

Note: this is available on <http://www.african-grey-parrot.com/African-Grey-Diet.aspx> and has also been published in the NAPS (North American Parrot Society) for an article on African Grey Parrot Diet, 1st quarter 2017. **This information is not just relevant to African Greys but to ALL pet birds.**

African Grey Diet and Nutrition

A variety of foods is important to providing the diet and nutrition that your African Grey Parrot needs to have a happy and healthy life. There are many differing opinions and thoughts on African Grey diet and nutrition, and there is no exact formula for feeding your companion parrot. Just provide the most balanced diet for your African Grey as possible.

As a base, a pelleted diet is the best for your African Grey. Preferably, an organically processed pellet, and not one that has additives—such as artificial coloring and flavoring. Seeds are high in fat and are not considered a healthy diet for your African Grey Parrot. Vitamin supplements should not be given to your African Grey without talking to your avian veterinarian. Most African Greys that are on a pelleted diet do not need them.

Provide an assortment of fresh, wholesome, organic vegetables. As with any child, sometimes it can be a challenge to get them to eat their veggies so you might have to spend some time encouraging your African Grey Parrot. Some vegetables contain more nutrients needed for your bird than others.

Good Vegetable Choices for Your African Grey

- Sweet potatoes
- Carrots
- Yellow and Butternut squashes
- Collard greens
- Broccoli (good source of calcium)
- Kale (also a good source of calcium)
- Peppers – green, red, chili
- Celery
- Zucchini
- Cucumbers
- Green beans
- Peas – garden and snow
- Leaf lettuce (not head or iceberg lettuce)

Good Fruit Choices for Your African Grey:

- Melons
- Kiwi

- Apples
- Mango and Papaya (with skins removed)
- Grapes
- Oranges
- Berries – blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, strawberries

A common deficiency found in an African Grey's diet is Vitamin A or beta-carotene, so it is important to provide beta-carotene vegetables daily. Calcium is extremely important, as it is the predominant mineral in bird's bodies. It is essential for healthy bones, nerve and heart function, muscle contraction, and blood clotting. An avian veterinarian should check your African Grey yearly for calcium levels.

Water is a very important part of your African Grey's care. Make sure they have fresh water in a clean bowl daily. If you question the water quality, give them bottled spring water – never distilled water as that has all the minerals and nutrients taken away.

As the bird owner, you have control over what your Grey is fed to help ensure that you are doing the best you can to help them live a long, disease-free life. Use good common sense, don't hesitate to talk to your avian vet, and you will achieve the balance that your African Grey Parrot needs to provide them with a balanced and nutritious diet.

Toxic Foods for Your African Grey

African Greys are such an important addition to our family life that it is only natural to want to include them at mealtime. This can be a lot of fun, messy, and good for your bird's emotional health, but it is vital to know that some foods are harmful and/or fatal to your bird. As owners, we need to know which foods are okay to share, which ones are not, and why.

Do NOT feed your Grey the following foods:

Avocado (toxic): Keep all avocado products, including guacamole, away from your Grey. The skin and pit of avocados have been known to cause cardiac distress and eventually heart failure in pet birds.

Chocolate (toxic): We all love chocolate, but this is a definite treat NOT to share with your bird. They get what is known as "chocolate poisoning" which first will affect the bird's digestive system and cause vomiting and diarrhea. As the condition advances, their central nervous system is affected, causing seizures and eventually death.

Tomato Leaves, Vines, Stems (toxic): While it is perfectly fine to give your bird a tomato to eat, the stems, vines, and leaves are highly toxic to them. Any time you give them a tomato, make sure it has been washed and sliced, with all green parts removed.

Coffee / Caffeinated Beverages: Coffee, soda, tea, and other caffeinated beverages are extremely hazardous to your bird's health. Caffeine causes a cardiac malfunction in birds and is linked to an increased heartbeat, arrhythmia, hyperactivity, and cardiac arrest. Share some fruit or vegetable juice with your bird instead.

Alcoholic Beverages: Responsible and caring bird owners would never think of giving their bird an alcoholic beverage but remember our birds do roam around our homes and have been known to help themselves to food and drink. Alcohol poisoning can be fatal as alcohol depresses the organ systems of birds. Keep all alcoholic beverages far away and out of reach of your bird at all times.

Dried Beans (toxic): Raw, dry beans can be extremely harmful to your bird. Uncooked beans contain hemagglutinin, a poison that is very toxic to birds. Make sure to thoroughly cook any beans before giving them to your Grey.

Pits or Seed of Many Fruits: Many seeds and pits of fruits—such as apples, cherries, pears, peaches, and apricots—contain trace amounts of Cyanide and should NOT be given to your bird. Share the fruit part but also be conscious that there may be pesticides on the fruit's skin. Thoroughly wash and core fruit before giving it to your bird.

Rhubarb: Leaves of the rhubarb are poisonous to birds. They contain high concentrations of oxalic acid which are an intestinal irritant. Large doses are fatal.

High-Fat, Fried, Salty, or High-Sugar Foods: These foods can cause multiple health problems in birds. Salty or high-sugar foods cause such problems as dehydration, excessive thirst, kidney dysfunction, and death. High fat in the bird's diet leads to obesity and may result in lipomas (fatty tumors), lipemia (fat in the blood), and hepatic lipidosis (fatty liver disease).

Mushrooms: A type of fungus, mushrooms have been known to cause digestive problems in birds. The caps and stems of some mushroom varieties can cause liver failure.

Onions: Limited amounts are generally regarded as acceptable; but excessive consumption of onions causes vomiting, diarrhea, and other digestive problems in birds. It has also been found that prolonged exposure to onions can lead to a blood condition called hemolytic anemia. This condition is followed by respiratory distress, and eventually death.

Nutmeg: This spice contains a narcotic called myristicin, while not usually a problem for humans as we only eat tiny quantities at a time; a bird that consumes nutmeg, suffers from dizziness, nausea, and vomiting.

Peanuts: These nuts are often contaminated with aflatoxin, a fungal toxin. Aflatoxin is carcinogenic and causes liver damage in birds. Roasting the peanuts reduces aflatoxin, but does not eliminate it in its entirety.

Any food that you question or are unsure of—use common sense and just don't feed it to your bird. It's not worth taking a chance on their health and life.