

Vegetable Mix with Crushed Pellets

by John Graziano and Chloe Redon



It can be challenging to get birds to eat vegetables and, especially, to eat a wide variety of vegetables. One method is to feed chunks of veggies and hope for the best. This often results in frustrated humans, hungry birds, and wasted food.

We've had more success feeding a wide variety of finely chopped vegetables, mixed with a semi-crushed pellets and dried vegetables. This approach makes it hard for birds to pick out only their favorites.

NOTE: *This recipe is appropriate for many, but not all, species of parrots. Definitely check with your Avian veterinarian for the proper diet for your particular bird!!!*

Choosing the Vegetables

For the vegetable part of the mix we use half leafy greens and half other vegetables (see the steps below). Depending on how many birds you have, and how much you are making each time, you can choose one or more from each of the lists below.



NOTE: Try different vegetables off the lists each time you make the mix, so that your bird gets a wide variety. For reference, refer to Table 2 in [this wonderful study](#), done by the CDC, which lists the nutrition density of “powerhouse” vegetables and fruits.

NOTE: Always buy vegetables and fruits that are **pesticide-free!!**

Step 1: Choose leafy greens.

Some greens have a strong, even slightly bitter, flavor, so start with milder ones, like chard and kale, when first introducing your birds to the veggie mix.

Here is an example list. Depending on how much you are making, choose one or more:

- Beet Greens
- Chard
- Chinese Cabbage
- Collards
- Dandelion Greens
- Kale
- Mustard Greens
- Spinach
- Turnip Greens
- Watercress (very nutritious, see study, we use almost every time)

Add some small leafy garnish greens and sprouts, such as:

- Cilantro
- Parsley
- Pea Shoots
- Sunflower Sprouts

If making small batches, you can buy premixed packages [Earthbound Farm](#) and [Organic Girl](#).

Step 2: Choose a root vegetable.

We use carrots frequently, and when we use beets we always get them with the greens attached and use the greens too. We eat some of the beets ourselves and use only one or two for the mix. Some roots have a strong flavor, so you may want to start with carrots when introducing the mix.

Here is an example list. Depending on how much you are making, choose one or more:

- Beet (a good time to use the beet greens too)
- Carrot
- Parsnip
- Rutabaga
- Turnip (a good time to use the turnip greens too)

Step 3: Choose a cruciferous vegetable.

The scientific categories for some of these vegetables may be different from our list. The important thing is to use a wide variety of colorful, nutritious vegetables.

Here is an example list. Depending on how much you are making, choose one or more:

- Broccoli
- Broccolini
- Brussels Sprouts
- Cauliflower (orange or green is good)
- Cabbage (purple is good too)
- Curly Kale
- Kohlrabi

Step 4: Choose additional colorful vegetables and peppers.

Be creative and choose a couple of additional vegetables.

Here is an example list. Depending on how much you are making, choose one or more:

- Corn (when in season, use fresh; use sparingly or as incentive when introducing the veggie mix)
- Green Beans (birds may prefer them slightly steamed)
- Peas (fresh peas shelled is preferable)
- Snap Peas
- Summer Squash (go for a variety of colors)
- Winter Squash (seasonal, steam slightly before mixing)

Add peppers. Most parrots like HOT peppers:

- sweet red, yellow, or orange bell peppers (**not** green bell peppers)
- jalapeño **peppers** or other HOT peppers, with the stem removed

Making the Vegetable Mix

Step 1: Wash and cut the vegetables.

Thoroughly wash vegetables and roughly cut into large pieces. Most vegetables should be raw. For winter squash, and optionally for green beans, steam slightly.

Step 2: Finely chop and mix vegetables.

Place vegetables in a food processor based on the size of the pieces you cut. Chop to about the size of pine nuts for small to medium-size birds. For bigger birds, chop into larger chunks.

The fineness of the chop depends on how well your bird eats all the different vegetables. If you find them picking out favorites, then chop a bit finer. If you find they eat all the vegetables, you can try a coarser chop.

Thoroughly mix the chopped vegetables in a large bowl.



Step 3: Store and freeze.

Store the mix in glass containers. Pint-sized Mason jars work well (or cup-sized if you only have a few small birds). A single jar or container should hold no more than a week's worth of food. If you have a way to vacuum-seal plastic, you can use that.

Freeze jars you don't plan on using immediately.



Serving

Step 1: Thaw, if necessary, and measure out servings.

For frozen jars and containers, thaw before serving. For each individual meal, measure about 1 heaping teaspoon of veggie mix per bird weighing about 140 grams (size of a Blue-Crown Conure). Modify the amount depending on bird size. Put into a bowl for mixing with pellets and, optionally, dried vegetables. Immediately refrigerate any the remaining vegetable mix.

NOTE: Use appropriately-sized containers so that you don't store the thawed veggie mix in the refrigerator for more than one week.

Step 2: Add the pellets.

Measure an amount of pellets that is about 2/3 of the amount of the total vegetable mix that you just put into the mixing bowl. If you additionally use pellets at other times of the day (foraging, training treats), use less pellets. Vegetables should comprise about half of most birds' meals.

For the pellets, use either tiny pellets, such as *Harrisons Adult Lifetime Super Fine* or, if your bird obsessively picks out pellets that size, you can use larger pellets and grind them into smaller pieces. The consistency should be fine enough so that your bird cannot pick out the pellets. We use the large *Harrisons Adult Lifetime Coarse* pellets and grind them up, since our birds do pick out even the super fine size pellets.

If you use [TOP's](#) pellets, either alone or with other pellets, they crumble easily, so don't grind them first; just mash them in.

Thoroughly mix the ground pellets into the vegetable mixture.

NOTE: If over time your bird eats all the veggie mix even with non-ground pellets, that's great! The idea is to get them to eat all the vegetables along with the pellets.

Step 3: Add air-dried vegetables to soak up excess juice.

If the mix was previously frozen, it can tend to have excess juice. Mix into the veggies some dried vegetables (and optionally berries) to soak up any left-over juice. Only add the dried food (and pellets) just before serving so that the food does not get soggy. So don't add the dried vegetables to the main dish you'll be putting back in the refrigerator, only add it to the current meal.

You can buy dried vegetables from the popular [Just Vegetables](#) company, or from [North Bay Trading](#), which has a wider selection and lower prices.

We usually add some sweet potatoes and pomegranates:

- <https://www.northbaytrading.com/air-dried-sweet-potatoes>
- <https://www.shopkarensnaturals.com/products/just-pomegranate>

Depending on what fresh vegetables you used in the current mix, here are some recommendations. Remember to use a variety:

- <https://www.northbaytrading.com/air-dried-broccoli>
- <https://www.northbaytrading.com/air-dried-cabbage>
- <https://www.northbaytrading.com/air-dried-organic-carrot-flakes>
- <https://www.northbaytrading.com/freeze-dried-cauliflower-florets>
- <https://www.northbaytrading.com/freeze-dried-organic-super-sweet-corn>
- <https://www.northbaytrading.com/air-dried-green-beans>
- <https://www.northbaytrading.com/air-dried-jalapeno-peppers>
- <https://www.northbaytrading.com/air-dried-kale-flakes>
- <https://www.northbaytrading.com/air-dried-parsley-flakes>
- <https://www.northbaytrading.com/air-dried-peas>
- <https://www.northbaytrading.com/air-dried-spinach>
- <https://www.northbaytrading.com/air-dried-zucchini>

You can add a little fruit for incentive, but the mix should be primarily vegetables:

- <https://www.northbaytrading.com/freeze-dried-organic-diced-cherries>
- <https://www.shopkarensnaturals.com/collections/dried-fruit/products/just-cranberries>
- <https://www.northbaytrading.com/freeze-dried-organic-raspberries>

We've also used some Lydia's Green Garden Sprouted Crackers to soak up juice:

- <https://www.lydiasfoods.com/product/green-garden-sprouted-crackers>

NOTE: If you have a dehydrator, you can dehydrate your own greens and vegetables.

Step 4: Feed.

Serve approximately 1 heaping tablespoon of mix per for a bird weighing about 140 grams. Adjust according to the weight of your bird. Use all the mix that you've added the pellets and dried vegetables to.

Hint: If vegetables are new to your bird or if s/he does not eat the mixture, finely grind and sprinkle a bit nuts or seed (or their previous dried food) onto the vegetables when you serve them. This works well to convert a bird from a seed diet to a pelleted diet with vegetables. Over time, sprinkle less and less of the incentive/seed mix, until your bird is eating only the vegetable pellet mixture.

Note: *Be sure to monitor your bird's weight regularly, to ensure that he/she is getting the proper amount of food. If your bird is over or under weight, modify the serving amount accordingly.*

Note: *Please consult your avian vet if you have any questions about your bird's diet.*