

What Can & Can't Go in Your Garbage Disposal?

It can be confusing to know what you can and can't put into the garbage disposal. We're here to provide you with info to make sure you're grinding food safely.

A food disposal sink is a must-have for every homeowner. It's a powerful kitchen tool that makes it easy to clean up after meals and helps keep food scraps from getting into your plumbing pipes or landfills. We often don't think about this modern convenience until an issue occurs, like your [disposal not grinding](#).

Though garbage disposals have awesome horsepower and sharp blades, certain foods and debris just can't be processed. Knowing the [garbage disposal dos and don'ts](#) goes a long way in keeping your appliance from getting clogged or breaking.

Proper use and maintenance can make your garbage disposal last longer and keep it running smoothly. Here are some tips on how to use a garbage disposal and what food scraps can be processed.

What Not to Put in a Garbage Disposal



- **Coffee grounds.** Coffee grounds can clump together into a thick mass that will clog your food disposal and won't allow your sink to drain.

- **Meat.** Does your garbage disposal stink? It might be because you're putting meat into it. You should never put meat into a food disposal sink. It can stick to the interior of the machine, rot, and cause a stench. Always throw meat remnants in the trash. Bones (with the possible exception of those from fish) should also stay out of the garbage disposal. Your unit isn't strong enough to grind them up.
- **Starchy foods.** Putting bread, oatmeal, pasta, and rice in your garbage disposal is a bad idea. These foods expand when wet, which can form a gelatinous paste in your drain and block up your sink.
- **Shells, nuts, and vegetable peels.** The shells of seafood and other crustaceans are also things not to put in a garbage disposal. The little bits can dull the blades and clog the machinery, causing the food disposal to malfunction. You should also avoid eggshells, nuts, vegetable peels, fruit cores and pits, and corn husks and cobs.
- **Grease, oil, or cooking fat.** These materials should never go into your plumbing, whether you have a garbage disposal or not. It can solidify and cause a whole mess that an expensive plumber will have to sort out.
- **Fibrous foods.** Some examples of fibrous vegetables that can't be ground up include pumpkin, celery, kale, lettuce, chard, artichokes, asparagus, and rhubarb. Their stringy materials can tangle up inside the unit and jam it. If that happens, you'll need to [unclog your garbage disposal](#).
- **Non-food items.** We've all experienced flipping the switch and hearing the grinding of a fork or spoon we missed. It can also be easy for a stray napkin or food wrapper to sneak its way into your sink food processor. Try to remember to do a quick check before turning on the appliance.
- **Caustic cleaning chemicals.** Avoid harsh chemicals like drain cleaner and bleach. Instead, use natural [deodorants for your garbage disposal](#), like baking soda, vinegar or lemon juice, and dish soap.



What Can You Put Down a Garbage Disposal?

- **Soft or liquid foods.** A general rule to keep in mind is that if you can feed it to your baby, you can put it down your garbage disposal. Many solid foods, such as vegetables (without peels) or fruits, can also go into the appliance. Chop them up first, so they don't strain the unit.
- **Ice.** Throw some ice cubes in along with your food waste and grind them up. They'll help loosen the food residue that is stuck to the blades.
- **Citrus fruits.** Keep a bag of orange, lemon, or other citrus peels in the freezer and toss some in when you need to freshen up your garbage disposal. Make sure to cut them up in bite-sized chunks, so you don't overwork the machine.

For proper [garbage disposal maintenance](#), you should also always run cold water through your food disposal appliance while it is in use and for 30 seconds after it has finished grinding food. This helps ensure that all food bits wash down the drain and none remain in your disposal.