

## Get the veggies, skip the starch

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(HealthDay)—Who doesn't love a big serving of creamy mashed potatoes or a side of steamy rice with their chicken? They're delicious, but it's easy to overindulge in these starchy, higher-calorie foods while

falling short on healthy vegetables.

Try these ideas for smart substitutions that are lower in calories and carbs, but will still delight your [taste buds](#) and satisfy your appetite.

Start with cauliflower, a non-starchy [vegetable](#) that easily mimics starchy ones, says registered dietitian Rachel Begun. You can mash, whip or rice cauliflower just like potatoes, and even use it to make pizza crust.

Or try spaghetti squash instead of regular spaghetti and top it with a fresh tomato sauce. For a great mac and [cheese](#) alternative, grate yellow summer squash and bake it with a sprinkling of low-fat zesty cheese. It's a great source of vitamin C, fiber and potassium, plus you'll get calcium in the cheese.

When summer's over, roast winter squash varieties, like acorn and Hubbard, for lighter yet still sweet swaps for [sweet potatoes](#).

When you want to have a grain, make it a whole grain, like couscous, quinoa or barley. Whole grain side dishes are a great way to get fiber, vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients. To save on calories, cut your usual portion in half and add in steamed or lightly sauteed vegetables to boost volume and more nutrients. And don't forget to use herbs and spices to liven up the taste.

So, get out of the potato-and-rice rut and savor these easy substitutions to spice up your dinner tonight.

**More information:** The American Heart Association has great vegetable recipes, including [spaghetti-squash spaghetti](#), that are delicious and nutritious.

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