

FOURTEEN WAYS TO DISGUISE VEGETABLES IN YOUR DAILY COOKING

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The most pressing problem in today's diets is the lack of cooked vegetables. Getting 60 to 70% of the diet to be cooked vegetables is one of the most difficult challenges for everyone. It can be especially difficult for parents who must deal with fussy children who refuse to eat many vegetables.

The following are simple suggestions to disguise or have fun adding many more vegetables to the diet. Play with these ideas, adding your own creative spirit. To save time preparing many of the dishes below, in the morning cook up a large quantity of vegetables in a steamer, perhaps, and then chop them and place in a plastic storage container in the refrigerator. Alternatively, chop them up first and stir fry them before storing them in the refrigerator. They will still be fresh enough all day for use at breakfast, perhaps, and for lunch and supper as well.

ADD GREENS TO YOUR CARROT JUICE

While carrot juice alone is excellent, a way to cut the sweetness, add unusual flavors, and most important, add more vegetables is to include a few spinach leaves, Swiss chard leaves, kale leaves, a piece of turnip, celery or rutabaga, or others. Rotate the vegetables, adding just one or two in each day's carrot juice. This is often an effective way to disguise the green vegetables. They are not cooked, but in the juice they are fine.

VEGETABLE CHILE

Instead of making a rich bowl of chile mainly with beans, substitute many more cooked vegetables such as chopped onions, garlic, broccoli, cauliflower, greens or others. One can still have turkey, lamb or beef in the chile, but it will now be much richer in vegetables.

To make this dish, first cook the vegetables, as they take much longer than cooking ground meats. After cooking the vegetables, chop them finely or blend them for a few seconds or more to reduce them to a chunky consistency. Then add ground turkey, ground lamb or ground beef, which should not require more than a minute or two of cooking to be ready. Add a few herbs or spices if desired. Do not overcook meats.

VEGETABLE PIZZA

Children, along with many adults, seem to love pizza for whatever reason. Try making your own pizza with a thin crust that can even be store-bought, if needed, followed by a thick layer of chopped up pre-cooked vegetables. Top this with some oregano or other spices, a little tomato sauce and some tasty cheese.

One could also add other things such as chicken, turkey sausage, and even some pepperoni, though it is a processed meat. This is not for everyday consumption, but if it helps a child or adult to eat a lot more vegetables, it would probably be worth the time and trouble.

Drawbacks of this dish are that it is a complex food combination, though not too bad. Also, it involves cooking the cheese, which is not optimal. It also involves tomato sauce, which is very yin and a nightshade vegetable, which is also not optimal. Once a week or so, however, might be fine for many children.

VEGETABLE ENCHILADAS OR TACOS

Instead of filling taco shells or enchiladas with salad, beans or pork, fill them with mostly chopped up cooked vegetables. One can also add a little chicken, beans, sauce, cheese, a little rice or other filling to disguise the cooked vegetables.

Always use blue or yellow organic corn tortillas, and never flour tortillas. The only disadvantage to this dish is cooking the cheese, so cook the vegetables first and then cook the enchilada minimally for best nutrition. Cheese is best eaten as raw as possible.

COOKED VEGETABLE TACO SALAD

Many children love pasta salad or taco salad. However, instead of using raw vegetables, use cooked ones such as chopped up broccoli, chopped carrots, onion, turnip, rutabaga or others. Cook the vegetables first. You can serve them hot, or let them cool down. Add a few broken apart blue corn chips or some rice pasta. If needed, top off the cooked salad with some fresh cheese, chopped nuts or seeds, maybe some pesto sauce or olive oil, and you have a delicious cooked taco salad.

VEGETABLE STEWS OR CASSEROLE DISHES

This is a wonderful place to disguise vegetables. Start with some stew meat, maybe with some gravy, and add chopped up vegetables. Cook in a crock pot or in the oven until everything blends together and it all tastes like the meat. Lamb is an excellent stew meat.

Don't overcook the meat, as it denatures the protein too much. The stew or casserole should cook in an hour or less, if possible. That should allow enough time to cook most vegetables as well. Otherwise, precook the vegetables if they require more time.

VEGETABLE SUSHI

For those who just cannot stay away from sushi, make some nori rolls at home filled with cooked vegetables, perhaps with a little cooked rice in them as well. One could even get creative and add a mashed or whole sardine to the vegetables, along with soy sauce or other flavoring.

While nori has more toxic metals than we like, this would be far better than regular sushi that contains tuna, ahi, raw fish and other less desirable ingredients.

VEGETABLE-CONTAINING MEAT LOAF

When you make a meat loaf, begin with some ground beef, ground turkey, or ground lamb. Then add a lot of pre-cooked chopped vegetables and maybe some flavoring to disguise the vegetables. If needed, add some egg to keep it from falling apart. Then bake the loaf to create an excellent family meal.

The only drawback to meat loaves is that eggs, needed to keep the loaf together, should preferably not be overcooked, and in fact should be eaten mushy or soft. However, a meat loaf that is filled with vegetables is still an excellent dish.

VEGETABLE QUICHE

Vegetables quiches are already in vogue and enjoyed by many young people.

Simply add a whole lot of vegetables to your quiche crust, rather than a lot of cheese or a lot of anything else. This is a favorite among many teenagers and children.

The drawback is that it involves overcooking the eggs and cooking the cheese, neither of which are ideal. However, once again it is far better than what most children and adults are eating today.

THICK VEGETABLE SOUPS

Adding loads of vegetables to all kinds of soups is a simple and excellent idea. For fussy eaters, disguise the vegetables by cooking them for 10-20 minutes and then puree the soup so the vegetables blend in with the rest of the soup.

The drawback to soups is that having too much liquid with meals weakens digestion. So use as little water as possible, or thicken soup with arrowroot powder. While corn starch is not a healthful thickener, arrowroot powder, though a little more costly, is a healthful thickener for any dish.

If possible, avoid using a lot of tomato in soups. Tomato is a nightshade vegetable that is quite irritating for the intestines, and very yin. Instead use a base of onions, celery, or other sweet vegetables.

VEGETABLE OMELETS

Chop up and cook the vegetables well. Then add the eggs and perhaps some spices to create an omelet. This is a superb dish. While it does not disguise the vegetables, often children and adults will accept some vegetables in an omelet.

The only possible drawback to this dish is do not overcook the eggs. Try to have the omelet a little mushy, as it is best that eggs be eaten soft, not hard.

STUFFED CABBAGE, RED PEPPER, GRAPE LEAVES OR OTHER LEAVES

This is more of a fun dish if one can involve children in making it. It does not so much disguise the vegetables as allow one to roll up some vegetables and rice, perhaps, in a cabbage or grape leaf and bake it into an appetizing package that can be enjoyed by all.

VEGETABLE PIE

A vegetable pie is somewhat like a deep-dish pizza. Begin with a preferably wheat-free crust, though if you cannot find one any thin crust will do. Place it in a pan that is 1-2 inches deep. Cook the crust according to the directions.

Then add your chopped up cooked vegetables – whichever you wish or whichever your children like the most. Top it with some cheese, or perhaps a little tomato sauce or other toppings. Even chunks of natural chicken or turkey sausage could be used as toppings. Place in an oven for about 10 minutes to melt the cheese and to warm everything up.

VEGETABLE FRITTERS OR PANCAKES

Some readers have had tasty vegetable fritters, or potato pancakes, perhaps. I would suggest not using potatoes, however. Instead, cook some of your favorite vegetables. Then chop up into small pieces. Mix with some egg to hold everything together, and add some seasoning if you wish. You might need other thickeners such as a little arrowroot powder, but

perhaps not. To make them sweet, you could add some cooked sweet potato or yam, and this would help hold it together, but this should not be necessary at all times.

Then place these on a frying pan in the form of fritters or pancakes with some butter or olive oil on the pan. Cook lightly on both sides for five minutes or so until they are golden brown.

For many recipe ideas in accordance with nutritional balancing principles, read ***Joyful Cooking*** by Joy Feldman.