



Homemade Organic Baby Food the Whole Family Can Enjoy

So I was at a grocery store recently, looking in the organic / natural section to just see what was out there (as I actually had some extra time for a change!), and was shocked to see that a small jar of organic baby food (green split peas I think it was) was nearly a dollar for a tiny jar! I remember my momma mashing our baby food with a hand operated masher contraption and now really appreciate even more the work she did to feed us 4 kids healthy homemade food! I am not sure if jarred foods were as widely available back then, but I am glad we were able to enjoy some home cooking!

When I was cooking for my mom a few years ago (she has MS now, unfortunately, maybe all those kid duties wore her out!), I realized that I made a lot of things that could very easily be made into baby food with a blender or masher. Simple, comforting, wholesome foods that cooked easily and were not too spicy for the body in healing mode. So, with the caveat that I have not had children of my own, other than my cats and dog (who I do cook for actually!), I am putting some thoughts out there on simple foods and approaches for making your own baby food. I have had extensive experience caring for babies and children in college, though, when I was a nanny, so that has also given me some ideas here. And for those days when we all need some extra TLC, these are good soothing foods for all of us who are still babies at heart!

Basically, what makes a food appropriate for a baby? I think these three things are key - **texture** (well broken down / mashed / blended), **flavor** (simple flavors without a lot of spice), and **nutrition** (full of nutrients that the growing baby needs from their food).

The right kind of **texture** can be achieved a few ways: cooking foods for a long time in the crockpot for 8 hours or so helps a lot with this very simply! If you put a pound of dried organic split peas in the crockpot, add lots of filtered water (enough to cover plus an extra inch), turn it on high and let cook for 8 hours or so, the peas will naturally cook until they are falling apart and soft, and you have your baby food ready to go! Good comfort food for grownups too! Throw in some whole washed organic potatoes / sweet potatoes / yams / carrots / butternut / acorn squash sections (seeds removed, peel on), with the peas / beans and you have some variety of protein, carbs, and veggies, as well as different foods that everyone in the family can enjoy!

You can also make some fast cooking foods that are naturally already the right texture and avoid blending or mashing - quinoa, oatmeal, brown rice



flour, corn grits, cream of wheat are some simple ones. Just boil then simmer in filtered water for a few minutes until soft, let cool, and it's ready to go. Adults can add in their favorite fruits, nuts, seeds, and/or veggies for more variety. For foods that just need a little mashing or blending, just mash the baby's portion with a fork or hand masher or put in the blender for a minute with some of the cooking broth or filtered water to get the right consistency. Rinse the blender out with filtered water for the grownups to drink with some sea salt or maple syrup added for extra fluids, electrolytes, and help clean out the blender (and your digestive tract!)

For **flavor**, just leave the food unseasoned for baby, then add your own seasonings in at the end to your portion. Some of my favorite simple flavorings that are easy to add in after cooking are: organic olive / coconut / sesame oil, sea salt (in just about anything!); savory - cumin seed, turmeric powder, brown mustard seed; sweet - cinnamon, cardamom seed, maple syrup. Older kids might like to add their own spices to experiment with new flavors.

To get the right **nutrition**, you want a balance of protein, complex carbs, fats, and fruits and veggies. This is something we all need, though a growing baby will have different demands than an adult, of course.

Quinoa is naturally very high in protein, easily digestible and can be made sweet or savory very easily. It also cooks in 10 minutes or so, and can be made in advance earlier in the day or the night before (as can most grains and carbs and beans) and let to cool a bit so that when served it will be the right temperature. Other good protein sources are cooked beans / lentils / peas / tofu, as well as blended / ground nuts and seeds (like flax and sunflower seeds, as well as young coconut) if your baby is old enough for them. To get a balanced set of nutrition from a one pot / crockpot meal, you can cook several things together at the same time and then mix / mash them together or serve them separately, depending on your baby's and family's preferences.

For example, yams, red or green lentils / split peas (pour on one side of the crockpot), rice (pour on other side of crockpot), can all be cooked together in the crockpot, and then you can serve different proportions of the proteins, carbs, and veggies to each child / person depending on their nutritional needs at that time. For older kids and grown ups, you can also add some organic veggies at the end of cooking to your individual bowl - spinach, broccoli / cauliflower florets, cherry tomatoes, baby carrots are all good for this. For a sweet dish, you can make a big pot of rice and yams, and for the older kids and adults, add in some organic fresh or dried fruits, as well as some raw nuts or seeds and some cinnamon.

Here are some of quick cooking combination ideas that are suitable for a baby (with optional add-ins for older kids and grown ups), that you can



also tweak for different ages, food needs, and tastes. No need to pre-soak these beans / lentils, which makes it even easier! Just cook in the crockpot or on the stovetop until super soft and it will make preparing it that much easier! And remember, you only have to mash the baby's portion, which should save some time too. Enjoy!

Savory

- Corn grits / cream of wheat / quinoa & cooked mung beans (blended for the baby) (Add-ins: chopped spinach, cherry tomatoes, olive / sesame oil, sea salt)
- Split peas / Red lentils & potatoes / yams / sweet potatoes / carrots (Add-ins: chopped spinach or broccoli, cumin seed, organic oil, sea salt)

Sweet

- Brown rice flour or cooked brown rice (blended for the baby) / cream of wheat / oatmeal / quinoa & mashed bananas (Add-ins: coconut / soy milk, sesame / coconut oil, raw nuts/seeds like brazil nuts, sunflower seeds, cashews, pecans, sea salt)
- Oatmeal / quinoa / rice and yams / sweet potatoes (Add-ins: cinnamon, maple syrup, raisins, raw nuts/seeds like flax, sunflower, pumpkin, cashews, almonds)

Hope this helps make cooking for your baby, kids, and family a simpler process! Let me know of any suggestions, corrections, ideas, etc. from all you hard working parents out there!

Best,

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