

9 Buffet Foods You Should Skip (and Why)



Buffets are a popular dining choice for those looking for variety and value. From lavish spreads in hotels to the local all-you-can-eat joints, the allure of endless options can be irresistible. However, not all buffet foods are created equal. Avoiding some dishes for health, taste, and overall value is best. Here's a guide to the buffet foods you might want to skip during your next visit.

1. Creamy Salads: A Hidden Calorie Bomb



Starting off the buffet with a plateful of creamy salads—think potato, coleslaw, or macaroni—might seem harmless, but these often include large amounts of mayonnaise and other high-calorie ingredients. A single serving can contain more than half your daily recommended fat intake. The high calorie count isn't the only issue; these salads are also typically low in nutrients, making them a poor choice compared to fresher, greener options.

2. Fried Foods: Crispy but Costly to Your Health



Fried foods are a staple at many buffets, but they are among the least healthy choices. Items like fried chicken, tempura, or spring rolls are high in trans fats and calories, contributing to heart disease and weight gain. Plus, these foods often sit out for extended periods, leading to a decrease in quality and an increase in oil absorption, making them even more unhealthy.

3. Processed Meats: Sodium and Preservative Overload



Cold cuts and other processed meats are common in buffet spreads. While they provide easy-to-eat options, they are heavy in sodium and preservatives like nitrates, which are linked to various health issues, including increased risk of cancer. Opting for freshly carved meats can be a healthier alternative that doesn't sacrifice flavor.

4. Pre-made Pasta Dishes: Heavy and Often Overcooked



Pasta dishes at buffets are typically pre-made and kept warm for an extended period, often leading to overcooked, mushy textures. Additionally, these dishes are frequently prepared with heavy, creamy sauces that can feel overly filling and derail dietary goals. Choosing lighter, freshly made options, or even a simple drizzle of olive oil with herbs, can be a tastier, healthier way to enjoy pasta.

5. Excessive Sushi: Questionable Freshness and Quality



Sushi at buffets can be risky due to concerns about the freshness of the seafood. Buffet sushi is often made in large batches and can sit out beyond the recommended time limits, potentially leading to food safety issues. It's also usually simpler rolls filled with surimi or vegetables, which are less satisfying than freshly made sushi from a dedicated restaurant.

6. Desserts: Sugar-Filled Temptations



Buffet desserts like cakes, pies, and pastries are tempting but generally packed with sugars and unhealthy fats. Overindulging in these sweet treats can lead to a spike in blood sugar, followed by a rapid crash, which might leave you feeling tired and unsatisfied. If you desire something sweet, look for fruit or smaller portions of desserts that offer a taste without the calorie overload.

7. Canned Vegetables: Lacking in Flavor and Nutrients



While fresh vegetables are a great addition to any meal, but their canned counterparts, often found in buffets, lack many benefits. Canned vegetables can have diminished nutrient levels and are typically loaded with added sodium to enhance shelf-life and taste. Freshly steamed or raw vegetables provide better flavor and more health benefits.

8. Pre-made Seafood Dishes: A Breeding Ground for Bacteria



Seafood needs to be handled and cooked correctly to prevent foodborne illnesses, and buffet settings often fall short. Dishes like seafood salads or pre-made fish entrees can be breeding grounds for bacteria if not kept at the proper temperature. Opting for freshly cooked seafood dishes can reduce the risk of consuming spoiled food.

9. Mystery Stews and Casseroles: Unidentified Ingredients, Unwanted Calories



Often made from leftovers or a mix of ingredients nearing their expiration, stews and casseroles at buffets can be calorie-dense and filled with fat. They may also include ingredients that cause dietary intolerances, such as gluten or dairy, hidden amidst the mix. Opting for dishes where you can identify all the components allows better dietary control.

Make Smart Choices When Eating Buffet Foods



Buffets offer a fantastic variety of dishes, but not every option is worth your plate space. By choosing wisely and avoiding certain foods, you can enjoy a healthier, more satisfying meal without the post-buffet regret. Next time you're at a buffet, remember that the quality of your choices matters just as much as the quantity. This approach not only ensures a better dining experience but also aligns with a healthier lifestyle.

Read More:

[11 Garden Vegetables You Can Cook in an Air Fryer](#)

[Health Myths Busted: 12 Things You Thought Were Bad for You but Aren't](#)

11 Garden Vegetables You Can Cook in an Air Fryer



In the realm of kitchen gadgets, the air fryer has surged in popularity for its ability to deliver crispy, delicious food without the excessive use of oil. This magic appliance isn't just for frozen fries or chicken wings; it's a fantastic tool for cooking fresh garden vegetables. Whether you're a seasoned gardener with a bounty of produce or someone who loves picking up fresh veggies from the local market, the air fryer can transform these garden treasures into delectable, healthy sides or main courses. Here are 11 garden vegetables that are perfect for air frying.

1. Zucchini



Zucchini is a versatile vegetable that takes on a delightful texture when cooked in an air fryer. Sliced into rounds or batons, they become irresistibly crispy on the outside and tender on the inside. Zucchini fries or chips can be a healthier alternative to traditional potato versions, offering a great way to use up the summer squash abundance.

2. Brussels Sprouts



Once the bane of many a childhood dinner, Brussels sprouts have made a culinary comeback, especially when they're air-fried. The high heat of the air fryer chars the outer leaves while keeping the interior soft and sweet. Halve them for quicker cooking, and consider adding a bit of balsamic vinegar before air frying for a delightful tang.

3. Carrots



When roasted, carrots develop a deep, sweet flavor; the air fryer accelerates this process, creating caramelized edges and a tender heart. Cut carrots into sticks or rounds before air frying, or use baby carrots for an easy, nutritious snack or side dish that even kids will love.

4. Sweet Potatoes



Sweet potatoes are a nutritious powerhouse, and air frying them makes them a crispy treat. Whether you prefer sweet potato fries, cubes, or slices, the air fryer delivers a crispy exterior and a fluffy, sweet interior without the need for deep frying.

5. Bell Peppers



Sliced bell peppers become wonderfully blistered and sweet in the air fryer. You can toss them with a bit of olive oil and seasoning for a quick side dish or include them as part of a mixed vegetable medley. Their natural sweetness is enhanced, making them a hit even with those who might not be big fans of peppers.

6. Green Beans



Green beans are another garden vegetable that takes well to air frying, becoming crispy and flavorful. A quick toss with garlic powder and a sprinkle of salt before air frying can transform these humble beans into a crunchy, addictive snack or side.

7. Asparagus



Asparagus spears turn wonderfully tender and slightly charred when cooked in an air fryer. Their natural flavors intensify, making them a perfect pairing with a squeeze of lemon and a sprinkle of Parmesan cheese for a gourmet touch.

8. Broccoli



Broccoli florets become crispy and fantastically flavorful in the air fryer, with the edges taking on a delightful char. This method can convert even self-proclaimed broccoli skeptics, offering a crispy, delicious way to enjoy this nutrient-rich vegetable.

9. Cauliflower



Like broccoli, cauliflower transforms in the air fryer, with the florets becoming crispy, golden, and irresistible. When tossed in your favorite spices before air frying, cauliflower can take on a whole new level of flavor, making it a versatile side dish.

10. Eggplant



Eggplant slices or cubes become wonderfully tender and slightly crispy when air-fried. It's a great way to enjoy this vegetable without it becoming greasy, as it often does when fried. Seasoned with herbs and spices, air-fried eggplant can be a delightful vegetarian treat.

11. Kale



Kale might not be the first vegetable that comes to mind for air frying, but it makes excellent chips. Torn into pieces, massaged with a bit of oil, and seasoned, kale cooks down into crunchy chips that are a healthier alternative to store-bought snacks.

Embracing the Air Fryer for Garden Vegetables



The versatility of the air fryer means that the possibilities for creating tasty meals are essentially endless. You can experiment with different seasoning blends, cooking times, and vegetable combinations to create an array of dishes that celebrate the best of what garden-fresh produce offers. So, next time you harvest your garden vegetables or return from the market with a basket full of greens, consider turning to your air fryer for a quick, healthy, and delicious cooking method that will make your vegetables shine.

Read More:

[Cooking on the Cheap: Snacking from Your Garden](#)

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5 Ideas for Using Up All That Basil



5 IDEAS FOR

Using Up All That Basil

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Using up all that basil growing in your [herb garden](#) initially sounds like it'll be an easy task. But now that we're deep into the summer season, you probably realize there's a lot

more of this pungent leafy herb than you ever thought possible.

If left alone to grow, many herbs will eventually start to flower. This turns the flavorful foliage bitter and unappetizing. The key to growing herbs and keeping them from bolting is to harvest often. But when plant growth is in full swing, finding ways to cook with basil can be tough.

Here are 5 ideas for working with all that extra herb on your hands

Pasta

Ask your social network for ideas to use up basil, and they'll probably suggest pesto. But a person can only eat so much pesto. At some point, you'll get sick of it.

But you can pair fresh basil with pasta in more ways than just processing it into a garlicky green paste. One of my favorite ways to use this herb is to slice it up thin and add it to a squash-based sauce—[squash](#) is another veg you probably have too much of.

Need a recipe? This one is in my regular rotation, and it's easy to customize with what you have on hand: [Summer Squash and Basil Pasta](#)

Dry it

Drying or dehydrating the leaves is an easy way to use up an abundance of this tasty herb. If you plan on dehydrating many herbs, I recommend a dehydrator. Otherwise, use your oven and go low and slow to avoid burning the leaves.

Freeze it

This is another option for preserving basil. Depending on how you plan to use it, you can freeze it as a paste or with

leaves intact. In the dead of winter, when the garden is asleep, you'll thank yourself for putting in the effort to freeze your extra basil. Add cubes of frozen basil to soups, stews, and pasta sauce.

New pesto ideas

Okay, I know I said no pesto. But if you're bored of the usual pine nut and basil combo, there are some clever ways to turn basil into a pasta-ready sauce.

My two favorites include:

[Walnut Pesto](#)

[15 Minute Creamy Avocado Pasta](#)

Pizza

This is the obvious choice. Fresh basil leaves on pizza add a flavor boost that turns regular pizza into something a bit more gourmet.

Consider making a pesto pizza sauce if you want a convenient way to use up pesto that doesn't involve pasta. Pair the tasty pesto sauce with a few dollops of ricotta, fresh mozzarella, or goat cheese.