



Vegetable and Grain Mix Recipe for Birds

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(Editor's note: The authors are long-time Mickaboo volunteers. This article shares their experiences with both their birds and those of other Mickaboo volunteers.)

It is often challenging to get birds to eat vegetables and, especially, to eat a wide variety of vegetables. One method is to toss large chunks of veggies into a bird's food bowl and hope for the best. This often results in frustrated humans, hungry birds, and wasted food.

We've had more success by finely chopping a wide variety of vegetables, mixing them with a small amount of grains, and feeding the mix as an outside-the-cage meal after a day of foraging. The small veggie pieces make it difficult for birds to pick out their favorites, and the grains provide an incentive for birds (and soak up the juices from the vegetables).

For breakfast, we give our birds a foraging mix of pellets, dried vegetables and berries, and Lydia's (raw) Green Crackers. The foraging provides a feeding activity while we are away at work during the day. The foraging details are in this [article](#) or can be found in Mickaboo's online [Reading Room](#), under the "Diet" heading.

After work, we let the birds out and feed them bowls of our veggie mix. Once you feed it, do not leave it sitting out more than a couple of hours. This timeframe makes the veggie mix perfectly suited to a supervised evening meal. Birds tend to love this for dinner, especially if you do not overfeed them their foraging breakfast. They also love the variety of two different meals.

Step 1: Grain mix.

Organic grains in bulk from a natural food or high-end grocery store:

- 3 parts Barley
- 3 parts Brown rice (not white)
- 1 part Amaranth
- 1 part Buckwheat
- 1 part Millet
- 1 part Oat Groats
- 1 part Quinoa



Mix grains well and store in a large glass jar for future recipes. To make one recipe:

1. Mix 1 cup grains and 1 cup water.
2. Mix in 1 tablespoon of hot curry powder and, optionally, additional cayenne or red pepper flakes to make it hotter.
3. Bring to a boil, then remove from heat.
4. Cover tightly and allow to steep until water is absorbed. This cooks them “al dente” (less soft than fully-cooked grains and, thus, less likely to trigger reproductive behavior).
5. Let sit covered while you prepare the vegetables.



Step 2: Vegetable mix.

Organic vegetables from a local store or farmer’s market:

- 1 bunch **kale** (green, purple, or dinosaur)
- 1 stalk **broccoli** or 1 bunch baby broccoli
- 3 or 4 medium-sized **carrots**
- 3 small **zucchini**
- 5 jalapeño **peppers** or other **HOT** peppers, with the stem removed
- 1 bunch **cilantro** (can *occasionally* substitute with parsley)
- 1 sweet red, yellow, or orange **bell pepper** (not green)
- 1 small **beet**
- **Organic Just Peas** and **Organic Just Corn** available at local health food and high-end grocery stores, or from the www.justtomatoes.com site.
- **Optional:** snap peas, blueberries, green beans, orange squash or pumpkin, wheatgrass, 1 slice of sweet potato



1. Thoroughly wash vegetables and roughly chop into large pieces. All vegetables should be raw, except sweet potato (if using).
2. Place each type of vegetable separately in food processor. For small to medium-sized birds, chop to about the size of sunflower seeds. For larger birds, chop to pea-sized chunks.
3. If including sweet potato, steam or put into the grain mix while steeping.



Step 3: Mix together, store and freeze.

1. Thoroughly mix the chopped vegetables in a large bowl.
2. Add the steeped grains.
Note: the water should have been absorbed by now.
3. If the final vegetable and grain mix is soggy, add a small amount of dried **Organic Just Peas** and, optionally, **Organic Dried Corn** to absorb the water.
Note: For conure-sized and smaller birds, lightly pulse peas and corn in food processor before adding to

veggie mix.

4. Store in pint-sized Mason jars (or cup-sized if you only have a few small birds). A single jar should hold no more than a week's worth of food.
5. Freeze any jars you don't plan on using immediately.



Step 3: Serve.

1. If serving immediately after making, be sure grains are completely cooled. For frozen jars, thaw before serving.
2. Serve approximately 1 tablespoon of mix per for a bird weighing about 140 grams (e.g. a Blue Crown conure). Adjust according to the weight of your bird. Since the mix is mostly vegetables, allow your bird to eat as much as s/he wants.
3. If vegetables are new for your bird or if s/he does not eat the mixture, finely grind a bit of their dried food mix and sprinkle it over the veggie mix.

If your bird is currently eating seed and you are converting to pellets and vegetables, sprinkle a little of his/her seed mix onto the vegetables. Over time, sprinkle less and less of the seed mix until your bird is eating only the vegetable and grain mixture.

4. Refrigerate after serving. Do not store in refrigerator for more than one week.

Note

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