7 FOODS YOUR KID DOESN'T LIKE (YET)

Get creative with these easy ideas. You just might find some new family faves in the process. (Brussels sprout chips FTW!)

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YOUR KID will reliably eat a handful of old favorites (hello, pasta). And there are other foods he'll only consider on a good day (sorry, hummus). But he's probably missing out on a whole category of items: the ones you've written off as too green, too grown-up, or too risky. Maybe those foods have been total fails in the past. Or maybe they're things you're not crazy about or don't know a tasty way to prepare. According to researchers from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, just as only are moms the biggest influence on whether foods are introduced, but they also tend to serve things they like themselves. Raising a healthy eater, however, means that sometimes you need to go outside your family's comfort zone. These seven items are ones that many kids—and grown-ups—find particularly challenging to enjoy. But if you start with our recipes that straddle the line between no-brainer kid fave and sophisticated-palate club, you just might raise a little asparagus aficionado or fish fiend. Let's get cooking!
1. CAULIFLOWER

If your kid isn’t a fan of straight-up raw florets, know that cauliflower can be totally transformed when it’s roasted, mashed, or even pressed into a pizza crust. Roasting also brings out the veggie’s natural sweetness. FYI: My kids didn’t fall for the “it’s basically white broccoli” line, and you’re probably won’t either.

WHY IT’S WORTH IT
A rich source of immune-boosting vitamin C and fiber, cauliflower packs the same disease-fighting compounds that broccoli does.

IDEAS FOR SERVING
- Toss florets in olive oil, then dredge in breadcrumbs and seasonings, and bake at 400°F until golden. Serve “nuggets” with ketchup or barbecue sauce for dipping.
- Steam half a head in the microwave or on the stovetop in a steamer basket and mash. Blend into a batch of mashed potatoes and top with lots of butter.
- Stir small steamed florets into mac ‘n cheese.
- Buy a bag of riced cauliflower (or pulse florets in a food processor) and sauté in a skillet with a little olive oil. Mix with regular cooked white rice or serve on its own as a bed for a stir-fry.
- Slather a whole head with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Roast until tender and browned.
2 BEETS

Time for parent-sanctioned petty talk at the dinner table—every kid’s dream! Did you know that eating beets can turn your pee and poop red? It’s temporary (and harmless), but that giggle-inducing factoid may entice your kids to try them. This root veggie has an earthy flavor, but beets can also be sweet.

WHY THEY’RE WORTH IT
Beets are a stellar source of potassium, a mineral that helps maintain a healthy blood pressure and that most kids don’t get enough of. Beets have vitamin C and a little fiber as well. The red pigment is also being studied for potential cancer-fighting properties.

IDEAS FOR SERVING
• Chop a small raw beet in half and blend it with a frozen banana, berries, milk, and honey for a dazzling dark-pink drink.
• Bake a tray of beet chips. Scrub and trim beets, then slice thin (use a mandoline if you have one) and toss with olive oil and salt. Roast on a baking sheet at 350°F for about 20 minutes or until browned and crisp.
• If your child already likes hummus, whip up a pretty pink version by blending a roasted beet and a can of chickpeas into a homemade batch.
• Cut beets into “fry” shapes, toss with oil, and roast on their own or alongside white or sweet potatoes.
• Swap peeled, grated raw beets for zucchini in a recipe for zucchini bread or muffins.

3 ASPARAGUS

Making these spears appealing is key. Cook them just until they’re bright green and crisp-tender (overcooked stalks get limp and wimpy). And be sure you snap off the tough, woody ends before prepping them. When all else fails,

Pro Tip

Make It Taste Good!

When your kids are learning to like a new food, don’t be afraid to up its appeal with a generous pat of butter, shake of salt, or squirt of honey. Your kids won’t always need that extra boost for enjoyment, but it can get them over the new-food hump.

IDEAS FOR SERVING
• Chop spears into bite-size pieces and add to your fam’s favorite stir-fry or fried rice.
• Roast a batch of cheesy spears. Dredge spears in flour, dip into beaten egg, then roll in bread crumbs and Parmesan cheese. Bake at 400°F for 10 minutes or until golden.
• Cut cooked spears into small pieces and toss with pasta, butter, and grated cheese.
• Include steamed asparagus on a veggie tray with a dip.
• Wrap thin strips of crescent roll dough around asparagus spears and bake until golden brown.

4 LENTILS

In a small study from the University of Idaho,

Pro Tip

Don’t Harp on Healthy

Kids want to hear how delicious something is, not about its nutrients. In a study published in the Journal of Consumer Research, preschoolers who heard a story about crackers that were dubbed “healthy” ate fewer of them than kids who heard a version calling them “yummy.”

WHY THEY’RE WORTH IT
Half a cup of cooked brown or green lentils has the same muscle-building protein as 2 ounces of beef and nearly half the fiber that young kids need in a day. Red lentils have less fiber but are still a great source of nutrients.

IDEAS FOR SERVING
• Mix a cup of cooked lentils into a pound of ground beef when making taco or lasagna filling or kid-classic Sloppy Joes.
• Toast cooked lentils with olive oil and salt on a baking sheet lined with parchment. Roast at 400°F for 15 to 20 minutes or until crisp, stirring halfway through.
• Make (or order in) a batch of dal, a thick Indian lentil dish, and let your kids scoop it up with pieces of warm naan, an Indian flatbread.
• If your kids like leafy greens, sprinkle a few cooked, cooled lentils over a crisp salad.
KIDS — Picky Eaters


5 / MUSHROOMS
We get it: Fungi don't exactly scream "kid-friendly." But mushrooms are special because they hit that fabled fifth taste sense called umami, a savory and meaty flavor that your kids might really like. The two most popular varieties, white button and cremini (or "baby bella"), are good gateway mushrooms to funkier-looking types like oyster.

WHY THEY'RE WORTH IT
Mushrooms are a source of vitamin D, essential for healthy bones, teeth, and muscles and a nutrient that's hard to get naturally through food. (Look on the package for varieties that have been treated with UV light to boost levels of D.)

IDEAS FOR SERVING
● Finely chop mushrooms and add to ground meat for meatballs.

275°F for 10 to 12 minutes or until crisp. Sprinkle with salt.
● Finely shred raw sprouts into a green salad and drizzle with your child's favorite dressing.
● Sauté halved sprouts in olive oil until the edges get crisp and golden, then add a pat of butter and a spoonful of maple syrup, and toss to coat.
● Roast Brussels sprout halves in the oven with olive oil and salt, and toss with crumbled bacon and dried cranberries.
● Cook shredded sprouts in a pan with butter or olive oil until soft. Squeeze on fresh lemon juice and sprinkle with salt.

7 / FISH
Kids should eat fish once or twice a week to nab all the health perks—that's the advice from the American Heart Association and the FDA. And remember that kid portions are quite small: 1 ounce for toddlers, 2 ounces for kids 4 to 7, and 3 ounces for kids 8 to 10.

WHY IT'S WORTH IT
Fish is loaded with iron and protein without a lot of saturated fat. Some varieties (like salmon, Atlantic mackerel, anchovies, and sardines) contain omega-3 fatty acids, which are good for heart health and brain development.

IDEAS FOR SERVING
● Brush barbecue or teriyaki sauce onto fish fillets before baking at 425°F for 10 to 15 minutes or until fillets are cooked through.
● Combine cooked fish, mashed potatoes, and an egg and pan fry as potato cakes.
● Cut a mild white fish such as tilapia or cod into bite-size chunks, dip into egg, bread with panko and Parmesan, and bake. Dunk the fish "nuggets" in tartar sauce or ketchup.
● Serve baked fish with warm tortillas and taco toppings, and let everyone build their own.
● Mix canned tuna with plain Greek yogurt and chopped apple. Serve on crackers.