

Good Table Foods For Birds

Find out what table foods are good to share with your parrot

By Rebecca Sweat

Fresh vegetables are a good source of vitamins and minerals for your bird.

If you have questions about what nutrients are important to your bird's species diet, you should consult with your avian veterinarian. There are, however, some generalities that apply to all parrots. There's a long list of foods that are really good to feed to your bird. Good protein sources include cooked dried beans (such as black beans, navy beans, red beans, pinto beans, garbanzo beans, kidney beans, lentils and dried split peas), and lean meats like chicken, turkey, and fish (such as salmon, trout, halibut and tuna).

"Beans are a really good food for a lot of parrots," said Jeffrey Jenkins, DVM, an avian veterinarian in Southern California. "They're not high in calories, they have good quality proteins, and they don't put a lot of weight on the bird." He recommends cooked rather than sprouted beans, because sprouts can spoil easily. The beans can be cooked until they're soft or mushy, and spiced with cayenne pepper or cumin, which parrots really like.

Grilled, roasted or broiled poultry or fish is best (rather than fried or barbecued). You can also give your parrot canned tuna, but make it water-packed rather than oil-packed.

Cooked eggs can also be good sources of protein, if your bird is not overweight. "Even then, you might want to make it three egg whites to one yolk," suggested California veterinarian, Tia Greenberg, DVM.

Healthy foods that meet your bird's carbohydrates requirements include whole-wheat bread, whole-grain or spinach pasta, and brown rice. White bread and white rice are OK to give your bird occasionally, as a treat, but they are not going to offer a lot in the way of nutrition. If you put sauce on your bird's pasta, choose a fat-free version like marinara or pesto, rather than a creamy white sauce.

"Stay away from white sauces, which are usually butter and cream," advised Larry Nemetz, DVM, an exotics-only veterinarian in Southern California. "Dairy products are not absorptive, the butter is very high in fat, and why add to the fat? Tomato sauce on the other hand is a simple carb, there's no fat, and you're not glopping the sauce on; you're just coating the pasta slightly so that it looks red."

In the vitamins and minerals group, basically any type of vegetable is fine to give to your bird. Broccoli, cauliflower, peas, string beans, squash, carrots, yams, spinach, Swiss chard, romaine lettuce, and lima beans are usually favorites among parrots. Fresh vegetables are ideal, but warmed frozen vegetables are also good.

Safe fat sources would be seeds, nuts and peanut butter. If you are cooking something in oil, choose an unsaturated fat source like olive or safflower oil. Keep in mind that birds that don't need a whole lot of this food group — especially if they are overweight.