

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.

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[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



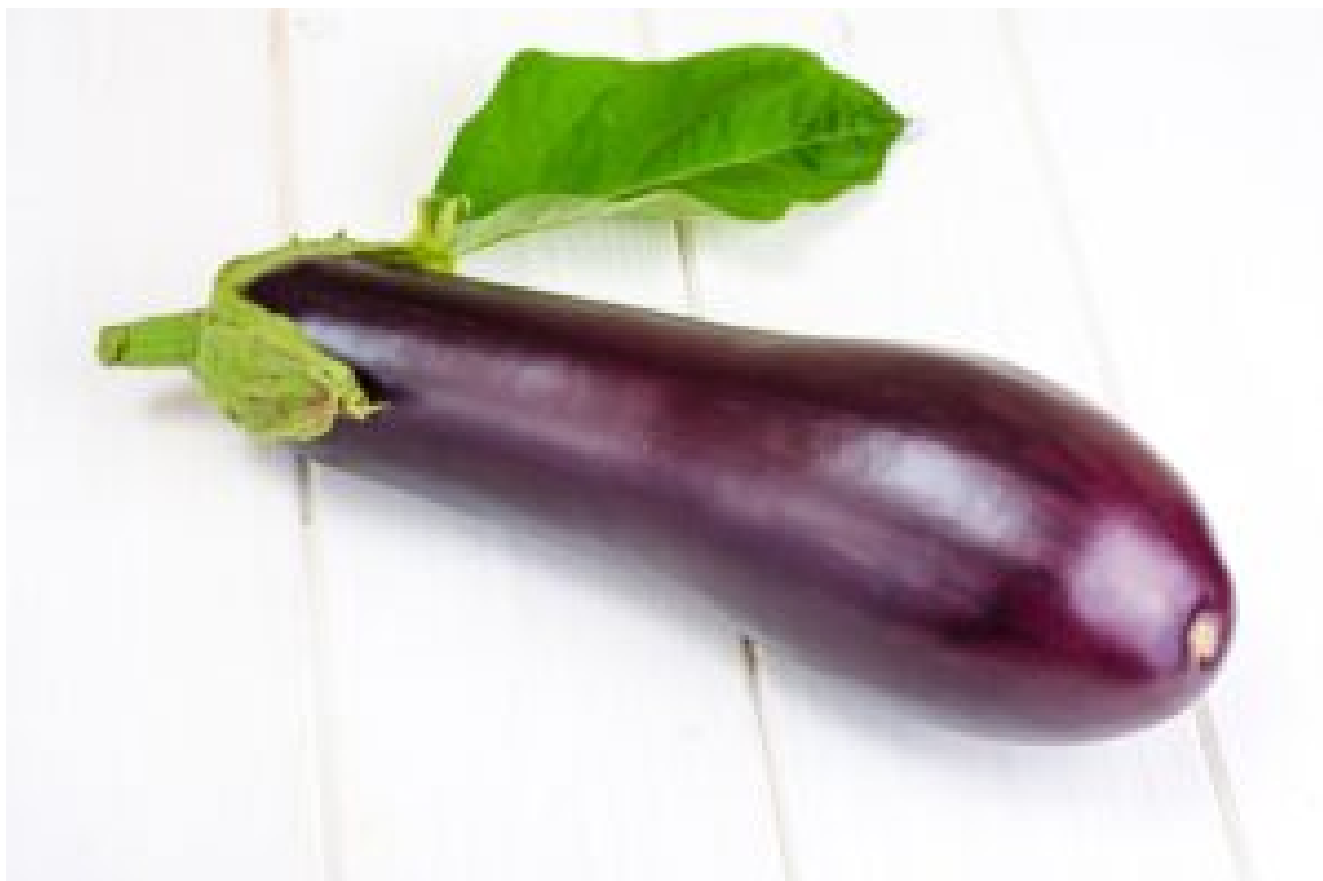
Broccoli florets become crispy and fantastically flavorful in the air fryer, with the edges taking on a delightful char. This method can convert even self-proclaimed broccoli skeptics, offering a crispy, delicious way to enjoy this nutrient-rich vegetable.

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.

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Health Myths Busted: 12 Things You Thought Were Bad for You But Aren't



In the age of instant information, distinguishing between fact and fiction can be challenging, especially when it comes to our health. Many beliefs we've held for years about what's harmful to our well-being are now being debunked by scientific research. Here's a look at 12 common health myths that may surprise you.

1. Eating Eggs Raises Your Cholesterol Levels



For years, eggs were villainized for their high cholesterol content, feared to spike blood cholesterol levels. However, recent studies have shown that eggs minimally affect blood cholesterol for most people and are a nutritious source of high-quality protein and vital nutrients like vitamin D and choline. Including eggs in your diet, in moderation, can be a part of a healthy eating plan.

2. Cracking Your Knuckles Leads to Arthritis



The unsettling sound of knuckle cracking has led many to believe it could cause arthritis. Yet, scientific evidence does not support this theory. The sound comes from gas bubbles bursting in the synovial fluid surrounding your joints, not from bones grinding. While habitual cracking isn't harmful, it's wise to avoid forceful or excessive manipulation, which could cause injury.

3. You Must Drink Eight Glasses of Water Daily



While staying hydrated is essential for health, the eight-glasses-a-day rule is not a one-size-fits-all requirement. Individual needs vary based on factors like activity level, climate, and overall health. Listening to your body and drinking when thirsty, as well as consuming fluids through water-rich foods, can adequately meet your hydration needs.

4. Microwave Ovens Make Food Radioactive



Microwaves have gotten a bad rap for supposedly zapping food with dangerous radiation. However, microwaves simply use electromagnetic radiation to heat water molecules in food. This process does not make the food radioactive, nor does it significantly diminish its nutritional value. Using microwaves is a quick, safe, and convenient cooking method.

5. Skipping Breakfast Is Bad for You



“Breakfast is the most important meal of the day” is a mantra many of us have grown up with. However, recent studies suggest that skipping breakfast might not necessarily be bad for everyone. Intermittent fasting and personal dietary rhythms mean that for some, waiting until later in the day to eat could contribute to better health outcomes.

6. Chocolate Causes Acne



The myth that chocolate leads to acne has caused unnecessary guilt for countless sweet toothed. Research has not found a direct link between chocolate and acne. Factors like hormonal changes and bacteria are more significant contributors to acne. However, maintaining a balanced diet is still essential for skin health and overall well-being.

7. Sitting Close to the TV Damages Your Eyes



Parents worldwide have warned their children not to sit too close to the TV, claiming it would harm their eyesight. Modern screens, however, emit much less harmful emissions than older models. While sitting too close might cause eye strain or fatigue, it doesn't cause permanent eye damage. Ensuring regular breaks and practicing good screen hygiene are more critical.

8. Eating Carrots Improves Night Vision



Carrots, rich in beta-carotene (which the body converts to vitamin A), are good for overall eye health, but don't expect superhero night vision. This myth originated from a World War II propaganda campaign. A balanced diet is key to maintaining healthy vision, but no single food can offer night vision capabilities.

9. Swallowed Gum Stays in Your Stomach for Years



The idea that swallowed gum remains in your stomach for seven years is a myth. While gum doesn't digest in the stomach, it passes through the digestive system relatively intact and exits the body during bowel movements. Swallowing gum occasionally is harmless, though it's not recommended as a habit.

10. Cold Weather Causes Colds



The common cold is caused by viruses, not cold weather itself. People may be more susceptible to getting sick in colder months due to spending more time indoors, where viruses spread more easily. Dressing warmly and practicing good hygiene are the best defenses against cold viruses, regardless of the weather.

11. Sugar Makes Children Hyperactive



The belief that sugar causes hyperactivity in children is widespread, yet research does not support this. Studies have shown no difference in behavior between children who consume sugar and those who do not. Factors like environments and occasions that typically involve high sugar intake (parties, holidays) may be more influential in changing children's behavior.

12. You Lose Most of Your Body Heat Through Your Head



The myth that we lose 70-80% of our body heat through our heads is an overstatement. While it's essential to wear a hat in cold weather to prevent heat loss, the amount of heat lost depends on how much skin is exposed, not just the head. Dressing warmly and covering exposed skin in cold temperatures is the best approach.

Watch Out for Health Myths



Ultimately, it's crucial to approach health myths with skepticism and to seek evidence-based information. By debunking these common misconceptions, we can make more informed decisions about our health and well-being. Stay curious, and don't let myths dictate your health choices.

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12 Unexpected Health Benefits of Gardening That Go Beyond Fresh Produce



Gardening is often celebrated for its ability to provide fresh, nutritious produce, but its benefits extend far beyond the bounty of fruits and vegetables. Here are 12 unexpected health benefits of gardening, showcasing how this humble activity can enhance physical, mental, and emotional well-being in ways you may not have considered.

1. Boosts Vitamin D Levels



Gardening requires spending time outdoors, which naturally increases your exposure to sunlight. This exposure is crucial for the body's synthesis of Vitamin D, a vital nutrient that plays a significant role in immune function, bone health, and inflammation reduction. With modern lifestyles leading to increased indoor time, gardening offers a delightful way to soak up some sun and boost your Vitamin D levels, naturally combatting deficiencies that are becoming increasingly common.

2. Enhances Mood and Reduces Stress



Engaging with nature through gardening has been shown to elevate mood and alleviate stress. The act of tending to plants and immersing oneself in the natural environment can trigger a positive mental state, reducing feelings of stress and anxiety. This therapeutic effect, often referred to as “horticultural therapy,” is being recognized for its potential to support mental health, highlighting gardening as a peaceful refuge from the fast-paced modern world.

3. Improves Physical Fitness



Gardening is a surprisingly physical activity that encompasses digging, planting, weeding, and watering. These activities engage multiple muscle groups and can be particularly beneficial for maintaining flexibility, strength, and endurance. Regular gardening can contribute to overall physical fitness, offering a moderate level of exercise that is both enjoyable and productive.

4. Promotes Mindfulness and Presence



The meticulous nature of gardening tasks requires focus and attention to detail, fostering a state of mindfulness. This present-moment awareness can be meditative, allowing gardeners to connect deeply with the environment, their plants, and themselves. Gardening encourages a break from digital screens and the hustle of daily life, promoting a serene mindfulness that benefits overall well-being.

5. Encourages Healthy Eating Habits



Growing your own food naturally leads to a greater inclination towards consuming fresh fruits and vegetables, promoting healthy eating habits. The satisfaction of eating produce you've grown yourself can also increase your willingness to try new foods and diversify your diet. This direct connection with the food source can inspire a more sustainable and nutritious lifestyle.

6. Enhances Cognitive Function



Gardening can stimulate cognitive development and function, offering a unique combination of physical activity, cognitive challenges, and sensory stimulation. Planning a garden layout, learning about different plants, and solving the inevitable problems that arise can keep the mind sharp and engaged. This mental exercise is especially beneficial as we age, with studies suggesting that gardening can reduce the risk of cognitive decline.

7. Fosters Social Connections



Community gardens and gardening clubs provide opportunities to connect with others, creating a sense of community and feelings of belonging. Sharing gardening tips, seeds, or produce can lead to meaningful social interactions and friendships. These connections are essential for mental health, and combating feelings of isolation and loneliness.

8. Reduces Exposure to Chemicals



Growing your own produce means you have control over the use of pesticides and fertilizers, allowing for more organic and chemical-free fruits and vegetables. This reduction in chemical exposure is not only beneficial for your health but also for the environment, promoting a more sustainable approach to food production.

9. Improves Sleep Quality



Physical activity associated with gardening can contribute to better sleep quality. Engaging in outdoor activities, especially in the evening, can help regulate a person's circadian rhythm, leading to more restful and restorative sleep. The stress-reducing effects of gardening also play a role in combating insomnia and improving overall sleep patterns.

10. Provides Sensory Stimulation



Gardening engages all the senses in a way few other activities can. The scent of flowers, the texture of soil, the sounds of nature, the taste of fresh produce, and the sight of blooming plants can provide a rich sensory experience. This stimulation is particularly beneficial for children and individuals with sensory processing issues, supporting sensory integration and development.

11. Encourages Environmental Stewardship



Gardening fosters a deeper connection to the environment and an understanding of the natural world. In many cases, this connection can lead to increased environmental awareness and a sense of responsibility for the planet's health. Gardeners are often more inclined to engage in eco-friendly practices, such as composting, water conservation, and supporting biodiversity.

12. Enhances Hand-Eye Coordination and Fine Motor Skills



The precise tasks involved in gardening – such as planting seeds, pruning, and handling gardening tools – can improve hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills. These skills are essential for daily activities and can be especially beneficial for maintaining dexterity and coordination as we age.

Appreciating the Unexpected Health Benefits of Gardening



Ultimately, gardening offers a multitude of unexpected health benefits that extend well beyond the nutritional value of home-grown produce. It is a holistic activity that nurtures the body, mind, and soul, promoting physical fitness, mental clarity, and emotional well-being. Whether you have a sprawling garden or a modest collection of potted plants, the act of nurturing plant life can have profound effects on your overall health, making gardening a truly rewarding endeavor.