

## 5 Amazing Meals in Parchment Paper

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While parchment paper is great for lining your baking sheets, it's also an easy way to whip up meals. Folding food up into parchment paper packets (*en papillote* in French) and cooking it in the oven not only means there are no pots and pans to wash, but also that your food will be moist and flavorful—cooking *en papillote* retains the food's moisture, reducing the amount of fats you need to add and sealing in flavor. When the packet is opened at the table, an aromatic puff of steam rises up, and it's truly like opening a gift.

Parchment is easy to use. Make individual servings by tearing off a big square for each packet and put the food in the center. Fold down the paper with several folds. Then simply twist the ends, or fold them up like a present. (Out of parchment paper? Some sources recommend greased aluminum foil, but it tears easily and can be difficult to work with.) Toss the packet on a baking sheet in the oven and dinner is done. If you're entertaining, you can assemble the packets ahead of time and cook them shortly before your guests arrive. Try these ideas and you will fall in love with parchment paper cooking.

### Fish

Fish is the most classic dish to make in parchment. You can make any type of fish in parchment, so it's very versatile (sole, salmon, halibut, cod—you get the idea). A few drops of olive oil are always a good thing to add to the packet. Mix and match leafy vegetables (spinach, chard, kale, bok choy) with flavors like olives, Dijon mustard, orange slices, cherry tomatoes, or fresh herbs. A splash of white wine or lemon juice will brighten the flavors. Expect a fish packet to take about 30 minutes to cook through at 400 degrees F.

### Shellfish

Shellfish is at its best when cooked in a steamy environment, so parchment paper is the perfect vehicle. Clams or mussels in the shell work well with white wine, herbs, butter, and lemon juice. Peeled (or, for even more flavor, [unpeeled](#)) shrimp cooks quickly on a bed of pre-cooked rice with thinly sliced carrots or yellow squash. Make a clam bake with clams, quarters of corn on the cob, and thinly sliced red potatoes with some Old Bay seasoning and a dab of butter. Cook your shellfish until the shells open or the shrimp is cooked through, about 15 minutes.

### Chicken

Boneless, skinless chicken breasts or smaller chicken tenders cook well in parchment when paired with colorful vegetables such as red pepper, asparagus, zucchini spears, or snow peas. Chicken soaks up the flavors of sauces like enchilada sauce, mole, pesto, or teriyaki. Add goat cheese or smoked gouda for more richness. Boneless, skinless chicken breasts cook in about 20 minutes at 400 degrees F.

### Veggies

Parchment is the ideal medium for cooking many vegetables because it steams them and locks in all the nutrients, instead of boiling them away in water. Try asparagus with sesame oil and sesame seeds, yellow squash slices with chopped tomato and thyme, or cauliflower with capers, lemon juice and Parmesan cheese. Always add a dash of olive oil to enhance the vegetables. Cook your veggies until crisp-tender, often about 15-20 minutes.

### Fruit

Fruit is an unexpected thing to make in parchment, but you can whip up baked apples with cinnamon and pecans, pears with caramel sauce, bananas with chocolate chips and butterscotch or Nutella, strawberry jam, and pineapple chunks for a banana split dessert. Bake until the fruit is soft. A whole apple will take an hour (reduce time by cutting them in half).

*Brette Sember is the author of [The Parchment Paper Cookbook](#), published by Adams Media. She blogs at [www. PuttingItAllOnTheTable.com](http://www.PuttingItAllOnTheTable.com).*