

Rethinking Aluminum Foil

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Rethinking **ALUMINUM FOIL**



Sometimes in life we get tired of hearing about all the things we should change, and as a result we hold on too tightly to things we should be letting go.

Oh, dear aluminum foil. I am afraid that in my home I may have held on a little too tightly.

Aluminum foil is easy. I use it in the kitchen to cover dishes that don't have lids. It holds food on the barbecue. And it makes food preparation and clean-up super easy when camping. Who doesn't wrap something up and shove it in the campfire coals? As the camping season began and I pulled out my camping menus, I realized how much I was dependent on that convenient aluminum foil.

Sigh. I suppose it was time to take another look.

The Dangers of Aluminum Foil

When I gear up to do some investigative research, the teacher in me always feels like singing, "Let's start at the very beginning... a very good place to start". So I decided the first thing I needed to do was find out how aluminum foil was made. That seems to be a great way to discover if I should be eating something, so why not apply the same rule here?

How's it made?

I discovered that during the process of making aluminum foil various oils are sprayed on it to keep it from sticking in the roll. That made me feel a bit uneasy. And like I had missed something a little too obvious.

Aside from that, they pretty much just flatten huge sheets of purified aluminum. For fun, you can check out an educational video of how aluminum foil is made by visiting this episode of [How It's Made](#) on YouTube.



Is it safe?

Yes. When using it cold. When tested cold, as in wrapping a sandwich in the fridge, there was no evidence of aluminum leaching into the food. Using it hot, or even warm, was a different situation.

In every situation tested, heated aluminum foil degraded and leached into the food that was cooking.

I was devastated! In food wrapped in foil, in foil bakeware, and to my extreme disappointment, even in a pan covered by foil — the dangers of aluminum foil were present.

The levels of aluminum leached are significantly higher if the food actually touches the foil, if the food is acidic, or even if spices are added. But those factors are not required. The hotter the heat, the more leaching that occurs. And it doesn't matter which side of the foil the food is exposed to (supposedly some have a side that is dull, though I have never noticed).

So is this something to worry about?

There are quite a few sources of aluminum in average, day-to-day exposure.

Thanks to antacids, vaccines, antiperspirants, and drinking water, most people are already getting a hefty dose of aluminum. Cooking in aluminum pans or using aluminum foil just increases the exposure.

What's wrong with increased exposure? Aluminum interferes with the digestion of calcium, phosphorus, and fluoride, and can even result in osteoporosis. It damages the liver, and impairs the kidneys. It is linked to neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's

and Parkinsons. It leads to colic, sleep disturbance, anemia, and speech problems.

What are the alternatives?

Luckily there are a large range of aluminum-free cooking and bakeware on the market. Cast iron, enameled cast iron, or glass are all great options for the kitchen. If you are looking to avoid the dangers of aluminum foil and aluminum entirely, you will also have to be careful of stainless steel. Layers of stainless steel can be bonded with aluminum.

If, like me, you are used to covering your dishes with aluminum foil, it will take investing in covered bakeware. Le Creuset and Corningware are great options, but don't forget your covered cast iron casserole dishes as well.



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For camping, I have begun packing my cast iron dutch oven. Cast iron can go directly into the fire and makes for easy camping clean up. I have found it to be a great alternative to those foil dinner packets that we used to shove down in the coals. Avoid the temptation of lightweight aluminum packware and instead invest in stainless steel for these outings. (Though if you are backpacking, it could certainly be heavy for hauling.)

And as for the barbecue, seasoned cast iron is still an option. If you are looking to barbecue something without putting it directly on the grill, there are a variety of grill top bowls and baskets made from stainless steel or wire. Be sure to watch out for non-stick coatings.

Will I use aluminum foil anymore?

As for aluminum foil in my kitchen, I can't see myself purchasing and using foil just to wrap and store food in the fridge. And due to chemical and food sensitivities in the home, I need to consider the oil it is treated with during production. That leaves me needing a few pieces of covered bakeware.

I think I will be hitting the thrift stores to remedy that! Not buying aluminum foil will save me money in the long run, lower our exposure to aluminum, and reduce what I contribute to landfills. The alternatives are all reasonable and acceptable adjustments for me.

Were you aware of the dangers of aluminum foil? Will you be rethinking aluminum foil as well? Keeping it? Or have you removed it from your kitchen already? Be sure to suggest some aluminum-free options for us in the comments!

source: [“Effect of Aluminum Leaching Process of Cooking Wares on Food”](#)