

## Alternative Food Choices For Birds

### Share healthy food items with your bird

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If your bird sees you eating a new or suspicious food item, it might be encouraged to give it a try, too.  
Courtesy Jessica Hagedorn, Wisconsin

Many birds really enjoy sharing mealtime with their human stewards, and this shared time can also provide a novel way to encourage picky birds to sample new, healthy foods. It is kind of like the “king’s taster” theory. If your bird sees you eating a new or suspicious food item without dire consequences, then just maybe it will be OK for it to nibble the same tidbit of food. However, we humans do not always choose items that are suitable to share with our birds, so it is better to be prepared and have healthy food items available to share at mealtime.

As a general rule, avoid foods cooked in fat or oil, say no to gravy, pass on foods with milk added, and stay away from butter, margarine, salty foods as well as items seasoned with garlic or onions. If the food item is not healthy for you (and most of us do indulge in these types of foods from time to time), you should not be giving your bird a piece of it.

If you are having a spaghetti dinner, try offering your bird a piece of cooked whole-wheat pasta, sans sauce or butter. A piece of breadstick would be appropriate — and personally, I just love watching a bird hold a piece of breadstick in its little claws, waving it about in the air as if conducting an orchestra. Pizza can be too greasy for a bird, so just offer it a piece of unflavored crust instead.

Mashed potatoes and baked potatoes are usually served with butter, sour cream or other additions, so serve your bird a cooked piece of sweet potato without any toppings to lower the fat content instead, because many birds do not need the additional fat and calories. If you are having a cooked vegetable in a cream or butter sauce, or mixed vegetables, offer your bird a wheel of corn on the cob (uncooked) to enjoy during your mealtime.

Many items in a tossed salad are good for your bird, but be sure to avoid dressing, grated cheese, onions or croutons. Washed greens, carrots, broccoli and other veggies are healthy offerings. Baked chicken, roasted pork, grilled steak and other meats are often relished by psittacines, however, some birds really enjoy meat more than others. Avoid greasy chicken skin and the fat trimmings that you remove from a piece of meat, but feel free to give your bird an appropriate sized bone with some meat attached to nosh on during dinner. Some birds will crack open a chicken wing bone and relish the marrow inside.

During breakfast, birds can share some cooked egg, whole-wheat toast (no butter, but a bit of jam or jelly is fine), or a few pieces of low-sugar breakfast cereal, a piece of granola or breakfast bar. There is no point to giving soggy cereal in milk.