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## What are the best frozen foods to cook in an air fryer

Cooking is essential housework now, with many restaurants closed and extra mouths to feed parked at the table for all three meals. I don't know about y'all, but frozen food was the first thing that was cleaned out of my local grocery store as I slowly stocked up in late February. For the past month, the much-beloved tater tots, hash browns, and bagged fries I enjoy cooking in the air fryer have been fully sold out.I have the unique ability to develop anxiety around any issue, and right now that issue is...Read moreI would imagine that air fryers are seeing a boost as people across the world hunker down for our collective forced downtime. My theory is based on this simple truth: that these devices cook your food faster and render it crispier—two things we need when the world feels like it's ending. Luckily, you don't need to hit the frozen aisle to achieve potato excellence in the air fryer. Plain potatoes actually shine here, and before I owned my little R2-D2 air oven, "regular" potatoes were what I reached for, and the shops are full of 'em.Baked, roasted, and fried friends all come out crispy and delectable and, as I keep repeating—my excitement growing like the ShamWow guy—it happens in way less time than a typical oven, letting you time your meals perfectly.Keep "roasted" potatoes uniformThe key to zapping raw potatoes in the air fryer is to use uniform cuts. While oddly chunked-up roasties do fine in uneven ovens—some get absolutely singed while others are nice and mushy—you can achieve almost uniform browning in the air fryer. Use it to your advantage! Cubed or thinly sliced, most shapes do well here, even shoestring cuts, but the main concern when going from raw to crispy is too much steam, which will definitely occur if you overcrowd the basket. No matter what cut you use, make sure there is some space for evaporating moisture to dissipate. Steam buildup will make things floppy.When it comes to french fries, fast food establishments do it best. It's not that they use the...Read moreTry tossing russets with a tablespoon of neutral oil and simple salt and pepper, but hang onto the bowl in case you need to apply more oil later. Too much oil will just end up in the bottom of the basket, and applying cooking oil before the potatoes go into the basket prevents this. I love doing one russet's-worth of one-inch chunks—a large potato fills up the basket of my fryer perfectly.Run a cycle for 10 minutes at 400°F, then shake the basket or toss the potatoes with tongs before running again. They shouldn't be dripping in oil, but if you think they look too dry you can toss them again with the residual oil in the bowl you saved. Cook for another five minutes at a time, shaking or turning until they're crisped to your preference.Mist potato pancakes with oilFor shredded potatoes, the air fryer may seem not ideal, but when held together with eggs and other binders, you can make one tasty potato pancake. This is where oil sprays will be your biggest helper. Spray the basket with cooking spray or oil before adding your formed latkes, then mist the pancakes with oil as well. A 12-14 minute cycle at 350°F should do the trick, but you may want to spray them again halfway through so they have the same savory, oily crunch as fried latkes.Some models will need to have the fan turned down for shredded or small cut potatoes, as the fan may blow your food around. And little potato bits can get stuck in the fan component, so exercise caution. Par-bake for super crunchy spudsOne way to avoid cook-time confusion is by starting your potato projects with par-baked or fully baked potatoes. Pre-baking a stiff, starchy russet in your air fryer means you can slice and dice the already cooked potato, then return it to the fryer for a few more minutes to crisp up with a quick slick of oil. Taters cooked this way come out as crunchy as anything you've deep-fried. If you want to eat fresh, hot, cronchy potatoes throughout the week, you can par-bake a big batch, then air fry at your leisure.My ex-husband did not know how to cook many things, but he was always willing to learn. I'll never...Read moreTo par-bake, clean three medium-sized spuds and stab them with a fork a few times on each side. Air fry at 400°F for 20-25 minutes for par cooked potatoes, and 30-35 for fully baked, depending on your model. (My regular oven takes about an hour to get them all the way done, so this is a summer survival tactic when I don't want to heat up my living space with an oven blast.)Take these cooked babies and store them in a sealed container in the fridge, then experiment to your heart's content. This is a killer move for small households—one potato easily serves two—and you can change the cut and seasoning each day to keep things interesting. Have turmeric lemon wedges one day, try some cumin and chili with peppers and onions for the next day's second breakfast, then chunk one up and brush with it melted butter, perhaps using a rosemary sprig as the brush if you really want to make it fancy. The air fryer crisps the skin and outer surface of each without burning any butter or cooking oil in just five minutes, resulting in restaurant-quality patatas. If you've ever had a crispy piece of pan-fried tofu or a smooth and creamy tofu puree, you know how amazing it can be. Unfortunately, too many of us have had tofu that turned into a forkful of soggy mush. That type of experience might turn you off from tofu for life, but it doesn't have to be that way! This plant-based protein has the ability to soak up other flavors, and (when cooked correctly) can result in caramelization that rivals any piece of meat. As a bonus, it's easy to learn how to cook tofu if you know a few basics. Once you get started, you'll realize that tofu can be cooked in so many different ways, and always turn out delicious.Types of TofuI'll your tofu recipes aren't turning out exactly as you'd imagined, it's possible you chose the wrong type of tofu—just one of the mistakes people make when cooking tofu. Tofu is extremely versatile: It can be enjoyed raw, pan-fried, baked, stir-fried, grilled, deep-fried, broiled, simmered in soup and more. But each type of tofu has an ideal cooking method. The different types of tofu reflect how much water is pressed out, affecting the texture and the tofu's ability to soak up other flavors. So it's important to know which one you need before you add tofu to your plant-based grocery list!Silken or Soft TofuIf you want tofu to maintain its blocky shape, stay away from silken tofu. But, if you're planning to use tofu in recipes that result in creamy consistency (like blended smoothies, dips or tofu-based salad dressings), silken is the way to go. This type of tofu is unpressed, so it contains a ton of water. That also allows it to soak up other flavors exceptionally well, like a sponge, so it will take on the taste of the ingredients it's cooked with.Firm or Extra Firm TofuAs the name indicates, firm and extra firm tofu have a firm texture with a spongy consistency. Most of the water has been pressed out, making it possible to cut solid shapes out of the block. Firm tofu is a little softer in consistency, and it will fall apart a little bit as it cooks, making it perfect for scrambles or stir-fry dishes. Extra firm tofu contains even less water, so it's ideal for creating crispy edges when pan-frying, grilling and baking.Tips for Cooking TofuRemove excess waterThe best way to avoid soggy tofu is to remove as much excess water as possible. This is also one of the keys to cooking tofu without it falling apart! Tofu has been pressed to remove water before it's packaged, but it's also packed in water to keep it fresh. It's important to drain this water and, at the very least, pat the block dry before proceeding. For best results, follow our all-important first step (more on that below) and press out additional water before proceeding.Cut into small slices or cubesThe way you cut tofu will affect how it cooks. Larger chunks take longer to cook, so we recommend cutting tofu into 1/4- to 1/2-inch slices or cubes for most cooking methods. This allows the exterior to crisp up while the interior warms all the way through.Add flavor with a marinadeTofu takes really well to marinades because it soaks up other flavors like a sponge. That said, we spend a lot of time pressing water out of tofu before cooking it, so we don't want to replace that water with extra liquid. When we're aiming for the crispiest tofu (especially when pan-frying or baking), we often skip the liquid marinade and use a spice rub instead.If crispy edges aren't important, go ahead and whip up a flavorful marinade. Just be sure to skip the oil! Oil and water don't mix, and a coating of oil will lock moisture inside the tofu, which can give it an overly custard-like texture. When you've prepared your oil-free marinade, place the pressed, cut pieces of tofu in the liquid for about 15 minutes.After removing tofu from the marinade, pat it as dry as possible with a clean towel and let it sit at room temperature for 15 minutes to further dry out before cooking. You can also dust marinated tofu with cornstarch to help it crisp up on the outside.Don't move the tofu aroundFinally, when you're cooking tofu, try not to move it around too much. Even extra-firm, pressed tofu is pretty delicate, so you definitely don't want to vigorously stir a pan containing tofu. Instead, gently shake the pan and use a spatula to flip the pieces over when it's time.You can eat raw tofu, tooOf course, you don't have to cook tofu. It's safe to eat raw tofu! The most popular forms of raw tofu are soft and silken tofu, which are usually blended or whisked into salad dressings. It's still a good idea to press raw tofu before consuming it because the excess water can make it messy and dilute the other flavors.How to Press TofuBefore you do anything else, it's important to drain and press the tofu. Pressing tofu removes as much excess moisture as possible, yielding a better final texture. It also allows the tofu to soak up more marinade, making it that much more flavorful.Some people swear by freezing tofu first. It's true that this does help remove some of the excess water, and it also gives the tofu a chewier texture.If you're running short on time, you can skip the pressing step with firm and extra-firm tofu. Simply pat the tofu dry and coat it with enough cornstarch so it's coated but not dusty. This hack works in a pinch, but it won't create an extra crispy exterior, and the tofu's texture won't be as firm.Method 1: Weighing and pressing at room temperatureCut the tofu into slices or cubes. Line a rimmed baking sheet with a clean kitchen towel and arrange the tofu pieces in a single layer. Cover the tofu with another clean towel and place a second baking sheet on top. Weigh the top sheet down with a heavy skillet or a stack of books. Let stand for 30 minutes before marinating or cooking.Method 2: Extended pressing in the refrigeratorCut the tofu into two pieces. Line a plate with a clean kitchen towel and arrange the pieces in a single layer. Cover the pieces with another clean towel and place a second plate on top. Weigh the plate down with a few cans from the pantry, and place the plates in the refrigerator overnight.Method 3: Use a tofu pressYou can remove the extra water from a whole block of tofu with a tofu press. Put the press in the fridge for at least 20 minutes, but as long as overnight. Then remove the pressed tofu and drain the excess liquid into the sink.6 Ways to Prepare TofuHow to cook tofu on the stovePan-frying this plant-based meat in a hot skillet is one of our favorite ways to enjoy this plant-based protein. We like cutting the tofu into 1/4- or 1/2-inch slices that resemble "steaks." They'll become delightfully crisp on the outside and soft and custardy on the inside. Serve pan-fried tofu like you would a seared steak (over grains, salad or vegetables), or use it to make any number of filling sandwiches.It's important to start with an oil with a high smoke point, like avocado oil or canola oil. You'll also want to be sure the tofu is as dry as possible; otherwise, it can splatter hot oil all over the cooktop. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the tofu slices in a single layer, leaving plenty of space between the pieces. (If the pan is overcrowded, the tofu will steam and never become crispy.) If you need to fry in multiple batches, you can hold the cooked tofu in a 200°F oven while you fry the remaining pieces.After about 5 minutes, or when the tofu achieves a golden brown color, use a spatula to carefully flip the tofu and continue cooking it on the second side for another 5 minutes.You can practice this method by making Curried Tofu with Rice.How to cook tofu in the ovenFor a more hands-off approach to creating crispy tofu, we recommend baking in the oven. Our preferred cut here is 1/2- to 3/4-inch cubes. The thinner the cube, the crispier the tofu, and the quicker they'll cook. They're fantastic as a snack, and they make a wonderful addition to salads and wraps.Preheat the oven to 400° and line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Pat the tofu as dry as possible and toss with your favorite spices. Feel free to add a little cornstarch to the mix to promote crispy edges. Spread the tofu onto the prepared baking sheet in an even layer and bake for 10 to 15 minutes. Gently flip the tofu pieces to promote even cooking and cook for an additional 10 to 15 minutes, until golden brown and crispy.How to stir-fry tofuTofu makes an excellent addition to vegetarian stir-fry dishes. It's a complete protein, containing all the essential amino acids our bodies need, and it melts into the other flavors of the stir-fry. We like using firm tofu here because of its crumbly texture, but extra-firm works well, too. If you want a scrambled texture, use soft or medium-firm tofu. It's best to cut the tofu into small cubes (about 1/4-inch pieces) to help them cook more quickly.In a large skillet, heat an oil with a high smoke point over medium-high heat. Add the tofu and cook for 7 to 9 minutes, shaking the pan to keep it from sticking, until the tofu is golden brown and crisp. Remove the tofu and add the remaining stir-fry ingredients. When the stir-fry is complete, add the tofu back to the pan to warm it through.Test this method with our Asparagus Tofu Stir-Fry recipe.How to air-fry tofuYour air fryer is a fantastic way to cook tofu quickly. It works the same way as the oven, but the convection air circulates more heat around the tofu to make it extra dry and crispy. Cutting the tofu into cubes is generally the best fit for most air fryers, but you can use large slices and cook in batches if you prefer.To make air-fryer tofu, preheat the air fryer to 400. Slice and season the tofu as desired. Place the tofu on the air fryer rack and cook for 6 to 8 minutes, shaking the basket occasionally to promote even cooking, until the tofu is lightly browned and crisp.How to cook tofu in soupln general, we like using firm or extra-firm tofu for soup. It holds its texture better without falling apart. That said, if you're making a pureed soup, don't be afraid to use soft or medium-firm tofu. To prevent the tofu from crumbling as it cooks, we recommend cutting it into 1/2-inch cubes and adding them at the end of the cooking time. Be sure not to boil the soup containing tofu, as it will cause the pieces to fall apart.Follow your soup's recipe instructions through the point where you simmer the broth. When the flavors have come together to the point where you're happy with them, add the tofu and simmer for about 5 minutes, until the tofu is warmed through.Give it a try with this Asian Tofu Noodle soup.How to grill tofuGrilled tofu is an absolute treat! The char from the grill combined with the smoke from the charcoal turns tofu into a meaty main, and it's a fantastic addition to BLT-style sandwiches. That said, it can be a little tricky to pull off, as tofu loves to stick to grill grates. Be sure to start with a hot grill and clean, oiled grill grates for best results. We also recommend using well-pressed, extra-firm tofu that's cut into larger slices—1/2- or 1-inch slices work best.Prepare a gas or charcoal grill for medium-high heat. Place the tofu pieces on the grill and close the cover. Cook for 5 to 8 minutes until the tofu has grill marks. Flip and cook, covered, for an additional 3 to 5 minutes until both sides are browned. Feel free to brush the tofu with your favorite barbecue sauce or marinade while it cooks, too.Even More Delicious Tofu RecipesThe musical "Waitress" I love cooking with Brussels sprouts. This tofu stir-fry recipe is the perfect quick and healthy weeknight meal. Make a scrumptious hoagie by stuffing toasted rolls with this tasty mixture. And if you're wondering—what is tofu? Find out with our handy guide. —Joseph Sciascia, San Mateo, CaliforniaMy family loves the tofu filling in this wrap! For parties, we often serve it as a dip with tortilla chips or pita bread. My husband requests this often, and it's super easy to double the recipe if needed. —Deanna Wolfe, Muskegon, MichiganWe raised our daughters as vegetarians. I wanted to give them more options than just pizza and pasta, so when they were around 11 years old, I made this vegetable potpie recipe. It's still a hit. By the way, these are the biggest mistakes you can make when cooking tofu. —Mark Sirota, New York, New YorkTaste of HomeTo make the tofu extra crispy in this tofu salad recipe, we recommend draining some of the liquid and cooking it in a generous amount of oil at high heat. It takes a little extra time, but it's worth it! —Taste of Home Test KitchenI love mushrooms and am learning how to make heartier dishes out of my old favorites. This delicious vegan cream of mushroom soup is low in fat and high in nutrition, and it meets my dietary restrictions. Tofu, used in place of cream, provides a silky texture, but keeps the soup vegan and dairy free. —Maria Davis, Flower Mound, TexasThis tasty Asian tofu was the first plant-based meat dish my fiance made for me. It's a wonderful light protein and is so easy to pair with broiled or grilled veggies such as eggplant, asparagus or even tomatoes. You can make this recipe in an air fryer, too. —Emily Steers, Los Angeles, CaliforniaWith its flavorful ginger sauce and fresh vegetables, this tasty dish is a favorite. I get rave reviews every time I serve it, and it doesn't bother my husband's food allergies. Check out our guide if you're new to tofu. —Phyllis Smith, Chincagum, WashingtonTofu takes the taste and texture of egg salad in this quick-fixing sandwich. —Lisa Renshaw, Kansas City, MissouriThis egg- and dairy-free pie is a great alternative to standard pumpkin pie! We make the pies with squash from our garden. Feel free to add even more of your favorite spices...you'll be glad the recipe makes two! —Juliana Thetford, Ellwood City, PennsylvaniaClassic flavors of Thailand abound in this fragrant and flavorful dish featuring peanuts, tofu and noodles. New to tofu? It gives the entree its satisfying protein, for a delicious way to introduce it to your diet. —Sara Landry, Brookline, MassachusettsIf you have never tried tofu before, go for it with this recipe. The tofu blends in with all the other ingredients, adding protein without the fat and calories of ground beef. —Mary Lou Moeller, Wooster, OhioWhat is tofu? It's certainly not boring and tasteless! The crispy vegetarian bean curd is so loaded with flavor in this fried tofu recipe, you'll never shy away from it again. —Nick Iverson, Denver, ColoradoTaste of HomeEven self-avowed carnivores won't miss the meat in this zippy dish. It's chock-full of healthy ingredients that will keep you feeling satisfied. —Laurie Stout-Letz, Bountiful, UtahThis easy recipe is great for "tofu beginners." For best results, cut the tofu block in half and wrap well in a terrycloth kitchen towel. Let it sit in the fridge for at least an hour so the towel absorbs excess water. Serve this with Chinese soup and egg rolls for a complete meal. —Autumn SinClaire, Gold Beach, OregonTaste of HomeMy go-to Thai restaurant inspired this curry soup. Shiitake mushrooms are my favorite, but any fresh mushroom will work. Fresh basil and lime add a burst of bright flavors. —Tre Balchowsky, Sausalito, CaliforniaCauliflower, garbanzo beans and tofu are subtle on their own, but together they make an awesome base for curry. We have this recipe weekly because one of us is always craving it. It's also a great dish if you're new to tofu. —Patrick McGilvray, Cincinnati, OhioGinger, garlic and sherry jazz up this soup loaded with veggies and noodles. We like to accent ours with peanuts and green onions. —Diana Rios, Lytle, TexasI made up this recipe when I was vegetarian and didn't eat eggs. It's packed with fiber, omega-3s and soy protein, but tastes delicious! Silken tofu is a wonderful egg substitute. —Brittany Carrington, Tehachapi, California

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