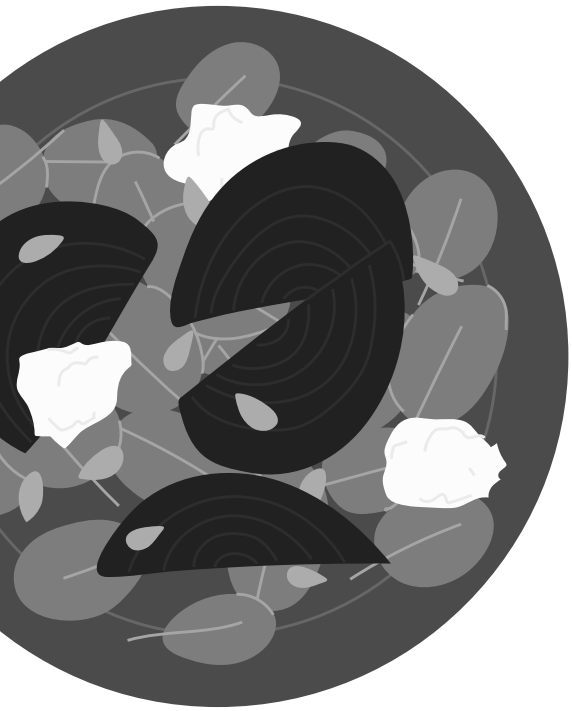

VEGETARIAN MEAL PLANNING

A well-planned vegetarian diet is a delicious way to eat that may provide health benefits as well. That's because an eating plan that is rich in plant foods may help to reduce the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and some cancers.

Vegetarians mostly eat plant foods (such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans and peas, and seeds and nuts) and do not eat meat, poultry, and fish. Some vegetarians eat eggs, dairy foods, or both, while others (called vegans) don't eat any animal foods or foods with ingredients that come from animals.

Meal Planning and Shopping for Good Nutrition

Whatever your vegetarian eating style is, it's important to eat a wide variety of foods to meet your nutrition needs. Go for these nutrients and food choices when you plan and shop for meals and snacks:

- **Protein:** Beans and peas, nuts and seeds, soy foods (such as tofu and tempeh), whole grains (such as quinoa, sorghum, and teff), eggs, and dairy foods.
- **Omega-3 fatty acids:** Ground flaxseeds, chia seeds, hempseeds, walnuts, soy nuts, canola oil, soybean oil, and some other plant oils.
- **Calcium:** Dairy foods (such as low-fat or fat-free milk, yogurt, and cheese) and plant foods like dark, leafy greens (such as mustard, collard, and turnip greens and bok choy), broccoli, beans, and dried figs. Also look for tofu prepared with calcium and calcium-fortified foods and beverages (such as breads, ready-to-eat cereals, juices), and plant-based milks like soy, almond, or rice milk. Check the labels to be sure calcium has been added.
  - *Tip:* Try other sources of calcium like beet greens, rhubarb, spinach, Swiss chard, and the grain amaranth. Note that the amount of calcium absorbed by the body from these plant foods can vary.

STOCKING THE VEGETARIAN KITCHEN

A well-stocked kitchen is a key to quick and easy vegetarian meals and snacks. Below are some ideas for what to keep on hand.

Refrigerator

- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Dairy or soy foods (milk, yogurt, cheese, tofu, tempeh)
- Eggs

Freezer

- Unsweetened frozen fruits
- Frozen vegetables without added sauces or salt
- Veggie burgers or crumbles
- Vegetarian entrées and vegetable pizza

continued

from previous

Pantry

- Whole grains (such as oats, whole-grain barley, brown rice, quinoa, millet, sorghum, teff, farro, and spelt)
- Whole grain cereals, breads, pastas, and crackers
- Canned or dried beans (such as pinto beans, black beans, and chickpeas), lentils, and split peas
- Low-sodium vegetarian broth and soups
- Canned vegetables with no added salt (such as tomatoes, artichoke hearts, green beans, and corn)
- Peanut butter, nut and seed butters, and tahini (sesame seed spread)
- Nuts and seeds (such as almonds, pistachios, walnuts, chia seeds, hemp seeds, and sunflower seeds)
- Canned fruit packed in 100% juice or water
- Dried fruit (such as raisins, plums, apricots, and cherries)

- **Iron:** Beans and peas, dark green vegetables (such as spinach and beet greens), some dried fruits, prune juice, pumpkin seeds and sesame seeds, soy nuts, edamame (green soybeans), and iron-fortified breads and cereals.
  - *Tip:* To help your body absorb more iron from plant foods, eat them with vitamin C–rich foods and drinks such as citrus fruits and 100% juices, broccoli, tomatoes, and bell peppers.
- **Zinc:** Beans (such as white beans, kidney beans, or chickpeas), whole-grain foods (such as oatmeal, whole-wheat bread, and brown rice), wheat germ, zinc-fortified cereals, and dairy foods.
- **Vitamin B12:** Eggs, dairy foods, some fortified cereals and soy drinks, and nutritional yeast.
- **Vitamin D:** Dairy foods and some fortified cereals and soy drinks.

Vegetarian Meal and Snack Ideas

Breakfast

- Yogurt (soy or dairy) mixed with chopped fresh fruit and chia seeds
- Oatmeal made with low-fat or fat-free milk or soy milk, with nuts and dried cranberries
- Toasted whole-wheat bagel topped with peanut butter and sliced banana

Lunch and Dinner

- Veggie burger, lettuce, and tomato on a whole-grain bun plus sweet potato chips
- Lentil and greens soup with whole-grain crackers
- Burritos filled with beans, textured vegetable protein (TVP), tofu or tempeh, and chopped vegetables
- Tofu and vegetable stir-fry over brown rice or noodles
- Whole-grain pasta with tomato sauce plus spinach salad
- Bean and vegetable chili and whole-grain cornbread

Snacks

- Air-popped popcorn sprinkled with Parmesan cheese or nutritional yeast
- Hummus with whole-wheat pita bread and raw vegetables
- Trail mix made with unsalted nuts, whole-grain cereal, and dried fruit
- Slice of veggie pizza