

# Your Guide to Food Combinations



# Food Combinations:

## Cooked vs. Raw

The choice between consuming foods cooked or raw depends on the nutrients in the food, as cooking can either enhance or reduce the bioavailability of certain nutrients. Here's a breakdown:

### Nutrients Enhanced by Cooking

#### 1. Lycopene (in Tomatoes, Red Peppers, etc.)

- Cooked: Lycopene levels increase when tomatoes are cooked, especially in the presence of fats like olive oil.
- Why: Heat breaks down the cell walls, making lycopene (a powerful antioxidant) more accessible.
- Example: Tomato curry or roasted bell peppers.



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#### 2. Beta-Carotene (in Carrots, Spinach, Sweet Potatoes)

- Cooked: Cooking boosts beta-carotene absorption by breaking down tough cell walls.
- Why: Heat releases fat-soluble carotenoids, making them easier to absorb when paired with healthy fats.
- Example: Gajar ka halwa (carrot pudding) with ghee or sautéed spinach.



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#### 3. Starch (in Potatoes, Rice, Grains)

- Cooked: Starch becomes digestible only after cooking.
- Why: Heat gelatinizes starch, making it easier for the body to break down.
- Example: Steamed rice or boiled potatoes.





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### Nutrients Enhanced by Cooking ↑

#### 4. Legumes and Pulses

- Cooked: Cooking eliminates anti-nutrients like lectins and phytic acid, improving mineral absorption.
- Why: Heat destroys harmful compounds that interfere with digestion and mineral uptake.
- Example: Dal (lentils) or rajma (kidney bean curry).





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### Nutrients Enhanced by Cooking ↑

#### 5. Protein (in Eggs, Meat, and Fish)

- Cooked: Cooking denatures proteins, making them more digestible.
- Why: Heat unfolds protein molecules, making them easier for enzymes to act on.
- Example: Boiled eggs or grilled fish.





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### Nutrients Reduced by Cooking ↓

#### 1. Vitamin C (in Citrus Fruits, Peppers, etc.)

- Raw: Vitamin C is heat-sensitive and is degraded during cooking.
- Why: High temperatures destroy vitamin C.
- Example: Raw salads with lemon or bell pepper slices.





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### Nutrients Reduced by Cooking ↓

#### 2. Folate (in Leafy Greens, Broccoli)

- Raw: Cooking leafy greens can reduce folate content.
- Why: Folate is water-soluble and leaches into cooking water.
- Example: Spinach in smoothies or raw methi leaves.



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### Nutrients Reduced by Cooking ↓

#### 3. Enzymes (in Fruits and Vegetables)

- Raw: Naturally occurring enzymes in raw foods aid digestion.
- Why: Enzymes are destroyed by heat above 47°C (117°F).
- Example: Fresh fruit salads.





# WHY COOKING CAN INCREASE NUTRITION

## 1. Breaks Down Cell Walls:

- Heat softens the fiber in plants, releasing nutrients like lycopene, beta-carotene, and lutein.
- Example: Cooked carrots vs. raw carrots.



## 2. Deactivates Anti-Nutrients:

- Cooking reduces phytates, oxalates, and lectins, which inhibit nutrient absorption.
- Example: Soaking and cooking beans improve iron and zinc availability.



# WHY COOKING CAN INCREASE NUTRITION

## 3. Improves Digestibility:

- Cooking starches and proteins makes them easier to digest.
- Example: Cooked rice is easier on the stomach than raw rice.



## 4. Boosts Antioxidant Levels:

- Heat enhances the availability of antioxidants like lycopene and polyphenols.
- Example: Tomato paste has more bioavailable lycopene than raw tomatoes.





# COOKED VS. RAW COMBINATIONS FOR OPTIMAL NUTRITION

## 1. Cooked Starches + Raw Fiber

- Example: Cooked dal with raw salad.
- Why: Balanced digestion and better bioavailability of minerals.



## 2. Raw Vitamin C + Cooked Iron

- Example: Lemon juice over cooked spinach.
- Why: Vitamin C enhances iron absorption from cooked greens.



## 3. Cooked Carotenoids + Healthy Fats

- Example: Carrot curry with ghee.
- Why: Cooking releases carotenoids, and fat enhances absorption.



# GOOD FOOD COMBINATIONS

## 1. Iron + Vitamin C

- Example: Spinach curry with a squeeze of lemon, dal tadka with tomatoes, or poha with lime juice.
- Why: Vitamin C enhances the absorption of non-heme iron (plant-based iron), making it easier for your body to utilize.

## 2. Healthy Fats + Fat-Soluble Vitamins (A, D, E, K)

- Example: Gajar ka halwa (carrots cooked with ghee), palak paneer (spinach with paneer), or dal tempered with mustard oil.
- Why: Fat-soluble vitamins need fat for proper absorption in the body.

## 3. Turmeric + Black Pepper

- Example: Haldi doodh (golden milk), turmeric-spiced sabzi, or Indian curries with black pepper.
- Why: Black pepper contains piperine, which increases the absorption of curcumin (the active compound in turmeric) by up to 2,000%.

## 4. Calcium + Vitamin D

- Example: Curd rice with sunlight exposure, ragi porridge (calcium-rich) with a morning walk, or milk-based kheer after basking in sunlight.
- Why: Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium efficiently, supporting bone health.

## 5. Zinc + Sulfur Compounds

- Example: Tandoori chicken marinated with garlic and onions, or rajma curry cooked with onions and garlic.
- Why: Sulfur-containing compounds in garlic and onions enhance zinc absorption from foods.



# GOOD FOOD COMBINATIONS

## 6. Vitamin B12 + Folate

- Example: Egg curry with spinach or fish curry served with methi thepla.
- Why: These nutrients work synergistically to produce red blood cells and support brain health.

## 7. Lycopene + Healthy Fats

- Example: Tomato chutney tempered with coconut oil or dal makhani with a dollop of ghee.
- Why: Lycopene (a powerful antioxidant) is better absorbed in the presence of healthy fats.

## 8. Iron + Sulfur Compounds

- Example: Palak dal (spinach with garlic tadka) or aloo methi (potatoes with fenugreek leaves and garlic).
- Why: Sulfur compounds improve the bioavailability of iron, especially from plant sources.

## 9. Protein + Carbohydrates

- Example: Rajma chawal, khichdi (lentils and rice), or whole-grain roti with dal.
- Why: Combining these creates a complete protein with all essential amino acids, boosting protein synthesis.

## 10. Magnesium + Vitamin B6

- Example: Banana with soaked almonds, dark chocolate with dates, or besan laddoo (chickpea flour with nuts).
- Why: B6 helps the body absorb magnesium, supporting muscle and nerve health.

# BAD FOOD COMBINATIONS

## 1. Iron + Calcium

- Example: Palak paneer (spinach with paneer), or consuming iron-rich dal with milk-based desserts like kheer.
- Why: Calcium competes with iron for absorption, reducing the bioavailability of both.

## 2. Zinc + Calcium

- Example: Curd rice with fortified supplements or eating yogurt with sesame seeds.
- Why: High calcium intake interferes with zinc absorption, especially in a single meal.

## 3. Phytates + Iron/Zinc

- Example: Whole wheat chapati with unsprouted rajma (kidney beans).
- Why: Phytates in whole grains and legumes bind to iron and zinc, reducing their absorption.

## 4. Tea/Coffee + Iron

- Example: Masala chai or coffee after a breakfast of poha or paratha (iron-rich meals).
- Why: Tannins in tea and coffee inhibit the absorption of non-heme iron from plant-based foods.

## 5. Alcohol + Vitamin B12

- Example: Alcohol with meat-based biryani or butter chicken.
- Why: Alcohol damages the stomach lining and reduces intrinsic factor production, which is crucial for B12 absorption.



# BAD FOOD COMBINATIONS

## 6. Oxalates + Calcium

- Example: Spinach raita (spinach mixed with yogurt) or beetroot curry with milk-based sweets.
- Why: Oxalates in spinach and beets bind to calcium, forming insoluble compounds that the body cannot absorb.

## 7. Fat + Simple Carbs

- Example: Poori with halwa or pakoras with sugary tea.
- Why: This combination slows fat digestion and leads to poor nutrient absorption, along with insulin spikes.

## 8. Fiber + Mineral-Rich Foods

- Example: High-fiber bajra roti with jaggery or nuts.
- Why: Excess fiber binds to minerals like magnesium, zinc, and calcium, preventing their absorption.

## 9. Vitamin C + Milk

- Example: Drinking nimbu paani (lemon water) or aam panna (raw mango drink) with a milk-based meal.
- Why: The acidity from vitamin C can curdle milk, leading to reduced calcium bioavailability and digestive discomfort.

## 10. Fat-Soluble Vitamins + Low-Fat Meals

- Example: Raw vegetable salad with no oil-based dressing or ghee.
- Why: Vitamins A, D, E, and K require fat for absorption, so low-fat meals reduce their bioavailability.

# TIPS TO MAXIMIZE NUTRIENT ABSORPTION

1. Avoid chai or coffee with meals, especially iron-rich ones like dal or sabzi.
2. Soak or sprout grains and legumes like rajma or chana to reduce phytates.
3. Add healthy fats like ghee or mustard oil to meals for better absorption of fat-soluble vitamins.
4. Eat fermented foods like idli, dosa, or curd for enhanced nutrient bioavailability.
5. Separate calcium and iron-rich foods in different meals for better absorption of both.





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