



# Simple Secrets

TO GETTING YOUR FAMILY  
TO EAT HEALTHY FOODS

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Method 1 - Puree

The background of the image shows a top-down view of a meal. At the top, a white plate holds a serving of hummus, garnished with chickpeas, olive oil, and fresh vegetables like tomatoes and basil. Below the plate, a clear glass bowl is filled with a smooth, yellowish hummus. A hand is visible on the left side, holding a pink-handled spoon. The entire scene is set on a dark wooden surface.

## Method 1

### Puree, puree, puree.

Pureeing food is a simple, incognito way to add just about any fruit, veggie or protein into a meal so that your picky eaters won't complain. Later, as their palates begin to adjust, they'll enjoy whole foods on their own because, thanks to you, they've been eating them already.

# A FEW QUICK TIPS

**CANNED:** Some fruits and veggies, such as butternut squash, sweet potatoes and pumpkin, come pureed in a can. These are perfectly fine to use, just double check to make sure the only ingredients listed are the actual fruit/vegetable, its natural juices, water and minimal salt.

**BABY FOOD IN A JAR:** Can't find a canned version and don't have the time to puree your own? Check the baby food aisle. Just remember, minimal, recognizable ingredients.

**FROZEN PRODUCE:** Looking for a nutrient-dense, cost-effective and efficient way to puree? Frozen produce is picked at the peak of ripeness, flash frozen soon after harvest and almost immediately packaged. The nutrients are frozen during this process and research has shown time and time again that the nutritional value in frozen fruits and veggies beats out their "fresh" counterparts that have been driven across the country or imported after being flown halfway around the world. Think about it, how many days was that asparagus in transit from Peru to your table?

**FRESH PRODUCE:** If picking out fresh fruits and veggies, take a quick look to make sure it looks fresh, not dried up, bruised or beginning to brown.

**ORGANIC:** Chemicals, pesticides and preservatives are heavily used these days, so we recommend organic produce whenever feasible.

**BULK PREPPING:** If you've followed our journey, you know how much we absolutely LOVE (and live by) cooking meals in bulk. The leftovers simplify future meals and save SO MUCH TIME! We take a similar approach when pureeing and encourage you to do the same. While everything is out, make extra for the rest of the week and some to freeze for future meals.



# How to prepare your produce for pureeing

Pureeing is MUCH more simple than it sounds. Basically, all you need is a steamer, pot or microwave to soften your veggies; a food processor or high-speed blender; a little water and mason jars to pre-portion and store. Build up a stash of purees in your freezer and simply replenish whenever necessary.

## BOILING ON STOVETOP

1. Peel, trim and chop your fruits and/or veggies (or, to save time, use pre-chopped frozen produce) and add them to a pot of boiling water.
2. Partially cover the pot with a lid and boil until they're tender when pierced with a fork.

## STEAMING ON STOVETOP

1. Put 1-2 inches of water in the bottom of a pot.
2. Add steamer basket or collapsible colander (without the produce), cover and bring water to a boil.
3. Add chopped veggies, cover the pot with a lid and steam until they're tender when pierced with a fork.

## MICROWAVE

1. Chop your fruits and/or veggies and add them to a bowl with a few tablespoons of water.
2. Loosely cover the bowl with a damp paper towel and microwave in 60-second intervals until they're tender when pierced with a fork. (This isn't necessary for soft foods like banana, avocado and kiwi that can be easily mashed.)

## ROASTING

1. Cut your veggies (butternut squash, sweet potatoes, beets) in half—no need to peel them.
2. Place your veggies on a foil or parchment paper-lined baking sheet. If roasting beets or sweet potatoes you can (but don't have to) wrap them in foil to lock in moisture.
3. Roast until tender.
4. Once your veggies have cooled, you can then scoop the flesh out of the skin (if necessary) and into a food processor or blender.

## PUREEING, PORTIONING AND PACKAGING

1. Let the fruits or veggies cool, then put them into the food processor and puree until smooth and creamy. Add a few tablespoons of liquid (water, broth or cooking juices from boiling/steaming) to help the pureeing process, if necessary.
2. Portion out and package the puree. We often measure it out into quarter-cup to half-cup portions in small mason jars. You can also transfer puree into ice cube trays, cover the trays with plastic wrap or a lid and freeze. Store the frozen cubes in baggies (each cube equals about 1 oz. and can easily be popped into individual meals such as scrambled eggs or soup).
3. If you plan to use the puree within a few days, place the pre-portioned puree in the fridge. Use mason jars, freezer baggies or airtight containers to freeze the rest. Label your purees with the type of food, amount (in cups or ounces) and date so you can keep track of which ones to use first.



## HOW TO INCORPORATE YOUR PUREES

This is when the fun truly begins (although turning on some tunes and sipping hot coffee or a chilled glass of white wine while preparing your purees isn't all that bad either).

The key is to keep things as incognito as possible. Think about what you're making and try to match the color of the fruit or veggie to the color of the dish, especially in light-colored meals. Darker-colored dishes, like something tomato-based, have a more forgiving flavor and color. Here are some of our favorite ways to keep things incognito: carrots are easily disguised in tomato sauce, pumpkin in potato soup, butternut squash in mac and cheese, spinach in a pesto sauce and broccoli in salsa verde-topped enchiladas.

For the most part, you can swap similar colored purees in and out of recipes. The only times that we recommend you stick to exactly what's called for is in dessert recipes. Some purees can change the texture, as well as make your sweet treat taste a little funky.





# COLOR GUIDE

The different colors of purees are not only beautiful, but the healthy benefits are incredible. Here are some purees, along with ways that they can help improve your health.



## **Light-colored purees** (cauliflower, golden beets, parsnips, yellow squash)

- Inflammation: Foods with yellow pigmentation can help calm inflammation in the body.

## **Orange purees** (carrots, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, butternut squash)

- Immune support: Foods that are orange are praised for playing an integral part in boosting our immune systems, in addition to helping heal and repair.



## **Red purees** (beets, fruit)

- Heart health and anti-aging: The nutrients commonly found in red foods are often high in antioxidants and have been shown to help alleviate some of the effects of aging.



## **Blue/purple purees** (berries, black beans)

- Brain and central nervous system: Foods that are blue and purple often contain nutrients that benefit cognitive function and the central nervous system. Basically, they're brain-boosting!

## **Green purees** (artichoke, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, spinach, green bell pepper)

- Detoxifying: Many foods that are green have been associated with helping to effectively eliminate toxins from the body.



Add in as much as you can get away with (you may have to taste test); gradually increase the amount of puree added while retaining the flavor, appearance and appeal of the original dish.

# Which foods make the best purees?

One of the most important things you can do for your family is offer variety so they're sure to get a wide range of nutrients. For the easiest purees (both texture and taste), opt for something from the list below. Use these ingredients to transform the way you see food and spark ideas on how you can add hidden whole foods into the meals your family loves to eat.

## STEAM, BOIL OR ROAST PRIOR TO PROCESSING OR BLENDING

- Artichokes (raw)
- Beets
- Brussels sprouts
- Broccoli
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Chicken
- Green beans
- Onions
- Parsnips
- Peas
- Pumpkin
- Spinach
- Squash (butternut, yellow, acorn)
- Sweet potato
- Yellow squash
- Zucchini

## STRAIGHT INTO THE FOOD PROCESSOR, NO STEAMING NECESSARY

- Apples
- Artichokes (canned)
- Beans (black, chickpeas, northern, pinto)
- Bell peppers (green, red, yellow)
- Berries

## MASH, NO STEAMING NECESSARY

- Avocado
- Banana
- Kiwi





Even though you're already sneaking healthy, whole foods into the main dish, you should still put at least one visible veggie on the table for both lunch and dinner as a side. You want your family to get used to seeing (and eating) vegetables. For example, serve raw, crunchy baby carrots or sliced bell peppers at lunch with a homemade dip (there are lots of recipes on FULLforLife.com). At dinner, steam, roast or stir-fry a bag of organic mixed vegetables.

Through this process, remember to share with your family WHY eating nutrient-dense, real food is important. These conversations, coupled with their palate adjusting over time, will make transitioning to eating whole foods (without being hidden) much smoother.

# Puree Recipes

## BREAKFAST

- [HIDDEN VEGGIE BREAKFAST QUESADILLAS](#)  
(can use: butternut squash, pumpkin, sweet potato, mushroom or carrot puree)
- [CAULIFLOWER SCRAMBLED EGGS](#) (cauliflower puree)
- [HEALTHY BLUEBERRY COCONUT BARS](#) (beet puree)
- [CARROT CAKE PANCAKES](#) (carrot puree)

\*All of the recipes can be found on FULLforLife.com.  
Click the recipe title to be taken to the actual recipe page.

## LUNCH & DINNER

- **HEALTHY HIDDEN VEGGIE MEATLOAF**  
(can use: broccoli or bell pepper puree)
- **SLOPPY JOE SANDWICHES**  
(can use: mushroom or pumpkin puree)
- **CHICKEN PARMESAN BAKE**  
(can use: artichoke, broccoli, carrot, butternut squash or roasted red pepper puree)
  - Follow the recipe as directed, but mix 1/2 cup vegetable puree into the yogurt/spaghetti sauce mixture prior to cooking.
  - Eliminate the artichokes, if desired.
- **HIDDEN VEGGIE BEAN AND CHEESE ENCHILADAS**  
(can use: finely chopped zucchini, chicken puree and/or roasted red pepper puree)



## SNACKS AND SIDES

- **GUACAMOLE** (spinach puree)
- **SPINACH PESTO SAUCE** (spinach puree)
  - Use on bagel or pita pizzas, pasta, you name it!
- **HIDDEN VEGGIE BAKED MACARONI AND CHEESE**  
(can use: carrot, butternut squash, sweet potato or pumpkin puree)

## DESSERT

- **CHOCOLATE FONDUE DIP** (chickpea puree)
  - Serve as a snack or dessert with fresh fruit wedges.
- **FLOURLESS FUDGE BROWNIES** (with pumpkin puree)





# ADDITIONAL WAYS TO SUCCESSFULLY INCORPORATE PUREES INTO YOUR FAMILY'S MEALS

## BREAKFAST

**FRENCH TOAST:** Add sweet potato, pumpkin, carrot or butternut squash puree to dipping batter.

**PANCAKES:** Add sweet potato puree in pancake batter. Sauté one diced apple in small amount of coconut oil + cinnamon, puree mixture and add to pancake batter.

**PUMPKIN PIE OATMEAL:** 1/2 cup oatmeal, 1 TBS pumpkin puree, 1/2 tsp pumpkin pie spice, 1/4 tsp vanilla

**SMOOTHIES:** Smoothies are a surefire way to sneak some spinach and other nutrient-dense super foods into your family's bodies to start their day off right. No need to puree first, just add some spinach in. You know your family best. Use your best judgment with the amount added.

*Here's a general rule that will help you when blending your sneaky smoothies:* Start by including one ripe banana and blueberries, both preferably frozen. The creamy, sweetness of the banana will overpower the spinach and the dark berries will mask the color. From there, add fruit and additional ingredients of choice. Oats, a spoonful of chia seeds, flax meal and almond butter are a great way to make it a meal and bump up the protein, fiber and healthy fats. They won't taste it, we promise!



## LUNCH & DINNER

**CASSEROLES:** Almost any casserole and veggie puree will work! Because casseroles typically have ingredients of several different textures and colors, the purees aren't as noticeable.

**CHICKEN SALAD:** Add cauliflower puree.

**BURGERS:** Add mushroom or carrot puree.

**SANDWICHES AND WRAPS** (especially when served warm, panini or quesadilla style): Spread a spoonful of pureed chickpeas (or [hummus](#)) on their bread and top with a little bit of cheese to disguise it.

Add pureed red bell peppers (jarred fire roasted red peppers work great for pureeing too!) to a chicken wrap or sandwich. If you have kids who like ketchup, pass it off as a condiment "similar to ketchup."

**SOUP:** Make a big batch of pureed squash and freeze it in ice cube trays. Drop one or two cubes into your family's bowl of chicken noodle soup, tomato soup or chili.

**PIZZA:** If using red sauce on your pizza: Mix spinach, bell pepper, carrot or roasted red pepper puree into sauce. If using pesto sauce: Mix in a little spinach or broccoli puree.

**LASAGNA:** Blend spinach or broccoli puree into the tomato sauce and cauliflower puree into the ricotta cheese. If you have trouble getting your children to eat chicken, add pureed chicken into the ricotta with, or in place of, the cauliflower puree.

**CHILI:** Try adding a little roasted red pepper, spinach or carrot puree.

**GRILLED CHEESE SANDWICH OR [CHEESE QUESADILLA](#):** Add pureed chicken, sweet potato, butternut squash or carrot puree. (Use shredded cheddar cheese and mix it with the puree prior to spreading on sandwich or tortilla.)



## SIDES, SAUCES, & CONDIMENTS



**SALSA** (put on scrambled eggs, omelets, quesadillas, homemade tortilla chips, etc): Saying we LOVE salsa is an understatement. We probably top more than half of our meals with it and have found it's a simple way to disguise veggie purees. We've successfully added pinto bean, roasted red pepper, spinach and carrot puree (individually of course), without anyone noticing.

**TWICE-BAKED POTATOES:** Add a heaping spoonful of cauliflower puree to each twice-baked potato mixture.

**KETCHUP:** You can add almost any red-, orange- or yellow-colored puree into ketchup. Just mix to combine.

**SPAGHETTI SAUCE:** Add beets, carrot, roasted red pepper or butternut squash puree. If adding spinach puree (the sauce disguises the taste well), add just enough so it doesn't drastically change the color. You can use this on bagel or pita pizzas, in pasta dishes, casseroles, you name it!



## SNACKS

**DEVILED EGGS:** Whip yolk mixture with cauliflower or carrot puree.

**ANTS ON A LOG:** Combine butternut squash or pumpkin puree with nut butter (1:3 ratio). Smear on celery, top with raisins and serve. You can also use this combo in PB & J's.

## DESSERTS

**SORBET POPS:** Blend pureed beets, spinach or carrots with a mixture of frozen fruit, milk and yogurt. Add a little honey for added sweetness. Pour into popsicle molds and freeze.

