



DIY BABY FOOD

Homemade & Healthy

DIY Baby Food: Homemade & Healthy

by Kris Bordessa of [Attainable Sustainable](#) -- Copyright 2016 Kris Bordessa

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Let me let you in on a little secret: Babies have been eating for *thousands* of years. Long before the iconic Gerber baby.

Think about it. New moms and dads have been feeding their babes from tiny little jars for less than a hundred years. And yet we've come to think that it's the only way to feed our little ones.

People. We are capable of feeding our families without the corporations. I've written a lot on my website about learning to cook at home and how to make the products we've become accustomed to buying at the store. This little ebook is an extension of that. If we can cook for our grownup selves, surely we can manage to cook some simple soft foods for our little ones.

As you work to become accustomed to the role of parenthood, I invite you to consider an alternative to the usual baby food fare. Try your hand at making your own! Get your baby off to a good start and set the foundation for healthier home-made meals for your whole family.

Moving beyond exclusive breast (or formula) feeding

The American Academy of Pediatrics [recommends introducing solid foods at around six months of age.](#)

Starting baby on solid foods – and when, exactly to do that – is a personal decision. As a parent, only you know what’s best for your baby.

My babies were introduced to solid food at different ages. My first-born had his first when he was about six months old. My second? He wasn’t quite four months old. That’s much earlier than I’d intended to begin, earlier than a lot of experts suggest, but the boy was ravenous and breastfeeding just couldn’t keep up with his appetite.

In both cases, though, their solid food diet was homemade except for rare occasions when we were on the road and found jarred food to be a better option.

It’s not hard to make your own baby food at home. And it makes so much sense. With a little bit of forethought and planning, you can have a week’s worth of baby food at the ready in an hour or so.

Nestle created the first infant food company in 1867. Gerber started selling their strained food for babies in 1927.

Why You Should Make Your Own Baby Food

1. It's substantially less expensive. Like, a lot.
2. You will know exactly what's in it, and choose [non-GMO](#) or [organic](#) produce.
3. It will be fresh. Who knows how long those baby food jars have been sitting in a warehouse?
4. You'll have more variety. The options in jarred food are limited.
5. Baby will learn to eat the flavors that you tend to eat in your household. If you're cooking sweet potatoes for the rest of the family, it's easy enough to puree some for him or her on the spot. [Hot tip: Read [Parents Need to Eat, Too.](#)]
6. Less waste. Instead of [generating a lot of disposable trash](#), you can support local farmers when you buy fresh produce.



Food Safety

Baby food companies would have you think otherwise, but making your own baby food at home is perfectly safe. Of course, you should be vigilant in using safe food handling practices to prevent any sort of food-borne illness.

- Always start with fresh, good quality food.
- Wash your hands and your equipment before starting.
- Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly before cutting them, even if you intend to peel them.
- Cook meat, poultry, and fish thoroughly to kill any harmful bacteria. Use [this chart](#) for reference.
- Refrigerate prepared food immediately. If it won't be eaten within 24 hours, freeze it for up to one month.
- Any food remaining in baby's dish should be tossed into the compost. Don't save it for later as it will be contaminated with bacteria.

Getting Started with Solid Food

The most important thing to remember is to start with one new food at a time, to make sure your baby doesn't have an allergic reaction. Offer the same solid food for several days before introducing something new.

Remember that your baby or toddler might need to try a new food multiple times before he or she accepts them easily.

Providing healthy options at this early stage sets the tone for a [healthy diet](#) as your child grows.

6 to 8 months

At this stage, baby can start eating pureed fruits and vegetables, along with staples like cereal, meat, and egg yolk. Early on, you'll want to prepare a thin puree by adding a bit of liquid to the cooked foods. (If you're steaming vegetables, save the cooking water and use this to thin out your puree.) As your child becomes more adept at eating solids, you can offer a thicker puree.

Steaming vegetables: Peel and cut vegetables into 1" cubes. Place in pot with 1" of water. Cover and bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer. Cook until tender.

Baking vegetables: Cook whole (or halved for pumpkin) on a baking tray at 350F until tender. (More on baking pumpkin [here](#).)

Pumpkin –

- Steam cubes or bake until well done and run through a food processor, blender, or food mill until creamy.

Sweet potatoes –

- Steam peeled and cut up sweet potato until well done, or bake whole, and run through a food processor, blender, or food mill until creamy.

Pureed peas –

- Steam peas until well done and run through a food processor, blender, or food mill until creamy.

Mashed bananas –

- Choose a very ripe banana and mash with a fork. You can add a bit of milk or water to smooth it out if necessary.

Avocado –

- Choose a very ripe avocado and mash with a fork. You can add a bit of milk or water to smooth it out if necessary.

Mashed potatoes –

- Boil cubed potatoes until well done. Mash with milk.

Carrots or beets –

- Steam cut up carrots or beets until well done and run through a food processor, blender, or food mill until creamy.

Applesauce –

- Peel and slice apples into a cooking pan. Add 1” of water or apple juice, then cover and cook on low until apples are tender. Mash or puree as desired.

Plum or peach puree –

- Puree chunks of fruit in a food processor, blender, or food mill until creamy. Add water if necessary to reach desired consistency.

Cereals –

- The old standby is packaged rice cereal, but prepared oatmeal, cream of wheat, and rice can all be pureed to a consistency suitable for your baby.

Egg yolks –

- Mash hard-boiled egg yolks with a bit of milk (breast or otherwise) or water to smooth it out.

Meat –

- When your child has adapted well to pureed vegetables and fruits, you might want to start incorporating cooked meat by pureeing with a bit of water or broth.

9 to 12 months

If your child has been eating solids for a while, you can probably start offering chunkier purees.

Create combinations of veggies and fruits. Beets and blueberries? Carrots and potatoes? The sky is the limit, so long as you're sure your child isn't allergic to the ingredients you blend.

Try stirring cooked quinoa into your vegetable purees.

Look to your dinner table. Much of what you eat can be mashed or blended to a “baby consistency” and your child can join you in your meal. Be cautious about spicy foods, though. Nobody wants a gassy baby.



Expanding into finger foods

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends waiting until your child reaches nine months of age before introducing snacks. And this is a critical time for instilling healthy eating habits.

Sure, your child may have the ability at this stage to tackle bits of hot dog, French fries, and doughnuts, but save these for a rare treat, focusing instead on providing food with plenty of nutrients.

It's common for children to be introduced to snacks like packaged cereals and crackers at this stage. They're easy, certainly, but be sure to continue to provide access to fruits and vegetables at this stage as you decrease the pureed versions.

What to offer:

- Cut up fruits like bananas, peaches, and plums
- Avocado
- Cooked peas
- Shredded chicken
- Cooked lentils
- Cooked pasta – small shapes
- Diced peaches
- Scrambled eggs
- Raisins
- Cut melon
- Diced bread
- Grated cheese

What not to feed your baby

Choking is a real hazard for babies and even “safe” foods can be dangerous. (Case in point: My oldest son managed to break off a large piece of a teething cookie, which he then proceeded to choke on.)

Always keep any eye on your baby or toddler when he or she is eating.

Avoid:

Hard, sticky foods like nuts, popcorn, marshmallows, and peanut butter are serious choking hazards.

Round food items like grapes or slices of carrot, hot dog,

Fruit juice. Or at least minimize its use. It can cause diarrhea, and it packs a lot of calories in a small amount of food. Better to eat whole fruits complete with their fiber.

Honey is best avoided until your child reaches one year of age, as there is potential for botulism.

Fish that's high in mercury. [Go here for a list of what to watch for.](#)

Kris Bordessa is the author of a number of books and the creator of [Attainable Sustainable](#). There, she shares recipes and do it yourself projects to help families move into a more self-reliant, healthy lifestyle one small step at a time.

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