

Air Fryers Are More Than Hot Air

By Lois Hoffman



If you bought every new gadget and appliance that hit the market, you would have to move out of your home to make room for the gadgets. Some actually do make your life easier and some...well some do just take up space.

Air fryers are one of those that I have been on the fence about. Fried foods are so good for the taste buds but so bad for your general health. Can you really have the best of both worlds with the air fryer by making French fries and other foods almost healthy?

How Air Fryers Work

First of all, what exactly is an air fryer? Basically, it is a smaller version of a convection oven. It cooks and crisps food by circulating super-hot air around foods using just a smidgen of oil or no oil at all. So, here is where healthy comes in; it cooks with up to 70 to 80 percent less fat than traditional deep frying.

From a safety standpoint, they are also safer than using hot oil for frying. There is no spattering or chances of getting burned by spilling hot oil on yourself. I have always thought it a shame when deep frying to use so much oil and then have to dispose of it all, usually only after one use. Air fryers are also less messy than traditional deep frying with no after smell nor needing to find a means to dispose of used oil.

They also cook faster than traditional ovens. There is no waiting time to pre-heat as you do ovens since air fryers reach high temperatures in minutes.

Should I Buy an Air Fryer?

If you are thinking of getting one, other than purely for health reasons, consider how much you will actually use it. Most of them are smaller, a three and a half to four-quart size, and will feed one or two people easily. However, if you have a bigger family, you will find yourself making multiple batches of food. You have to weigh the time of making multiple batches or waiting longer and doing just one batch in the traditional oven.

Price is another consideration. Most range between 60 and 200 dollars, depending on how fancy you want to get.

Also consider where you will store it. They take up a lot of counter space if you don't have room in your cabinets. Because of their shape and size, they do require a lot of room. Like bread machines, many of them live their lives on closet shelves and in garages, which brings us to the point of out of sight, out of mind.

There is also the question of whether you need an air fryer if you have an Instant pot. Although Instant pots are hailed as being the latest and greatest, they don't have the capability to fry foods unless you purchase a gadget called the Mealthy Crisp Lid which provides the attachments to allow your Instant pot to also air fry food. These sell for around \$60, so that too is an added expense

Now, the big question, what about taste? Do air-fried foods taste like the real thing? Well, the answer is yes and no, depending on the food. Cheaper cuts of meat come out tender when air-fried. Air fryers are also great for re-heating leftovers and frozen foods like chicken nuggets and tater tots. Roasted vegetables, air-roasted garlic and other foods come out better in an air fryer. It can turn a can of chickpeas into a crispy, delectable happy hour snack. I remember my grandmother making doughnuts and how they sucked up so much oil. Air fryers make doughnuts that taste just as good, without all the oil.

Small whole chickens, three pounds or less, come out with crispy skin and juicy, tender meat, much like rotisserie chicken. The air fryer shines when it comes to small snacks like toasted nuts.

The big question here is French fries. The overall consensus is that they are not quite as good as the real deal. However, if you do choose to make them in an air fryer, they are better with the skins left on.

Perhaps the biggest misconception about an air fryer is that all it can do is fry. Far from it. You can also bake in it, turning out brownies and bagels, molten lava cakes and more. The good thing about this is that you can have a sweet treat that is only enough for a couple people so you don't have temptation setting around.

What it boils down to is that air fryers make delicious food fast in small batches. They prove that you can have your cake and eat it too...or, in this case, you can have your French fries and still eat healthy.

Air Fryer Doughnuts (the quick way)

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 tbs cinnamon
- 1 tube Pillsbury Grands biscuits
- 4 tbs melted unsalted butter
- Olive oil

Directions

1. Combine sugar and cinnamon in a bowl, set aside
2. Lightly coat air fryer basket with cooking spray
3. Remove biscuits, separate and place on parchment-lined cookie sheet
4. Place 3 or 4 biscuits in a single layer in basket
5. Set fryer for 350*, cook 3 or 4 minutes on a side, then turn
6. Place on cookie sheet, baste with melted butter and roll in cinnamon/sugar mixture
7. Serve warm

Air Fryer Molten Lava Cakes

Ingredients

- 3-1/2 squares bittersweet chocolate
- 1 stick butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1/2 cup flour

Directions

1. Melt butter and chocolate together
2. Mix in sugar, eggs and vanilla

3. Add flour, mixing in thoroughly
4. Grease or spray a ramekin or small pan
5. Fill halfway with batter
6. Place ramekin or pan in fryer basket and cook at 375* for 10 minutes or until edges are set
7. Remove, let cool and loosen edges with a knife

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