



6 Dangerous Food Mistakes



Cancer causers at your cook-out? A hidden brain-damaging agent in your morning hash browns? Potentially fatal superbugs lurking in your supermarket meat? The research on our food system is enough to wipe out your appetite. Luckily, you can easily sidestep many food system threats as long as you avoid these 6 dangerous food mistakes...

Charring Your Meat

The Threat: Heterocyclic amines, or HCAs, are carcinogenic compounds created when meat is heated up. This barbecue bummer has been shown to increase the risk of breast, lung, stomach, pancreatic, and prostate cancers. **The Fix:** Master the marinade. The American Institute for Cancer Research found that marinating meat can lower HCAs by as much as 99 percent. A study found that marinating steaks lowered HCAs by 87 percent. Rosemary marinades are particularly protective. Food Safety Consortium tests found gingerroot, rosemary, and turmeric -- all high in antioxidants -- curb HCAs in cooked meat, even when cooking is at high temps. (Rosemary is most protective.) Using avocado oil can help, too. The oil -- rich in cholesterol-lowering monounsaturated fatty acids, has a high smoke point, reducing harmful oil oxidation.

Skiping the Soak

The Threat: A study in Environmental Health found more than 95 percent of preschool children ingested

potentially damaging levels of acrylamide, a naturally occurring compound formed when starchy foods are cooked at 250° F or higher. Based on lab animal studies, the International Agency for Research on Cancer classified acrylamide as a "probable human carcinogen."

Other scientists found a link between chronic dietary exposure to acrylamide and damaged nerve cells in the brain, signaling acrylamide could promote neurodegenerative disease, including Alzheimer's.

The Fix: You don't have to write off mashed potatoes. Before cooking any spuds, first soak the raw, sliced potatoes in water for two hours to slash acrylamide by nearly 50 percent. Low on time? Even a 30-second rinse lowers acrylamide levels by more than 20 percent. Whatever you do, avoid storing potatoes in the refrigerator -- that actually encourages them to produce more acrylamide during cooking.

Toasting Too Intensely

The Threat: Toasting your bread until it's very dark also sends acrylamide levels soaring. In fact, many processed foods like crackers and cookies contain acrylamide because the food industry created the high-carb snacks at high temperatures.

The Fix: Choose a lighter toast. Better yet, try baking your own bread. A 2008 Danish study found that adding rosemary to the dough before making wheat buns lowered the buns' acrylamide content by up to 60 percent. Even adding just a small amount of rosemary -- 1 percent of the dough -- significantly lowered acrylamide levels.

Indulging in Arsenic

The Threat: Two recent reports from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and Consumer Reports found worrisome levels of the carcinogen arsenic in rice and rice-based processed foods.

The Fix: Environmental Working Group, a consumer-advocacy group, suggests

rinsing brown rice through before you cook it. A good rinse could lower arsenic levels by 30 to 40 percent. (This doesn't work with white rice.) For babies, consider orange vegetables as a first food instead of rice-based cereal, suggests EWG.

Underestimating Unwanted Warm-Ups

The Threat: Picnics mean deviled eggs and macaroni and potato salad. But allowing these cookout staples to stay out too long could leave your guests with a nasty stomach bug.

The two main problems of foodborne illness in the U.S., are not cooking food to a high-enough temperature, and leaving food out at an unsafe temperature. Don't leave any food items out for longer than two hours, and in very hot, 90-degree-plus temperatures, take it inside after an hour.

The Fix: Scrub fruits and veggies used in salads thoroughly before cutting. Keep deviled eggs and salads cold -- packed in a cooler that's filled 75 percent with food and 25 percent with ice or frozen drinks or cold packs, to allow cold air to circulate freely. Cold food should be kept at 40° F or below.

Getting Sloppy with Superbugs

The Threat: According to a recent analysis, 87 percent of supermarket meat contains antibiotic-resistant bacteria, hard-to-kill germs that in some cases could be fatal.

The Fix: Simple food-safety measures like storing meat on the lowest rack of your refrigerator (away from produce), using separate cutting boards for meat and fruits and veggies, and using a food thermometer can help combat infections. While all meat should be treated carefully to avoid foodborne disease, choose organic when you can. Other tests have shown organic meats harbor fewer antibiotic-resistant germs, likely because they aren't from animals overfed antibiotics, the standard practice in industrial, nonorganic agriculture.

MONTHLY RECIPES



Crunchwrap Supreme

- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 tsp. chili powder
- 1/2 tsp. ground paprika
- 1/2 tsp. ground cumin
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 8 large flour tortillas
- 1/2 c. nacho cheese sauce
- 4 tostada shells
- 1 c. sour cream
- 2 c. shredded lettuce
- 1 c. chopped tomatoes
- 1 c. shredded cheddar
- 1 c. shredded Monterey Jack
- 1 tbsp. vegetable oil

1. In a large nonstick skillet over medium heat, combine ground beef and spices and season with salt and pepper. Cook, breaking up meat with a wooden spoon, until no longer pink, about 6 minutes. Drain fat and wipe skillet clean.
2. Stack 4 large flour tortillas and place a tostada shell in the center. Using a paring knife, trace around edges of shell to cut 4 smaller flour tortilla rounds.
3. **Build Crunchwraps:** Add a scoop of ground beef to the center of remaining 4 large flour tortillas, leaving a generous border for folding. Drizzle cheese sauce over each, then place a tostada shell on top. Spread sour cream over each shell, then top with lettuce, tomato, and cheeses. Place smaller flour tortilla cutouts on top and tightly fold edges of large tortilla toward the center, creating pleats. Quickly invert Crunchwraps so pleats are on the bottom and they stay together.
4. In the same skillet over medium heat, heat oil. Add Crunchwrap seam-side down and cook until tortilla is golden, 3 minutes per side. Repeat with remaining Crunchwraps.

Quesarito

For the beef

- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 tsp. chili powder
- 1/2 tsp. ground cumin
- 1/2 tsp. smoked paprika
- kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

For the cilantro-lime rice

- 2 c. cooked white rice
- 1 tbsp. lime juice
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped cilantro

For quesarito assembly

- 8 large flour tortillas
- 1 1/2 c. shredded Cheddar
- 1 c. Nacho Cheese Sauce
- 1/2 c. sour cream

1. **Cook beef:** Heat a medium skillet over medium-high heat then add beef, chili powder, cumin and paprika. Season with salt and pepper. Cook until beef is no longer pink, about 6 minutes. Drain fat.
2. **Make cilantro-lime rice:** In a medium bowl, toss together white rice, lime juice and cilantro using a fork. Set aside.
3. **Make quesadillas:** Heat a large nonstick pan over medium-high heat. When the pan is hot, add a tortilla and sprinkle cheddar cheese all over. Top with a second flour tortilla and cook until the cheese has melted, about 2 minutes per side. Repeat with remaining tortillas and cheddar to make 4 quesadillas.
4. **Build quesaritos:** Top the center of one quesadilla with some rice, meat, nacho cheese sauce and sour cream. Roll up into a burrito. Repeat with remaining ingredients.
5. Reheat the nonstick pan over medium-high heat. When the pan is hot, add two quesaritos and cook until the outside quesadilla is golden and slightly crispy, 3 to 5 minutes per side.

Nacho Fries BellGrande For fries

- 5 large russet potatoes, peeled and cut into thick strips
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. paprika
- 1/2 tsp. cayenne pepper
- 1/2 tsp. onion powder

For meat

- 1/2 lb. ground beef
- 1/2 tsp. chili powder
- 1/2 tsp. onion powder
- Kosher salt

For cheese sauce

- 3 tbsp. butter
- 1 jalapeño, seeds removed and minced
- 3 tbsp. all-purpose flour
- 1 c. whole milk
- 2 c. shredded cheddar cheese
- Kosher salt

For garnish

- 1 tbsp. sour cream
- 1/4 c. grape tomatoes, quartered
- 1 scallion, thinly sliced

Make fries: Preheat oven to 400° and toss potato wedges in olive oil. Season with salt, garlic powder, paprika, cayenne, and onion powder and spread in an even layer on a large baking sheet. Roast 15 minutes, toss, and roast 15 minutes more, or until potatoes are tender in the center and crisped on the outside.

Make beef: In a medium skillet over medium heat, combine beef with chili powder and onion powder and season with salt. Cook until no pink remains. Drain fat and set aside.

Make cheese sauce: In a medium sauce pan over medium heat, melt butter. Add jalapeños and cook until fragrant, 2 minutes. Add flour and cook until slightly darkened, 2 minutes more. Add milk and bring to a simmer, then whisk in cheese and let thicken, 3 to 5 minutes more.

Assemble: Top fries with cheese sauce, beef, and garnish with sour cream, tomatoes, and scallions.

Copycat Texas Roadhouse Rattlesnake Bites

- 1 c. shredded mozzarella
- 1 c. Shredded Monterey Jack
- 2 jalapeños, minced
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 c. all-purpose flour, kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 3 large eggs, beaten
- 1 c. plain bread crumbs
- 1 tsp. paprika
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp. cayenne pepper

1. Line a large, rimmed baking sheet with parchment. In a large bowl, mix together cheeses, jalapeños, and garlic.
2. Using a tablespoon, scoop into balls and squeeze tight. Place on baking sheet and freeze until solid, at least 30 minutes.
3. Set up dredging station: In a shallow bowl, add flour and season with salt and pepper. In another shallow bowl, add eggs. In a third shallow bowl, add bread crumbs, paprika, garlic powder, and cayenne. Mix to combine.
4. Roll frozen cheese balls into flour, then eggs, and then bread crumbs, repeating until all are well coated.
5. In a large, deep skillet, heat 1/4" oil over medium heat until shimmering. In batches, fry bites until golden on all sides, about 3 minutes. Drain on paper towels. Serve bites with ranch.

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