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WomensHealthMag.com

Beyond Slicing and Dicing

Your food processor has hidden talents. Learn five cool things you never knew it could do.

1/ Grate Hard Cheeses

A sprinkle of a strong-flavored cheese such as Parmigiano-Reggiano or Grana Padano can add lots of flavor to pasta or salad for minimal calories (around 20 per tablespoon). Bonus: Eating cheese can neutralize acids in the mouth, helping restore tooth enamel and prevent cavities, according to researchers at the Forsyth Institute in Boston.

Try this: Bake flattened tablespoons of freshly grated Parmesan on a baking sheet at 325°F for 6 to 10 minutes, until lightly browned. Cool and loosen with a spatula; let sit 5 minutes until hardened. Use as a salad garnish or predinner snack.

2/ Emulsify Salad Dressing

A DIY dressing takes seconds, costs pennies, and will entice you to up your vegetable intake. And Iowa State University researchers have found that eating veggies with an oil-based dressing helps your body absorb cancer-fighting carotenoids.

Try this: Use the food processor to chop parsley, chives, rosemary, or other fresh herbs. Drizzle in olive oil and balsamic vinegar in a three-to-one ratio. Add Dijon mustard and honey to taste.

3/ Pulse Salmon into Homemade Burgers

Keep a few cans of salmon on hand so you can make this quickie midweek meal that's loaded with those nutritional all-stars, omega-3 fatty acids.

Try this: In a food processor, combine two 15-ounce cans drained wild salmon, 2 tablespoons onion flakes, 2 eggs, ½ cup light mayo, ¼ cup bread crumbs, 1 tablespoon lemon juice, and ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper. Pulse until just combined. Form patties (recipe makes six large or 12 small) and coat with additional bread crumbs. Cook in a pan with oil, 4 to 5 minutes per side. Serve on whole-grain rolls or with cocktail sauce for dipping.

4/ Liquefy Sautéed Onions for a Flavor Boost

Use the resulting velvety sauce as a base for chicken dishes, pasta sauces, and more, says recipe writer Max Falkowitz, a columnist for SeriousEats.com. This is also a great way to sneak the heart-healthy flavonoid quercetin into your meal.

Try this: Sauté finely diced yellow onions in canola oil (about 1½ tablespoons of oil per medium onion) until well-browned and limp. Add spices, if desired. Pour into the food processor and pulse until fully blended.

Give stale bread a new lease on life.

5/ Make Your Own Bread Crumbs

They'll taste fresher than the store-bought kind, and they'll also be better for you. "It can be hard to find 100 percent whole-grain bread crumbs," says Michelle Dudash, R.D., an Arizona-based chef.

Try this: Tear a slice of bread into quarters and toss the pieces into a food processor. (Using fresh bread will give you moist crumbs that you can use to coat part-skim mozzarella cheese sticks before baking; stale bread is better suited for fine, firm, dry crumbs that will give chicken a satisfyingly crunchy coating.) Pulse until crumbly.

—Rachel Meltzer Warren, R.D.

Ready to Cook?

> Get more quick and easy recipes to make with your food processor at WomensHealthMag.com/Recipes.