

Sautéing Without Oil

One of the biggest shifts for people adopting a whole foods, plant-based diet is learning to cook without oil. Once you learn a few simple techniques, it's really not that difficult—and you'll remove significant amounts of extra fat and empty calories from your diet (see page 10 for more on why oil is avoided in these recipes).

One of the most common uses of oil in everyday cooking is to sauté aromatics (onions and garlic being the most common) before starting a dish. The Dry Sauté Method can be used instead, and it will work for other vegetables as well. You'll see this method called for in numerous recipes in the pages ahead.

A note about garlic: It burns much faster than onions, so when you're not using oil, it's wise to wait to add your minced garlic until the onions have begun sticking, right before you deglaze the pan.

Dry Sauté Method

Whenever the recipes ahead call for a dry sauté, these are the steps you need to take to start the dish.

1. Heat the pan until very hot. (Use the "water test," a great trick taught by the Rouxbe Online Culinary School, to test if the pan is hot enough: a drop of water should roll around the pan like a mercury ball as soon as it touches the surface.)
2. Add chopped onions, shallots, or leeks to the hot pan.
3. Cook until they begin to color and stick slightly to the pan. You will start to see some speckles around the pan. The browning is important for building flavor. The onions are caramelizing—releasing, concentrating, and bringing their sugars to the surface. If using garlic, add it at this stage.
4. Add a splash of flavorful liquid, such as low-sodium vegetable broth or wine, and stir to deglaze the pan and loosen the onions, scraping up the browned bits on the bottom of the pan.
5. Reduce the heat from medium to low and proceed with the recipe or remove the pan from the heat and add the contents to other dishes.