



Nourishing Mind and Body

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The holiday season is approaching and new appliances often are gifts for family members. Air fryers and multifunction pressure cookers have joined the traditional slow cookers, blenders and toaster ovens in many kitchens. Do you need more appliances?

Exploring Air Fryers

Air frying is a healthful alternative to deep frying foods. Minimal to no oil is needed to get a similar taste and texture. Cutting back on oil will help lower fat and overall calories. Most vegetables can be roasted in an oven or air fryer. Your children and teens may be tempted to try new foods.

In an air fryer, food can be cooked in less time at a lower temperature. Air fryers blow air more forcefully and at a hotter temperature than a regular convection oven. Be sure to clean the air fryer basket after each use according to the manufacturer's directions.

Consider these safety tips:

- Read (and keep track of) the manual that comes with your appliance. These often include recipes specific to the appliance.
- Use a food thermometer to make sure food (especially meat) is thoroughly cooked. Place the thermometer in the thickest part of the meat or center of the dish and measure the temperature of the food in several places to confirm temperature.
- See www.ag.ndsu.edu/food and check out the food safety information for details.



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Air Fryer (or Oven-fried) French Fries

- 2 large russet potatoes
- 1 tablespoon (or less) olive oil or your favorite oil
- Herbs, spices, salt and/or pepper to taste
- Favorite dipping sauces (for serving)

Air Fryer Directions: Preheat the air fryer to 380 F. Wash potatoes with water and pat dry. With the skin on, cut the potatoes in half lengthwise, then into 1/4-inch slices. Cut the slices into 1/4-inch sticks. Toss the fries with the oil in a medium bowl, then sprinkle with selected seasonings. Working in batches if necessary, put the fries in an even layer in the air fryer basket with no overlapping and cook until golden brown and crisp, 14 to 16 minutes. Shake basket a few times during the cooking cycle, so fries cook evenly. Serve with your favorite dipping sauce.

Oven Directions: Preheat oven to 375 F. Prepare the potatoes as described for air fryers. Toss with oil. Lay in a single layer on a parchment- or foil-lined pan. Cook for 20 minutes. Increase oven temperature to 425 F and continue baking about an additional 20 minutes until crisp. Adjust baking time for thicker fries.

Makes four servings. With 1/4 teaspoon salt, each serving has 210 calories, 7 grams (g) fat, 4 g protein, 33 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber and 160 milligrams sodium.

Connect

Connecting at the family table typically involves pleasant conversations with family members who share your space. It also can involve connecting in a different way with family who are not with you daily by telling their stories. This month we talked about a popular appliance, the air fryer. Let's take the kitchen tools talk a step backward, just for fun. It may evolve into a history lesson!

Ask your family at the table tonight, "Do we have an old appliance or kitchen tool in our home that used to belong to a family member?" Maybe you have the pie maker grandpa used to make "campfire pies" over an open fire with buttered bread and canned pie filling. Do you have possession of your aunt's ancient, slightly bent and rusty walnut grinder? Can you still taste those brownies she made? Have you ever seen a Fry Daddy or Presto burger cooker from the 70s and 80s? Reminisce about how meals were made or purchased when you were younger. What were your favorite foods as a child your own children's age? Share the stories, memories and family history.

Kitchen equipment can be a mystery. Assemble an assortment of kitchen gadgets and play "guess what this is called and how to use it." Your family may even be propelled into making something new for dinner just to use that interesting tool!

Older youth may enjoy trying to "stump the family" with the latest and greatest new tools by bringing something they use at school, a photo of something from work, new technology or a club project to the family table.

If you have a copy of *The Little Red Hen*, dust it off, read it and talk about all of the tools used to grow, harvest and mill the wheat as well as the old oven and kitchen tools. Who in your family might have farmed or cooked like that?

This very old tale still has implications for every family who wants to share the work and the fun. An updated version called ***The Little Red Hen (Makes a Pizza)*** by Philomen Sturges (Author) and Amy Walrod (Illustrator) is available online as a read-along story.

Invite your child or teen to create lower-sodium spice mixes to flavor your foods. See "Do It Yourself Spice Mixes" from NDSU Extension (<https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/publications/food-nutrition/do-it-yourself-spice-mixes>). It includes a ranch dip mix to try with this month's recipe.



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Savor (the Savings)

Before adding a new appliance to your kitchen, do your research. Consider whether the appliance is worth the expense. Air fryers vary in capacity and price, from \$50 to more than \$300. Learn about the amount of food they can cook (based on your family size), think about how often you would use it, and determine your available counter and storage space.

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