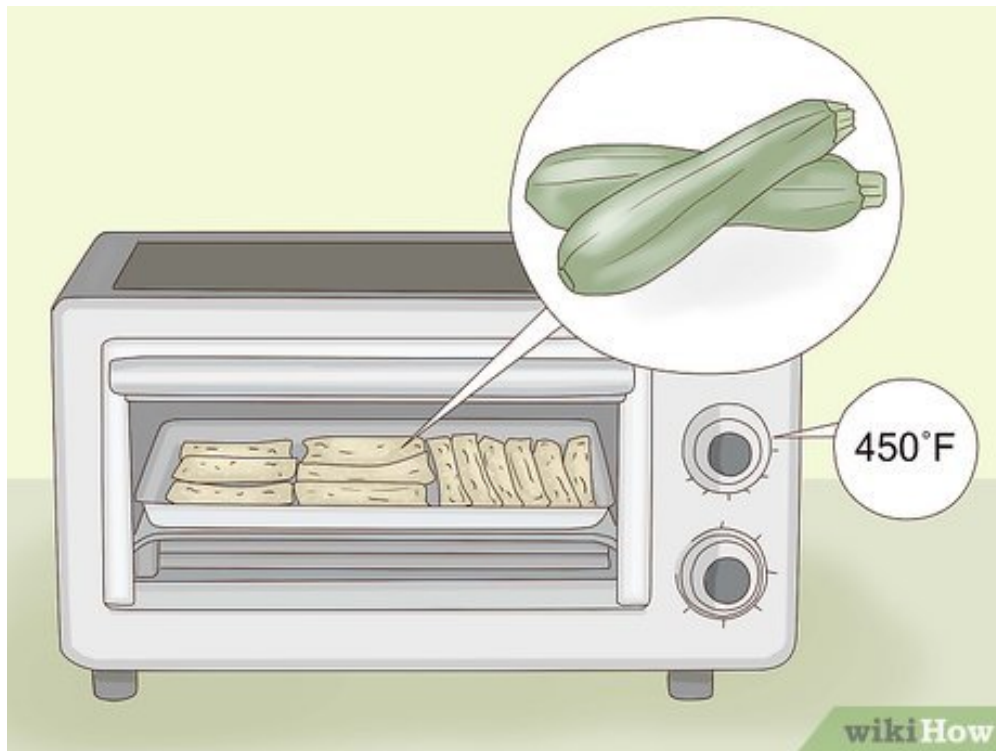
- Go for a lighter breading, if possible. The less breading or batter, the less oil it will absorb.
- Use cornmeal or rice flour. This will decrease oil absorption.
- Try a batter that has a leavener or carbonation. This will lessen the amount of oil the batter absorbs.^[15]

Method 3 of 3: Cooking Healthier Fried Food



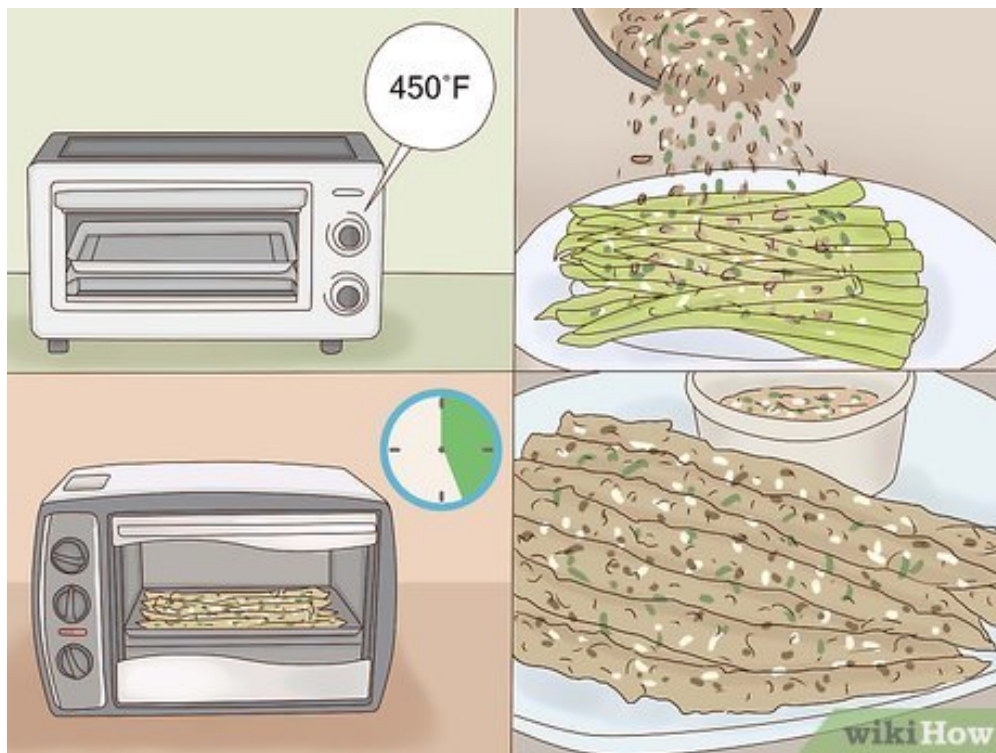
1 Make healthier fried chicken. Fortunately, many of your favorite dishes, like fried chicken, can be made healthier through a couple alterations to the recipe. To make healthier fried chicken:

- Fix your favorite breading or batter the way you normally do. However, decrease the amount of batter on each piece of chicken, if possible.
- Take your chicken pieces and dip them in egg.
- Drop your chicken in a freezer bag with your batter.
- Heat a skillet on medium high on your oven top.
- Coat the bottom of the skillet to about an eighth of an inch with vegetable oil.
- Fry your chicken pieces until they are golden brown.^[16]



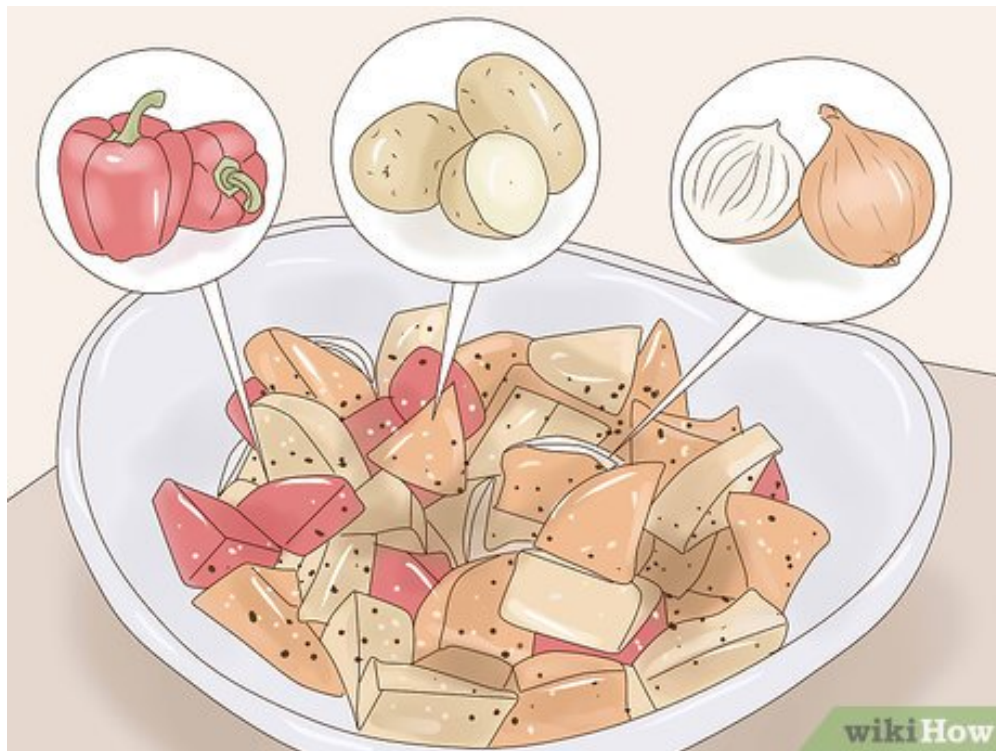
2 Create oven-fried zucchini sticks. Oven-fried zucchini sticks are healthy because they're not deep fried and because zucchini is a very healthy vegetable. In the end, they're also a tasty and enjoyable snack for your whole family. To create oven-fried zucchini sticks:

- Preheat your oven to 450 degrees Fahrenheit (232 Celsius).
- Mix together cornmeal, flour, salt, and pepper in a bowl or a freezer bag.
- Take medium-sized slices of zucchini and dip them in egg white.
- Drop your zucchini slices in the bowl or freezer bag with the cornmeal and flour mixture.
- Generously coat a baking sheet or tray with cooking oil.
- Place your zucchini slices on the tray, put them in the oven for 8 to 10 minutes, and then flip them. Cook for another 8 or 10 minutes and then remove them from the oven.[17]



3 Oven-fry asparagus spears. This is a treat where you'll take a healthy vegetable and fry it to create a delicious snack or side. What makes this an even healthier treat is that it uses the oven-fried approach, rather than the deep-fried approach. Thus, your asparagus and its batter will absorb less oil.

- Turn the oven on to 450 degrees Fahrenheit (232 Celsius).
- Coat a cooking tray with vegetable oil.
- Place 1/3 cup of low fat mayo, 2 scallions finely chopped, 2 tablespoons of miso, 1 teaspoon of chile-garlic sauce, and ½ teaspoon of sesame oil in a bowl and mix them together.
- Put your asparagus on a dish and drizzle ½ of the mayo and miso mixture on top. Make sure each asparagus spear is coated with the mixture. Then, sprinkle panko crumbs onto the asparagus. Roll them around in it, to make sure they are coated with panko, too.
- Place the asparagus spears on the oiled tray and cook them for 20 to 25 minutes. When they're golden brown, serve them with the remaining mayo and miso mixture.^[18]



4 Use a pan to fry healthier hash browns. Pan-fried hash browns make a wonderful alternative to fries because they absorb less oil. In addition, you can add a variety of ingredients to your hash browns to make them tastier and more nutritious. To make pan-fried hash browns:

- Finely dice 1/4th of a medium onion and 1/4th of a medium red bell pepper.
- Peel and shred 3 medium russet potatoes.
- Put 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil in a large cast iron skillet and turn the heat to medium-high. Add your onions and peppers. After 1 minute, put in your potatoes.
- Add pepper and as little salt as you can.
- After 3 to 5 minutes, begin to flip the hash browns.
- Remove them when both sides are golden brown.^[19]



Expert Q&A

Question

Can I eat fried food while dieting?



Lyssandra Guerra
Certified Nutrition & Wellness
Consultant
Expert Answer

Fried foods are not good for you if you're trying to maintain a healthy liver.

Helpful ☐ Not Helpful ☐

Question

What are the healthiest oils to use?



Lyssandra Guerra
Certified Nutrition & Wellness
Consultant
Expert Answer

Olive oil and avocado oil are both tasty and versatile. They're also both healthy for you in moderate amounts.

Helpful 0 Not Helpful 0

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About This Article



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This article was co-authored by **Lyssandra Guerra**. Lyssandra Guerra is a Certified Nutrition & Wellness Consultant and the Founder of Native Palms Nutrition based in Oakland, California. She has over five years of nutrition coaching experience and specializes in providing support to overcome digestive issues, food sensitivities, sugar cravings, and other related dilemmas. She received her holistic nutrition certification from the Bauman College: Holistic Nutrition and Culinary Arts in 2014. This article has been viewed 4,562 times.

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1 votes - 100%

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