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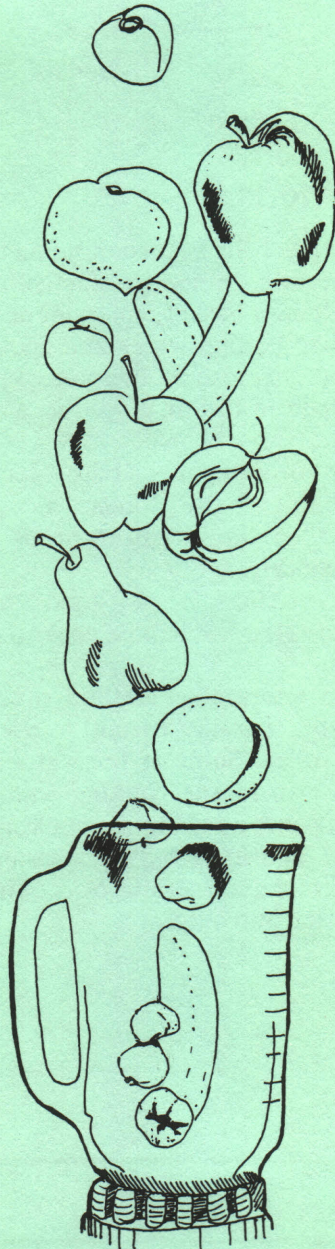
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Making Baby Food
Michigan State University Extension Service
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Making Baby Food



When your baby is ready to eat solid foods, you may want to prepare some baby foods at home. It can be convenient and money-saving to use some of the regular family foods. However, most of the family's food—prepared with salt, spices, sugar or fat—is unsuitable for infants. You will have to take time to prepare foods separately, or remove baby's portion before salt, sugar, or other seasonings are added.

Equipment can be as simple as a sieve or strainer, a blender or a baby food mill. However, baby food must be prepared under *strict sanitary conditions*. The information here will help you prepare baby foods correctly, and serve and store them safely. The information applies to babies up to 1 year of age.

Is baby ready for solid foods?

More and more pediatricians are recommending that babies *not* be given solid foods until at least 4 months of age, and preferably that parents wait until 5 to 6 months to begin cereal and other solid foods. Check with your doctor, nurse or dietitian before beginning solid foods. "**My Baby's First Food**" (*Extension publication C-594*) has more information on what, when, how, and how much to feed babies.

Your baby will not need pureed foods very long. Usually a baby 9 to 10 months old can begin to eat some "junior" or soft foods.

Cleanliness

Cleanliness is a *must* when preparing, storing, heating or serving baby food.

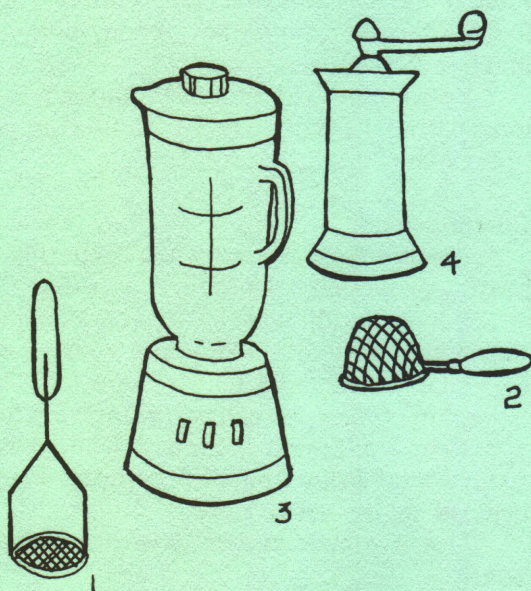
Before handling baby food, wash your hands thoroughly with hot water and soap. Clean your fingernails and check for infected cuts and hangnails. Infections can carry staph bacteria.

Keep equipment spotlessly clean. *Wash* in hot, soapy water. *Rinse* under hot running water and *air dry*. Do not dry with a towel.

Use a plastic rather than a wooden cutting board.

Equipment for Pureeing baby food

1. A **fork** or **potato masher** may be used to puree ripe bananas, cooked apples, winter squash, white or sweet potatoes, or carrots. Make sure the food contains no lumps, pieces of skin, strings or seeds.
2. Cooked foods may be strained through a fine mesh **sieve** or **strainer**. A sieve is also useful for steam-cooking small amounts of food for the baby. Be sure that all food particles are removed when the strainer is washed.
3. A **blender** will puree most foods, including cooked meats. Remove tough peels and seeds from fruits and vegetables before blending or they will be ground into the food.
4. A small, hand-operated **baby food mill** will prepare either raw or cooked foods. One advantage is that peels and seeds are strained out of the food and remain in the mill. A mill is less satisfactory for preparing meats, except liver and other organ meats.
5. A **food grinder** may be used to prepare meats. Meats puree smoother if ground with a fine blade first, then finished in a blender. A food grinder alone may be used to prepare meats for an older baby (10-12 months old).



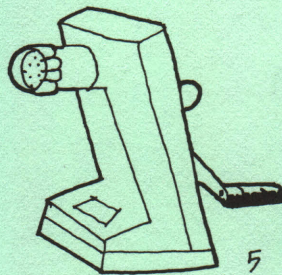
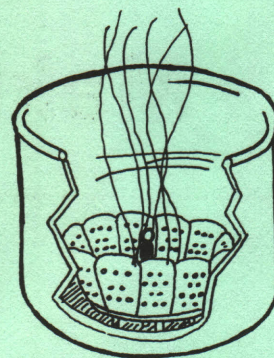
Cooking methods

Steaming is one of the best cooking methods to preserve vitamins and minerals, particularly for vegetables. Use a steam basket, colander or sieve to hold the food above boiling water and cook in the rising steam. Food may also be steam-cooked in an oven if it is wrapped in foil or placed in a covered roaster.

Roasting or **broiling** are both acceptable methods of cooking baby foods. Foods will probably need added liquid (meat broth or formula) to puree smoothly.

Microwave cooking is a good method, especially for vegetables that can be cooked quickly in very little water.

Boiling is an acceptable method of cooking vegetables and fruit, if you're careful to use only a small amount of water. Some of the water soluble nutrients will dissolve in the cooking water. You can save these nutrients by using the cooking water to thin the pureed food to eating consistency. Simmering is a recommended method of cooking lean meat to prepare it for pureeing.



Serving and storing Home-prepared baby food

Since baby food is usually pureed, ground or creamed, it will spoil more easily than other foods. Plan to use the food immediately or freeze it. A refrigerator only slows and does not destroy bacterial growth. *A general rule of thumb is to store baby's food in a refrigerator only 2 to 3 days.*

If you warm baby's food, do it just before serving. Warming raises the food to a temperature of 65° to 130°F, ideal for bacteria to grow. A baby's delicate digestive system is easily upset by careless handling of foods.

Warm the food in a custard cup in a covered pan of water, or in a microwave oven. Warm only the amount needed for each meal and throw away the uneaten portion. *Don't return it to the jar.* Baby's saliva will break down the food and make it runny. Also, bacteria from a baby's mouth will grow on the food.

Don't be afraid to serve foods cold. Most babies will accept cold food.

Feed solid foods from a small spoon. Bottle feeders are not recommended by health specialists.

Freezing home-prepared baby foods

Many mothers find it convenient to prepare several servings of baby food at one time and freeze the food in serving-size containers.



- Pour pureed food into plastic ice-cube trays, cover with waxed paper and freeze. When frozen, transfer cubes to freezer bags or containers. Seal, date and label contents. Keep frozen at 0°F (−18°C) no longer than one month.

or

- Pour pureed food into baby food jars leaving a generous (at least ½ inch) head space. Cover with caps and seal tightly. Date and label contents. Freeze. Store at 0°F (−18°C) no longer than 1 month.

Thaw only what you will need for immediate use. Do not refreeze baby food, as there is a danger of bacteria growth when the food is warm.

All meats and other protein foods should be thawed in the refrigerator or quickly in a microwave oven. Fruits and vegetables may be thawed at room temperature.

Canning

Canning baby food is not practical because the smallest canning jar available—1 cup—is too large for baby food. Instead, can vegetables unsalted and fruit unsweetened (use plain water instead of syrup).

Puree only what is needed for one meal. When a jar is opened, use for baby food or family meals within 2 or 3 days.



Fruits, vegetables, and meat products To prepare for baby

- Fresh and frozen fruit juice without sugar added.
- Home-canned and frozen fruits and vegetables without sugar, salt or seasonings.
- Fresh fruits and vegetables without sugar, salt or seasonings.
- Fresh or frozen meats, poultry or fish without added salt.

Unsuitable fruits, vegetables And meat products

- Fruit drinks and imitation-flavored fruit ades.
- Commercially canned fruits and vegetables (unless unsweetened, or unsalted, and packed in glass).
- Meat products with salt, sugar, seasonings and other additives (bacon, bologna, hot dogs, frozen meat pies, etc.).

Basic Recipes

For Pureed Baby Foods

Recipes are in one or two-serving sizes. Recipes may be doubled or tripled if you can store food in a freezer that holds the temperature at about 0°F (-18°C).

Fruits

Cooked or home-canned fruit

1/2 cup freshly cooked or home-canned fruit, or cooked dried prunes (all without sugar)

Use apples, pears, peaches, nectarines, apricots (not dried) or prunes

2-4 teaspoons liquid (unsweetened fruit juice, water or formula)

Remove skin and seeds (except apricot and prune skins). Press through a sieve, or place ingredients in baby food mill or blender and puree until smooth. Serve or freeze.

Hint: Cooking apples such as Jonathans and Winesaps are better than Delicious varieties.

Fresh fruit

3/4 cup ripe fruit (uncooked peaches, nectarines, *bananas, pears, apricots, apples)

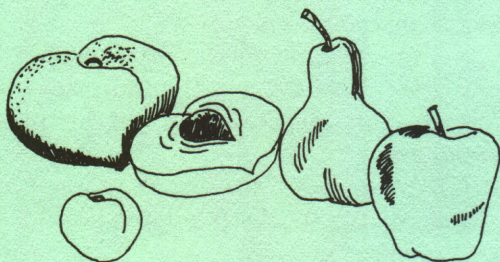
Do not add sugar.

1 teaspoon unsweetened fruit juice

1 teaspoon lemon-flavored water (1 teaspoon lemon juice to 1 cup water to prevent darkening)

Remove skin and seeds. Puree ingredients in baby food mill or blender until smooth. Serve or freeze.

**Bananas do not freeze well.*



Vegetables

Do not add salt, sugar or fat.

1/2 cup cooked fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables without salt (sweet or white potatoes, green beans, peas, carrots, yellow squash)

2-4 Tablespoons cooking liquid, formula, or water

Cook fresh vegetables or use frozen or canned vegetables without salt or seasoning. Read labels for ingredients to be sure.

Press vegetable chunks through a sieve or baby food mill. Thin with cooking liquid or formula to eating consistency.

Or, place cooked vegetable and liquid in a blender and puree until smooth.

Serve or freeze. Date and label contents, and freeze no longer than 1 month.

Note: After the individual vegetables have been fed several times, some good combinations are: potatoes and carrots . . . potatoes and green beans . . . carrots and peas.

Egg Yolk Puree

For babies over 6 months

Cook one egg in simmering water 15-20 minutes. Remove shells. Remove yolk and puree with 1 Tablespoon of formula or milk until smooth.

Serve; or date and label contents, freeze, and keep no longer than 1 month.

Note: Use only the yolk. Egg white is often delayed until late in the first year to avoid problems with allergies. Use the egg white in the family's casseroles, salads or sandwiches.

Meats

Do not add salt or fat

1/2 cup cooked meat (small pieces of chicken, liver, roast beef, turkey, pork)

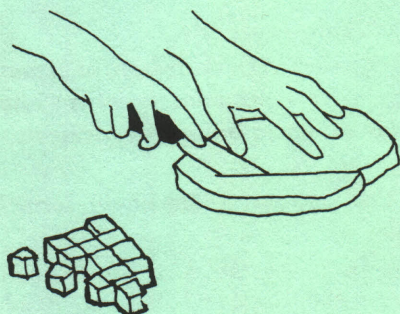
2-4 Tablespoons meat broth, formula or milk

Cook lean meat (fat, skin and connective tissue removed) over low heat in a small amount of unsalted water.

Puree meat and liquid until smooth.

Serve; or date and label contents and freeze no longer than 1 month.

Note: Meat may be ground in a food grinder for older babies (10-12 months old).



Combination Dishes*

Do not add salt or fat

1 cup cooked, cubed meat (no fat or connective tissue)

1/2 cup cooked rice, potato, noodles or macaroni

2/3 cup cooked vegetables

3/4 to 1 cup liquid (formula or milk; broth)

Serve; or freeze in serving-size containers. Label and date contents, and use within 1 month.

**Many health specialists do not recommend combination dishes. If you do prepare combination dishes, use them only after you have fed the individual foods several times.*

Custard

For babies over 10 months old.

3 egg yolks

2 Tablespoons sugar

2 cups milk, warmed

Mix egg yolks and sugar well. Stir in milk and mix well. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until mixture coats spoon.

Refrigerate; use within 2-3 days.

Additional suggestions

Do not feed spinach or beets to babies under 6 months old. These vegetables naturally contain relatively high amounts of nitrates. Some authorities suggest that home prepared baby foods may be more hazardous than commercially canned baby foods because some water supplies may be unusually high in nitrates. Water can be tested by the State Department of Health and Environment.

Do not feed babies salted foods. Some individuals are more likely to develop high blood pressure than others; studies suggest that feeding babies sodium in the form of salted foods or other sodium additives may help trigger high blood pressure later in life. Some sodium is necessary for good health, and is contained in foods naturally. A young baby does not need added salt. Foods that seem bland to an adult are a new taste experience to an infant.

Do not feed your baby raw eggs or raw milk

because of the danger of infection that these raw foods may carry. There is little nutrient loss during pasturization of milk.

Do not use "leftovers" to make baby's food. They are likely to have higher levels of bacteria than freshly prepared food.

Many pediatricians do not recommend combination dishes, such as meat-vegetable dinners and fruit desserts. The nutrient and calorie content of these dishes vary greatly, and may result in over- or under-feeding a baby. Commercially canned baby "fruit desserts" instead of fruit, and "soups" and "dinners" instead of meat and vegetables will provide fewer nutrients than the foods they replace, and thus are unsuitable choices.

If you do prepare combination dishes, use them only after you have fed the individual foods several times. This allows you to test for possible allergic reactions.

Consult with your health care advisor (physician, nurse, dietitian) about what is best for your baby.

A GUIDE FOR FEEDING YOUR BABY

FOODS	0-4 MONTHS OF AGE	5-6 MONTHS OF AGE	7-9 MONTHS OF AGE	10-12 MONTHS OF AGE
		Period of introduction of new foods See, "Baby's First Solid Food," p. 12 for further information.		
FORMULA (if not breast-fed)	22-29 oz. (660-870 ml)	If no other food, 29-32 oz. (about 1 quart); decrease amount as other foods are introduced.	2-2½ cups (480-600 ml) per day	2-3 cups (480-720 ml) per day
ADDITIONS				
Iron-fortified baby cereals		1-2 baby spoons, 1-2 times/day	2-3 Tablespoons, 2 times per day	2-4 Tablespoons, 2 times per day
Vegetables (include dark green)		1-2 baby spoons, 1-2 times/day	2-3 Tablespoons, 2 times per day	3-4 Tablespoons, 2 times per day
Fruits		1-2 baby spoons, 1-2 times/day	2-3 Tablespoons, 2 times per day	3-4 Tablespoons, 2 times per day
Fruit Juices (include 1 citrus fruit such as orange or grapefruit juice)			3-4 oz. (90-120 ml) per day	3-4 oz. (90-120 ml) per day
Meats Examples: meat, poultry, fish, egg (use yolk only until 12 months of age)			1-2 Tablespoons, 2 times per day	2-3 Tablespoons, 2 times per day
Breads, whole grain or enriched Examples: toast, crackers, hard biscuits			½-1 serving, as desired	½-1 serving, as desired
ADDITIONAL VITAMINS & MINERALS		Check with your health care provider		

FLUIDS—The baby needs more fluids for good health than is in the formula and juice suggested above. Water is the best drink to use.

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