

Family Resources

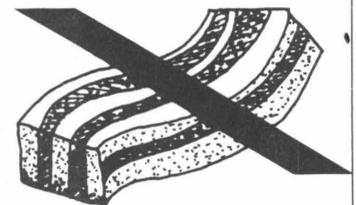
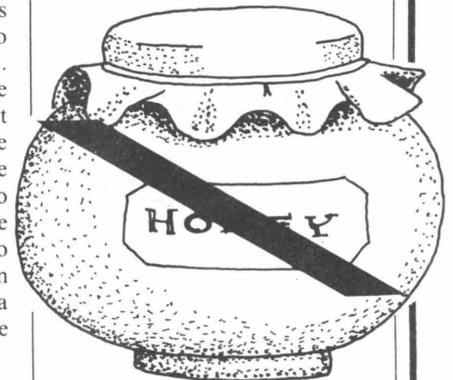
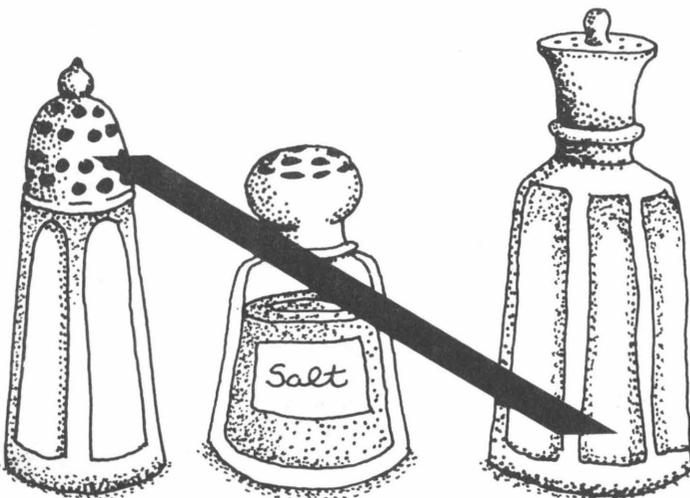
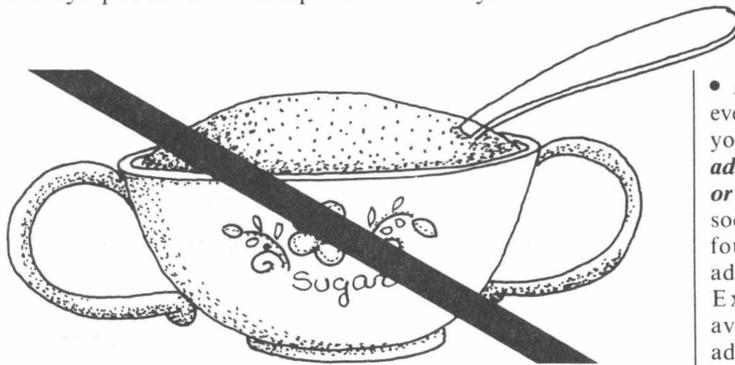
Virginia Cooperative Extension Service
Extension Division
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

Publication 348-012
Reprinted April 1983

HOMEMADE BABY FOOD

Ann A. Hertzler
Nutrition Extension Specialist

Many families want to make their own baby food to save money, to make use of foods in season, or to avoid some of the additives in baby food. Disadvantages of homemade baby food are that it is not handy for traveling and the high sugar and sodium content of packaged foods that the family uses means that family foods are not always practical to adapt for the baby.



- **Do not season baby foods** even if they seem tasteless to you. **Baby food should not have added sugar, salt, fat, fat-back, or seasonings** such as monosodium glutamate. Sodium is found naturally in foods so additional salt is not needed. Extra sodium should be avoided in baby food. Do not add salt in cooking. Do not use packaged foods which have sodium or salt added. Too much salt will be hard on the baby's system. There is also concern that too much sodium (salt) early in life may be a factor in blood pressure problems later.

- **Do not use mixtures such as casseroles, pizza, cobblers, or meat pies** which are prepared for family consumption because of the salt, sugar, and fat content.

- **Do not use fried or greasy foods.**

- **Do not use pickled or brined food** such as pickles and sauerkraut.

- **Do not use processed foods** such as hot dogs, sausage, luncheon meats, or cured pork because of the sodium content as well as nitrates and nitrites.

- **Do not give high-calorie, low-nutrient foods** such as candy, pretzels, colas and cakes.

- **Do not use honey** in food for infants under a year of age. Some honey contains organisms which can cause illness or death in infants.

Virginia Cooperative Extension Service programs, activities, and employment opportunities are available to all people regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, handicap, or political affiliation. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, and September 30, 1977, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Mitchell R. Geasler, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, and Dean, Extension Division, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia 24061; M. C. Harding, Sr., Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State University, Petersburg, Virginia 23803.

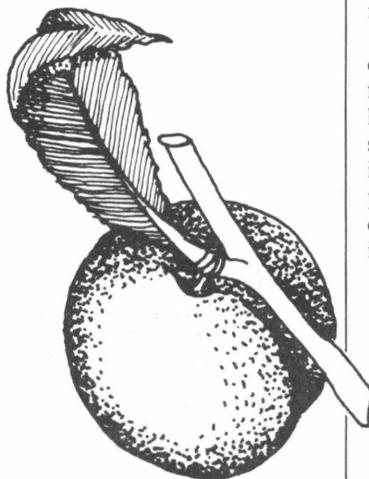
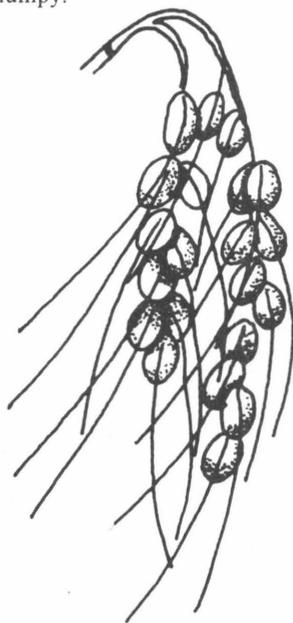
LD
5455
A762
no.
348-
012
1983
VPI
Spec

FOOD CHOICES

CEREALS

Select whole grain or enriched cereal. Enriched means that iron and vitamins have been added after refining. Rice cereal is a good choice for first cereals because it is unlikely to cause allergies. In the following month, add barley and wheat cereals.

Cook cereals according to the directions on the package. Dilute the cooked cereal with milk. Baby cereals are ready for the baby to eat. Coarse cereals will need to be strained or blenderized so they are not lumpy.



FRUITS

Select fresh, frozen or canned fruit. If using frozen or canned, select unsweetened.

Ripe Banana: Ripe bananas have a brown skin with spots. They are very easy to mash into a puree for infant feeding.

Stewed Fruit: Fresh fruits such as apricots, pears, peaches, and prunes are easy to stew. Prunes are especially good for constipated babies. Do not feed berries to the baby because of the small seeds. Wash fresh fruit. Make sure seeds and skins are removed from fruits so they will not choke the baby. Cook in a little bit of boiling water until soft. Puree or strain so all the lumps are gone.

Canned Fruits: Canned fruits such as apricots, apples, pears, peaches, prunes, or plums also can be prepared for infant feeding. Buy fruit canned in water. If using sweetened canned fruit, pour off the sweet juice so the fruit won't be too sweet for the baby. Follow the directions for pureeing.

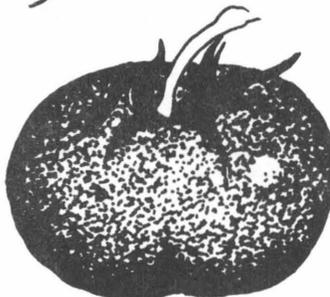
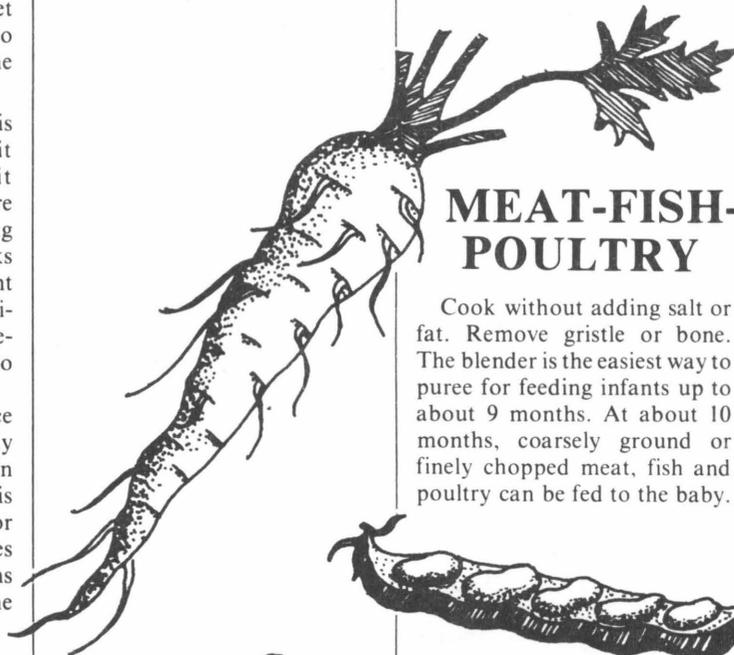
Juice: Fresh or canned juice is better than powdered fruit beverages or canned fruit drinks. Powdered beverages are usually an artificial flavoring and a sweetener. Fruit drinks contain only about 10 percent juice. Strain fresh or reconstituted frozen orange or grapefruit juices to remove pulp. Do not sweeten.

Lead seaming used on juice cans not designed specifically for infant feeding may contain higher amounts of lead than is safe for baby. Therefore, for infant feeding, purchase juices packaged in glass or in cans designed specifically for the infant.

VEGETABLES

Vegetables such as carrots, squash, spinach, string beans, peas, asparagus, tomatoes, white or sweet potatoes and beets can be used fresh, frozen, or canned. Broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and turnips should be cooked without a lid in order to let some of the strong flavor escape. Canned vegetables such as peas usually have a fair amount of salt from processing. Some frozen vegetables have added salt. Boil vegetables in a little bit of water until the vegetable is soft. Follow directions for pureeing.

There is controversy about beets, carrots, spinach and other greens for homemade baby food because they may be high in nitrites and nitrates. The amount in these foods depends on where the food was grown. Usually the amount is not excessive for the infant over six months of age.

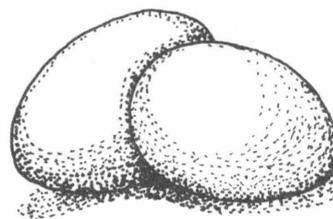


EGG YOLK

Egg white is usually not given to babies until they are a year old. The egg white may cause problems but the egg yolk, an excellent source of iron and protein for the baby, is well tolerated.

Hard Cooked Eggs: Put a fresh egg in boiling water. Turn off the heat. Let the egg sit in the hot water 20 minutes. Remove the cooked yolk and mash with a fork.

Egg Custard: Combine 1 egg yolk, 1/4 cup milk, and 1 teaspoon sugar in a pan. Stir over medium heat until the mixture is thick.



MEAT-FISH-POULTRY

Cook without adding salt or fat. Remove gristle or bone. The blender is the easiest way to puree for feeding infants up to about 9 months. At about 10 months, coarsely ground or finely chopped meat, fish and poultry can be fed to the baby.

DRIED BEANS

Follow recipe directions for cooking dried peas and beans. Do not use recipes containing bacon or fatback, butter or margarine, sugar, barbecue sauce, salt or spicy seasonings. Puree by any of the listed methods making sure that lumps are not present.

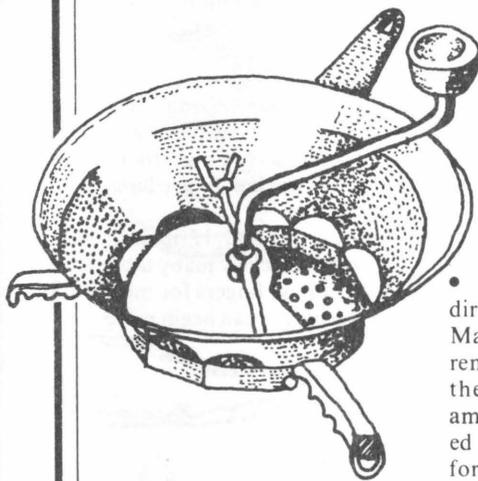
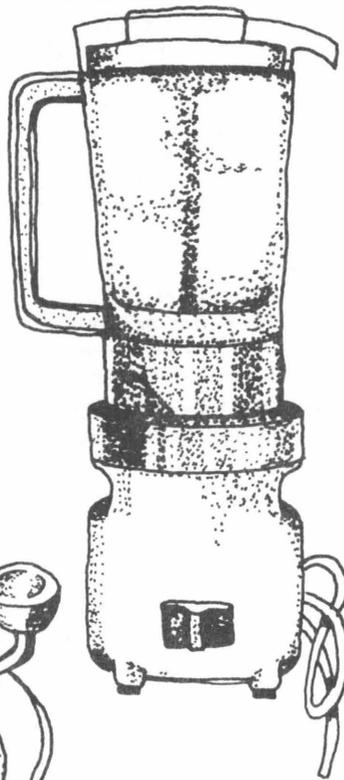
EQUIPMENT FOR PUREEING BABY FOOD

- **FORK OR MASHER:**

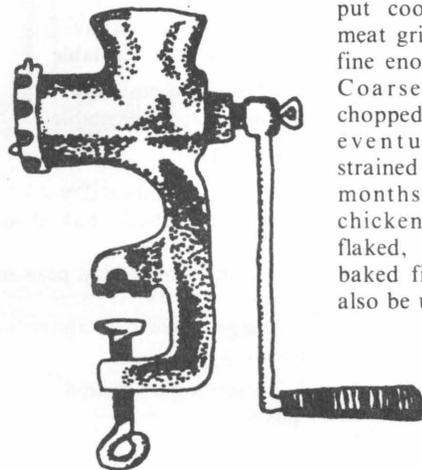
Remove skins and seeds. Mash food soft with a fork or a masher. Make sure there are no lumps. Ripe banana or cooked foods without skin or seeds, or cooked white or sweet potatoes and carrots can easily be mashed to feed the baby.

- **SIEVE, STRAINER, OR RICER:**

A sieve or strainer, a clean, fine wire mesh, or a ricer may be used for pureeing. Push the cooked food through the mesh. Repeat the process if the food is still lumpy. Be sure that all food particles are removed from the screen when washing.



- **FOOD MILL:** A food mill for regular kitchen use or designed especially for baby food can be used with raw or cooked foods and liver. Cut the food into pieces before cooking. Put the cooked food through the food mill. The skin and seeds will stay in the food mill.



- **BLENDER:** Read the directions with your blender. Make sure skins and seeds are removed before putting food in the blender. Add a small amount of formula, unseasoned cooking liquid or fruit juice for blending. Blend the food until it is smooth with no lumps. When cleaning, check the blade area and crevices to see that food particles are removed. A stiff brush is helpful for removing food from hard to clean places.

- **FOOD GRINDER:** When the baby can have ground meat, put cooked meat through a meat grinder. This will not be fine enough for young babies. Coarsely mashed, finely chopped, or ground meat will eventually replace most strained foods. At about 10 months, finely diced roast chicken, chopped beef or flaked, boneless, broiled, or baked fish without bones can also be used.

FOOD SAFETY

- Make sure the blender, grinder or whatever equipment is used to puree (e.g. can opener, cutting board, counter tops) is clean and that hands have been washed. *A wire brush is a good investment* to use for scrubbing hard to clean spots on screens or around blades of the blender. Old food particles can harbor harmful bacteria that contaminate baby food and cause sickness. Thoroughly rinse equipment with very hot water.

- When food is pureed or ground, bacteria are more likely to grow because of the increased surface area. Therefore, limit the length of time baby food is stored in the freezer or refrigerator. Do not refreeze pureed food because of the chance of food spoilage.

- Meats and eggs pureed for the baby should be kept only one day in the refrigerator because they spoil easily. Do not let these foods stand at room temperatures for any length of time.

- Pureed fruits and vegetables can be stored in the refrigerator for two or three days.

- To store homemade baby food up to three months, put the mixture into ice cube trays, cover with a moisture-vapor proof wrap, and freeze. Transfer to freezer bags or airtight containers. Be sure to mark the date on the package. One cube is about the right size for one serving.

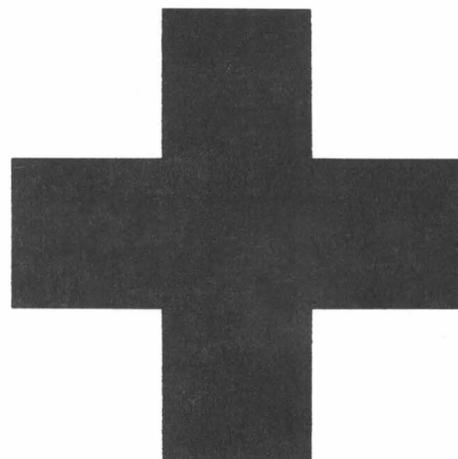
- Small jars also can be used for freezing. Make sure to leave at least a half inch air space because food expands when it freezes. Cover and seal tightly.

- Warm only the amount of baby food that will be used at a feeding. Saliva from the mouth to the spoon will affect the food in the dish. The natural enzymes in saliva may begin to break down starch so that mixtures that have been tasted will usually become thinner on standing. Therefore, throw away any food served to the baby which is not completely eaten. Do not even put a tasting spoon in any baby food portion that is kept in the refrigerator.

- Warm frozen food in a custard cup in a small pan of water or in the microwave or in an egg poacher. Only prepare what will be used. Throw away portions that the baby does not eat.

- Do not give the baby food that contains nuts, popcorn, or raisins. Even up to 1 and 2 years of age small foods such as these can cause choking. If you give the infant a chicken bone for teething, make sure the sharp tendons and gristle are removed.

- Canning baby food is not practical because of jar sizes. However, do can for the family remembering not to add sugar or salt. When preparing home canned foods for the family, remove baby's portion before adding seasoning for the family.



TEETHING FOODS

A baby starts chewing something partly to help cut teeth. A wafer that is firm and does not crumble seems to best satisfy the teething baby. Zweiback, toasted bread or hard biscuits are good teething foods. Sweets such as cookies should not be used for teething. They add extra calories, teach infants to want foods they will learn to eat all too soon, can crowd out nourishing foods, can cause tooth decay, and may become a substitute for love. Cookies should not be used as pacifiers to keep babies quiet when they are fussy.

STARTING NEW FOOD

Up to the 1900s breast feeding by the mother or a wet nurse was crucial in the growth and health of an infant. Little food was added to the infant diet until well after one year of age. With the discovery of vitamins and minerals in the 1920s and 30s, infant feeding recommendations emphasized nutrients such as vitamin C and D and minerals such as iron and fluoride. Breast milk or milk formula supply the basic nutrient needs of the infant for the first six months. The addition of food is based on nutrient needs. Actual food choices and nutrient supplementation depend on the customs and resources of the area.

The addition of solid foods in the first three months has been called force feeding since the infant can only basically suck and swallow. Solid foods at this time will likely result in overfeeding and the possibility of food allergies.

Semi-solid food is usually recommended for the infant around 6 months of age. Commercial baby food can be used or baby food can be made at home. Homemade baby food should be smooth without lumps. At about 9 months foods with more texture can be introduced.

INTRODUCING NEW FOODS

- Gradually introduce the baby to a variety of foods from each of the food groups. Start only one new food each day. If vomiting, rash, or diarrhea result from the use of a particular food, you will know which one it is.

- *You can mix the new food with milk or formula so the first foods will be easier to handle. Or you can use unseasoned cooking liquid, fruit juice, plain yogurt, buttermilk, or water.*

- Start with about a teaspoon of the new food. Serve it along with something the baby likes.

- Use a small spoon which fits the baby's mouth. Don't worry if the baby spits out the first spoon-fed foods. He is getting used to the spoon and also learning to swallow.

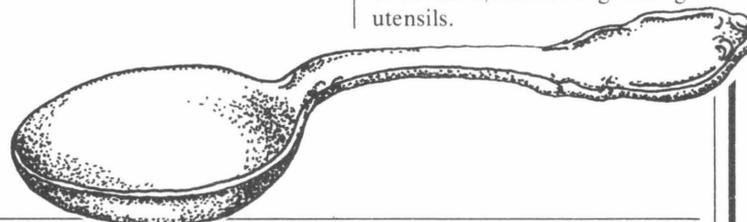
- Do not start solids from a bottle even if mixed with formula. The solid food may cause choking and may clog the nipple.

- Avoid giving the formula or juice in a bottle as a pacifier for the baby to fall asleep with. The use of a bottle with a sleepy infant results in the baby holding the fluid in his mouth. The natural sugar in milk or juice exposed to incoming teeth for long periods of time causes bad tooth decay. This condition is known as NURSING BOTTLE SYNDROME.

By 5 or 6 months the tongue and swallowing movements become coordinated so the baby is ready to eat from a spoon. The baby also is developing head and neck control. The baby will be able to drink from a cup although considerable spilling may occur.

As teeth begin to erupt between the seventh and ninth month, soft, chewable foods can be introduced. Finger foods will help develop finger-hand coordination.

Between 10 and 12 months the infant can chew many table foods, will use fingers for most of the meal, and can begin using utensils.



BABY FOOD PORTION SIZES

Addition	5-6 Months	7-9 Months	10-12 Months
Iron fortified breakfast cereal	1-2 baby spoons/1-2 times a day	2-3 Tbsp./2 times a day	2-4 Tbsp./2 times a day grits, rice, cornmeal
Vegetables	1-2 baby spoons/1-2 times a day pureed	2-3 Tbsp./2 times a day pureed or junior	3-4 Tbsp./2 times a day mashed or soft vegetable
Fruits	1-2 baby spoons/1-2 times a day/pureed	2-3 Tbsp./2 times a day pureed or junior	3-4 Tbsp./2 times a day mashed or soft vegetable
Fruit Juice		3 to 4 oz./day	3-4 oz./day
Meat, organ meats, fish, poultry, egg yolk, dried beans, cottage cheese, yogurt		1-2 Tbsp./2 times a day	2-3 Tbsp./2 times a day -finely chopped: baked or broiled -mashed: cooked dry peas or beans -cottage cheese, yogurt or pudding
Breads (whole grain or enriched) ie., toast, crackers, hard biscuits		1/2-1 serving as desired	1/2-1 serving as desired -pastas