

Preparing Foods for a Pureed Diet

What Foods to Use

Identifying which foods are safe for a pureed diet may be confusing. Eating the same soft foods day after day can become boring and make you lose interest. However, with some simple preparation steps and a little effort many food items can be pureed to a consistency that is safe.

There are many foods that can be used in their regular form. These foods can be consumed without modification or added thickeners. Examples include:

Cereals:

- Grits (creamy)
- Cream of wheat or rice

Dairy:

- Yogurt (custard style)
- Thick milkshakes (with thickener)
- Whipped topping
- Pudding

Fruits:

- Mashed bananas
- Canned pumpkin
- Applesauce
- Smooth, canned pie fillings
(no chunks of fruit)

Vegetables:

- Cooked, mashed squash
- Mashed white or sweet potatoes

Soups:

- Smooth, cream soups (i.e. tomato, cheese, creamy potato) (Should be thickened to appropriate consistency for your liquid recommendations)

Condiments (Other):

- Mayonnaise
- Sour cream
- Taco sauce
- BBQ sauce
- Honey or thick syrups
- Molasses
- Ketchup
- Mustard
- Hollandaise and other cream based sauces
(i.e. Cheese, white, or smooth tomato)

Misc.:

- Refried beans
- Polenta or corn meal mush
- Baby food (not runny)
- Baby rice cereal (a quick alternative for pureed rice)

Many foods can easily be pureed with a blender, food processor or stick hand blender. Meats or other more solid foods puree best in a food processor. A small amount of liquid and powdered thickener, such as Thicken Up, may also be added to achieve the desired consistency. Buying already prepared foods from the deli or convenience section of the supermarket can help simplify the process of preparing a pureed meal.

Examples of foods easy-to-puree include:

- Quiche
- Various cooked meats
- Various cooked vegetables
- Meat or Egg salads used for sandwich fillings (i.e. Chicken, egg, ham, or tuna salads)
- Prepared casseroles (i.e. Mac n cheese, goulash, canned spaghetti and meatballs, or any soft casserole)
- Creamed Corn, Spinach, Peas, etc..
- Soups or Stews with soft vegetables and/or meat (i.e. Chili, corn chowder, bean, cheese, potato, etc)
- Prepared burritos
- Soft pasta salads (i.e. Tuna pasta, Italian pasta, etc..)
- Canned tamales
- Baked beans
- Pot Pie fillings
- Baked apples
- Poached pears
- Chunky pie fillings (i.e. Apple, cherry, strawberry, blueberry)
- Soft cookies, brownies and moist cakes (without nuts, coconut or baking chips)
- Bread puddings
- Soft pies
- Fresh, Frozen or Canned fruit

There are some items that do not puree well in a food processor or blender and should be softened to the proper consistency using a slurry mixture. A slurry is a mixture of liquid and thickener that is poured over a food, allowing the food to become softer and more palatable.

Examples of foods that should be slurried include:

- Soft dinner rolls
- Soft bread slices
- Cinnamon rolls
- Muffins
- Pancakes and Waffles
- Cookies and Bars
- French toast
- Biscuits
- English muffins
- Crackers – saltine, snack, and graham

NOTE: Slurried foods should not contain nuts, seeds or other particulates.

How to Puree Foods

Food should be pureed to a smooth consistency. The final consistency of the food should be smooth and thick enough to scoop with a fork or spoon; very similar to the consistency of mashed potatoes.

In order to puree foods properly you must have the proper equipment. A food processor works best for pureeing foods and achieving the desired consistency. If a food processor is not available a heavy duty blender or stick hand mixer is also acceptable.

The following are some helpful hints to remember when pureeing foods:

- Cut food into small chunks so it can be pureed evenly.
- Drain canned foods thoroughly and save liquid for use in adjusting the consistency during pureeing.
- Use hot, cooked meats, vegetables, casseroles, and soups when pureeing. Warm, cooked food is softer and easier to puree to the proper consistency.
- Make sure to scrape down the sides of the bowl or container while pureeing. Doing so will help to incorporate all ingredients that may become stuck to the side.
- Once food is pureed, reheat or cool as necessary before serving.

General Preparation Techniques for Pureeing Foods with a Blender or Food Processor

The final consistency for all pureed foods should be similar to a thick pudding. It should be smooth in texture and thick enough to pick up with a spoon or fork.

Meat, Fish, Poultry

- Cut food into small chunks so it can be pureed evenly.
- Use hot, cooked meats for pureeing.
- Puree with liquid until a smooth consistency or paste is formed.
- Add powdered thickener if necessary.
- Blend or process until powder is dissolved. (Hint: Scrape down sides of blender container or processor bowl to incorporate all thickener powder.)
- Reheat to serving temperature.

Canned Fruits and Vegetables

- Drain thoroughly and save liquid.
- Puree fruit or vegetables until smooth.
- If needed, add reserved liquid or water and process until a smooth consistency is achieved.
- Add powdered thickener, if necessary, and blend or process until powder is dissolved. (Hint: Scrape down sides of blender container or processor bowl to incorporate all thickener powder.)
- Reheat or cool to serving temperature as necessary.

Soups

- Puree in blender or food processor until smooth.
- Add powdered thickener if necessary.
- Blend or process until powder is dissolved. (Hint: Scrape down sides of blender container or processor bowl to incorporate all thickener powder.)
- Reheat to serving temperature.

Breads and Desserts

- Cut food into small chunks or crumble so it can be pureed evenly.
- Puree food with liquid until smooth in consistency.
- Add powdered thickener if needed.
- Blend or process until powder is dissolved. (Hint: Scrape down sides of blender or processor bowl to incorporate all thickener powder.)
- Reheat or cool to serving temperature as necessary.