

Ask the Expert: What is dietary diversity?

Written by Anali Morales-Juarez, MS, PhD-student, Department of Nutrition Science at Purdue University



Dietary diversity means eating many different kinds of foods. These can include cereals; roots and tubers; vegetables; fruits; meat; eggs; fish and other seafood; legumes, nuts and seeds; milk and milk products; oils and fats; and beverages. Eating different kinds of foods helps you get different vitamins, nutrients, and minerals, which can help prevent chronic diseases and nutrition related health problems.

Measuring dietary diversity helps people and organizations understand if a person or a community has access to enough different types of food. This is important for food security, which means having reliable access to enough food for a healthy life. By measuring dietary diversity, it can be easier for researchers to find and look for possible problems in food access and nutrition.

Where you live can affect the types of food you can get. If you live close to a big grocery store, you can buy many different foods. But if the nearest store is far away or doesn't have a lot of variety, it might be harder to find certain foods. All these things together affect the choices that fit in a budget, the food selections that you have and the dietary diversity. You can learn more about dietary diversity and healthful variety in a diet at <https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/what-is-myplate>



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Food Safety: Bagged Lunch Safety

Written by Olivia Romanovich, MS Student, Department of Nutrition Science at Purdue University

The beginning of the school year is quickly approaching, and that means parents across the state will be preparing bagged lunches for their children and themselves. It is important to consider keeping the food inside bagged lunches safe as they are carried from the house to the office or school. Here are some tips to keep food safe inside your bagged lunches to reduce the risk of foodborne illness:

- Keep perishable food cold to stop bacteria from growing

Perishable means that the food can go bad if not kept cool. Some common perishable foods in bagged lunches are lunch meat, poultry, and eggs. Keep cool packets or ice bags around these foods in bagged lunches or quickly get them back in a refrigerator to make sure they stay cool.

- Remember to stay safe and clean by washing hands, food, and utensils when preparing bagged lunches

Always wash hands for 20 seconds with warm water before handling food and packing a bagged lunch. It is also important to wash surfaces and utensils where food is prepared to prevent growth of bacteria or cross-contamination. Sanitize surfaces and utensils after preparing foods, by cleaning these areas and items with a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented, liquid chlorine bleach in 1 gallon of water.

- Prevent cross-contamination and foodborne illness when preparing bagged lunches

Harmful bacteria can be spread through a kitchen when preparing different foods on the same cutting board or with the same utensils. To reduce the risk of foodborne illness, use separate cutting boards for produce and raw meats or poultry.

- Reheat hot foods or leftovers to 165 degrees F to ensure safety

Be sure to use a food thermometer to guarantee that reheated foods reach 165 degrees F. Pack hot foods in an insulated container

Source: <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/keeping-bag-lunches-safe>

Fiesta Hummus

Directions

1. Drain and mash the garbanzo beans with a fork or in a blender/food processor.
2. Add in the yogurt, garlic, lime juice, sesame oil, chopped jalapeño peppers and cilantro. Make sure everything is well combined.
3. Mix in all the seasonings.
4. Serve hummus in a bowl. Enjoy!

Ingredients (4 servings)

- 1 can garbanzo beans*
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 2 garlic cloves (minced)
- 1/2 cup non-fat plain yogurt
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- 1 jalapeño pepper (chopped)
- 2 tablespoons cilantro (chopped)



Nutrition Facts (per serving)

Calories: 98
Protein: 5g
Carbs: 12g
Fat: 4g

***foods included in the
TEFAP (The Emergency
Food Assistance Program)**

Sources: <https://www.myplate.gov/recipes/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/fiesta-hummus>

Eating Right: How To Enhance The Flavor Of Your Meals

Written by Soneya Tamang, Purdue University Nutrition Science, Brain and Behavioral Sciences '25

Cooking is one way to save money and improve your eating habits. Making meals at home lets you control what ingredients you will use and can help you use less sodium, added sugars, and saturated fats that are often added to store-bought prepared foods. You can also make meals at home that better meet certain dietary needs, especially for those that have food allergies or other dietary restrictions. Cooking methods that reduce saturated fats like baking, steaming, or grilling can be used instead of frying. Cooking at home can also make you more mindful of the ingredients and foods that you eat and can help you see ways to improve your dietary habits.



Home-cooked meals don't have to be boring. Here are some tips to make your home-cooked meals more healthful and delicious:

- Use high-heat cooking methods, such as pan-searing, grilling, or broiling, to improve the flavor and browning of meat, poultry, and fish. But avoid burning, scorching, or overcooking meat.
- For a sweet, smokey flavor, roast vegetables in a grill or extremely hot oven (450°F). Sprinkle with herbs and lightly brush or spray with high smoke point oil like canola oil before putting them in the oven.
- Slicing onions and frying them slowly over low heat in a small amount of oil will caramelize them and bring out their sweetness. Use them to flavor meat or poultry.
- Use dry, sweet, hot, and green peppers in addition to yellow and red peppers to make dishes more colorful and to add new flavors. Alternatively, mix in some spicy sauce.
- Use grated orange, lemon, or lime peel or citrus juice to give a zesty flavor. Citrus fruits are acidic which can bring out the flavor of different foods.
 - Try new spices like paprika and curry powder to add flavor to foods.
 - Add a pop of flavor with condiments like ketchup, mustard, and pickles.



Send comments and/or change of address to:
Indiana's Emergency Food Resource Network
Department of Nutrition Science
Purdue University
700 West State Street
West Lafayette, IN 47907-2059
Phone: (765) 496-0271
Fax: (765) 494-9606
Email: earaya@purdue.edu
Website: www.purdue.edu/indianasefrnetwork/

This newsletter is edited by Emma Araya and Heather A. Eicher-Miller, PhD and is created by the Eicher-Miller Lab in the Department of Nutrition Science at Purdue University. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

In The News: Sharing Culture Through Food

Written by Emma Araya, Purdue University Nutrition and Dietetics'26



Food gives us a great way to connect to each other from our diverse cultures, backgrounds, and experiences. It can help bring people together since we all need to eat! By learning and experiencing food from different cultures and countries, food can help us understand more about the world and the backgrounds of people we share our community with.

According to the University of California Los Angeles, a lot of foreign cuisines were introduced in the U.S through immigration in the 1800s. The background of new Americans from all over the world had a significant impact of American cuisine and the dishes that are eaten around the country today. For example, General Tso's chicken, a dish with Asian inspired flavors, is one of the most popular dishes ordered through food apps in the U.S.

Eating dishes from different countries can also give you new ideas to try to add into your own favorite dishes. Take a look in the international section at your grocery store for new flavors to add to meals and visit restaurants featuring cuisines that are new to you to learn more about different cultures in your community.