

Making Ripples

Eco-Friendly Fries

by Amanda Bancroft

Fried foods are delicious, but most people accept that they are treats, not healthy snacks. However, there are plenty of ways to reduce their unhealthy qualities by making them from scratch at home using local organic ingredients. Homemade fries dispose of the need for disposable packaging, which reduces waste. From solar cooking to vegan gluten-free homegrown baking, not all fries have to be the same. As a bonus, you won't be limited to ketchup and available dipping sauces given out at restaurants or food trucks – create your fantasy fries with the dip of your dreams!

Sure, this is going to take some work and almost certainly won't be as convenient as eating out. But you can still eat out occasionally while enjoying the family fun and freedom of home cooking, too.

There are so many paths in this fry adventure. Not everyone is vegan, but that's a great choice. Vegan cheeze makes a creamy topping. Not everyone has a solar cooker like the All American Sun Oven, but these ovens are awesome and efficient when the sun is shining. Some people go for the yukon gold potato while others choose the sweet potato – or even a variety of veggie sticks and potato colors from red to purple! If you see something you don't like or can't do, just pick a different flavor or method. First, pick your potato.

If possible, grow organic potatoes in your garden and use natural methods to combat pests and disease. Or just buy from a local farmer. Can't get a local potato? Try growing your own ingredients for dips and baked-in flavors, like garlic, oregano, basil, cilantro or lavender. Mexican “loaded” fries would go great with cilantro sauce! Sweet potatoes go well with lavender, which tastes naturally sweet and complements local honey. Spicy fries are delicious, too, with pretty much any kind of potato.

Baking in a home oven is healthier than deep frying, and works fine – as long as you check frequently so that the fries don't burn. If you use the sun oven, you needn't worry about burning because that's not possible (they may get dried out if left too long, though). It's 100% solar powered, so the electric bill will be zero for these fries. Visit SunOven.com to learn more. Whichever way you get your fry fix, keep it environmentally-friendly, healthy, and delicious, too!

Lavender Sweet Potato Fries

1. Chop one large local sweet potato into fry-sized slices, with or without skin.
2. Bruise a few sprigs of homegrown lavender, leaves and blossoms.
3. Sauté one clove garlic with the lavender in olive oil.
4. Toss the fries in the oil using a bowl or sealed plastic bag.

5. Bake in the oven on a cookie sheet at 450 for about 20 minutes, turning them with a spatula halfway through. Serve and enjoy!

Amanda Bancroft is a writer, artist, and naturalist building an off-grid cottage for land conservation on Mt. Kessler. She and her husband Ryan blog about their adventures and offer a solar-hosted online educational center on how to make a difference with everyday choices at: www.RipplesBlog.org.