

HEALTHY COOKING METHODS

Could the way you cook your food be affecting your health? A growing body of research suggests that toxic chemicals are formed when we use intense cooking methods.

some culprits

- ▶ **HCAs (heterocyclic amines) and PAHs (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons).** These are found in meat, chicken and fish that have been cooked with dry heat (grilled, barbecued, fried or smoked). They are linked to an increased risk of cancers of the stomach, bowel, prostate and pancreas.
- ▶ **AGEs (advanced glycation end products).** These already exist at high levels in uncooked animal foods such as meats, higher fat and aged cheeses, as well as high fat spreads or oils. Cooking with dry heat and high temperature generates new AGEs. AGEs are linked to many health problems, including inflammation, cataracts, Alzheimer's and heart disease. Animal studies show AGEs accelerate diabetes complications.
- ▶ **Acrylamide.** Found in many carbohydrate-rich foods that have been prepared at high temperatures (not typically found in meat, fish or dairy). The International Agency for Research on Cancer says that acrylamide is "probably cancer-causing in humans."

cooking tips

Organic products are better for the planet and probably better for your health. However, they will not reduce your exposure to these chemicals. It's the way the food is cooked that counts!

- ▶ Use moist cooking methods. Cook more soups, stews and casseroles, or steam or poach foods.
- ▶ Vegetables and fruits don't form HCAs, so if you do want to barbecue food, load your grill with these!
- ▶ Avoid smoked and processed meats.
- ▶ If you eat dairy, select low-fat white cheeses such as cottage and ricotta.
- ▶ Avoid toasting bread or warm it to the lightest colour acceptable.
- ▶ Soften rolled grains overnight or cook them with water instead of using processed breakfast cereals.
- ▶ Steam or boil potatoes, and avoid French fries and hash browns.
- ▶ Snack on natural nuts rather than roasted nuts or potato chips.
- ▶ Avoid coffee, which is made by roasting beans, forming large amounts of acrylamide.



Sue Radd is the award-winning author of *The Breakfast Book* and co-author of *Eat To Live*, internationally acclaimed for showing how savvy eating can combat cancer and heart disease and improve well-being. See www.sueradd.com for more nutrition information or follow her on Twitter @CulinaryMed.