



Vegetarianism in a Nutshell

The basics: Vegetarians do not eat meat, fish, and poultry. Vegans are vegetarians who abstain from eating or using all animal products, including milk, cheese, other dairy items, eggs, honey, wool, silk, or leather. Among the many reasons for being a vegetarian are health, environmental, and ethical concerns; dislike of meat; non-violent beliefs; compassion for animals; and economics. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics has affirmed that a vegetarian diet can meet all known nutrient needs. The key to a healthy vegetarian diet, as with any other diet, is to eat a wide variety of foods, including fruits, vegetables, plenty of leafy greens, whole grain products, nuts, seeds, and legumes. Limit your intake of sweets and fatty foods.

Making the change to a vegetarian diet

Many people become vegetarian instantly. They totally give up meat, fish, and poultry overnight. Others make the change gradually. Do what works best for you. Being a vegetarian or vegan is as hard or as easy as you choose to make it. Some people enjoy planning and preparing elaborate meals, while others opt for quick and easy vegetarian dishes.

What about nutrition?

Protein Vegetarians easily meet their protein needs by eating a varied diet, as long as they consume enough calories to maintain their weight. It is not necessary to plan combinations of foods. A mixture of proteins throughout the day will provide enough essential amino acids. (See "Position of the American Dietetic Association: Vegetarian Diets," JADA, July 2009; Simply Vegan; and nutrition information on VRG's website, www.vrg.org.)

Sources of protein Beans, lentils, tofu, nuts, seeds, tempeh, chickpeas, peas... Many common foods, such as whole grain bread, greens, potatoes, and corn, quickly add to protein intake.

Sources of iron Dried beans, tofu, tempeh, spinach, chard, baked potatoes, cashews, dried fruits, bulgur, and iron-fortified foods (such as cereals, instant oatmeal, and veggie "meats") are all good sources of iron. To increase the amount of iron absorbed at a meal, eat a food containing vitamin C, such as citrus fruit or juices, tomatoes, or broccoli. Using iron cookware also adds to iron intake.

Sources of calcium Good sources include broccoli, collard greens, kale, mustard greens, tofu prepared with calcium, fortified soymilk, and fortified orange juice.

Vitamin B12 The adult recommended intake for vitamin B12 is very low, but this is an essential nutrient so vegetarians should be aware of good sources. Fortified foods, such as some brands of cereal, nutritional yeast, soymilk, or veggie "meats," are good non-animal sources. Check labels to discover other products that are fortified with vitamin B12. Tempeh and sea vegetables are not reliable sources of vitamin B12. To be on the safe side, if you do not consume dairy products, eggs, or fortified foods regularly, you should take a non-animal derived supplement.

Children According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, vegetarian and vegan diets can meet all nutrient needs for infants and children. Diets for infants and children should contain enough calories to support growth and have reliable sources of key nutrients, such as iron, zinc, vitamin D, and vitamin B12.

What Can I Use Instead of Animal Products?

Meat substitutes in soups or stews

- Tempeh (cultured soybeans with a chewy texture)



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- Tofu (freezing and then thawing gives tofu a meaty texture; the tofu will turn slightly off-white in color)
- Wheat gluten or seitan (made from wheat and has the texture of meat; available in natural foods or Asian stores)

Egg replacers (binders)

- Ener-G Egg Replacer (or similar product available in natural foods stores or by mail order)
- 1 small banana for 1 egg (great for cakes & pancakes)
- 2 Tablespoons cornstarch or arrowroot starch for 1 egg
- ¼ cup tofu for 1 egg (Blend tofu smooth with the liquid ingredients before they are added to the dry)

Dairy substitutes in cooking

- Soymilk
- Rice, coconut, almond, and other nut milks
- Soy margarine
- Soy or almond yogurt (found in natural foods stores)
- Soy sour cream

Adding Omega-3's to Your Diet

To maximize production of DHA and EPA (omega-3 fatty acids found in fish and made by our bodies), include good sources of alpha-linolenic acid in your diet. Alpha-linolenic acid is found in flaxseed, flaxseed oil, canola oil, tofu, soybeans, and walnuts. You can also obtain DHA directly from foods fortified with DHA from microalgae (in some brands of soymilk) and supplements containing microalgae-derived DHA.

Cholesterol & Saturated Fat

Remember: Animal products (including dairy and eggs) contain cholesterol. Vegetable products do not contain any significant amount of cholesterol. However, some vegetable products, such as coconut and palm oil, are high in saturated fat and may raise blood cholesterol levels. Full-fat dairy products and eggs also contain significant amounts of saturated fat.

Resources:

- Wasserman, Debra, and Charles Stahler. *Meatless Meals for Working People—Quick and Easy Vegetarian Recipes*. The Vegetarian Resource Group.
- Wasserman, Debra, and Reed Mangels, PhD, RD. *Simply Vegan—Quick Vegetarian Meals*. The Vegetarian Resource Group. Contains a thorough vegan nutrition section.
- *The Vegetarian Resource Group's Parents E-mail List*: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/vrgparents>.
- *The Vegetarian Resource Group's Online Restaurant Guide*: <http://www.vrg.org/restaurant>.
- Center for Science in the Public Interest. C.S.P.I., 1875 Connecticut Ave. NW, #300, Washington, D.C. 20009.
- People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, 501 Front St., Norfolk, VA 23501.



- *Position of The American Dietetic Association: Vegetarian Diets. Journal of The American Dietetic Association, July 2009.*
- [Vegan Outreach](#), P.O. Box 1916, Davis, CA 95617.
- *Loma Linda University Diet Manual. Includes vegetarian diets for people with special medical needs.*
- *USDA National Nutrient Database:* <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp>.

So, What do Vegetarians Eat?

Common vegetarian foods include pizza, spaghetti, macaroni and cheese, eggplant parmesan, meatless lasagna, bread, yogurt, peanut butter and jam, corn flakes, oatmeal, pancakes, French toast, vegetable soup, fruit salad, French fries, vegetable pot pies, grilled cheese, bean tacos and burritos, vegetable lo mein, fruit shakes, and more. For vegan versions of these items, see www.vrg.org

Some vegetarians also eat tofu, tempeh, bulgur, lentils, millet, tahini, falafel, nutritional yeast, whole wheat flour, wheat germ, sprouts, chickpeas, tamari, kale, collards, carrot juice, barley, rice cakes, carob, split peas, kidney beans, soy burgers, kiwi fruit, papaya, curries, nut loaf, and more...

Some Vegetarian Recipes

Sweet Sautéed Red Cabbage

(Serves 4)

- ½ medium-sized red cabbage, shredded
- 1 apple, chopped
- Small onion, chopped
- ½ cup water
- ½ cup raisins
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon

Use a non-stick pan, if possible, and heat ingredients, stirring occasionally, over medium-high heat for 10 minutes.

Total calories per serving: 106

Fat: <1 gram

Carbohydrates: 27 grams

Protein: 2 grams

Calcium: 50 milligrams

Fiber: 5 grams

From Simply Vegan - Quick Vegetarian Meals

Spicy Potatoes, Cabbage, and Peas over Rice

(Serves 4)

- 2 cups rice
- 4 cups water
- 5 potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced
- 2 cups water
- ½ green cabbage
- 10-ounce box frozen peas (or use 1½ cups fresh)
- 2 teaspoons curry powder



- **1 teaspoon turmeric**
- **½ teaspoon ginger**
- **½ teaspoon garlic powder** **teaspoon cayenne pepper**
- **Salt to taste (optional)**

Cook rice in 4 cups water in a covered pot over medium-high heat until done.

In a separate pan, add sliced potatoes to 2 cups of water and heat over medium-high heat. Shred cabbage and add to potatoes. Add peas and spices. Cover pan. Continue heating, stirring occasionally, until potatoes are tender. Serve over rice.

Total calories per serving: 547	Fat: 1 gram
Carbohydrates: 121 grams	Protein: 13 grams
Calcium: 93 milligrams	Fiber: 9 grams

From Simply Vegan - Quick Vegetarian Meals

Rigatoni Combination

(Serves 6)

- **⅓ pound rigatoni or other pasta**
- **1 large onion, chopped**
- **1 clove garlic, minced**
- **½ large green pepper, chopped**
- **2 teaspoons olive or vegetable oil**
- **One 8-ounce can tomato sauce**
- **One 16-ounce can kidney beans, drained**
- **1 teaspoon soy sauce (optional)**
- **¼ teaspoon salt (optional)**
- **½ teaspoon chili powder**
- **Black pepper to taste**

Cook pasta according to package instructions. Sauté onion, garlic, and green pepper in oil 4-5 minutes or until soft. Stir in tomato sauce, kidney beans, soy sauce, salt, chili powder, and black pepper. Simmer several minutes. Drain pasta when done and stir into sauce. Serve as is, or add ½ cup crumbled tofu to each serving to make a lasagna-like dish. Add hot sauce if desired.

(To decrease the fat content, sauté in water instead of oil or just brush the pan lightly with an oiled paper towel.)

Total calories per serving: 181	Fat: 2 grams
Carbohydrates: 33 grams	Protein: 8 grams
Calcium: 36 milligrams	Fiber: 6 grams

From Meatless Meals for Working People

Garbanzo Bean Burgers

(Makes 6 burgers)

- **2 cups cooked garbanzo beans (chickpeas), mashed**



- 1 stalk celery, finely chopped
- 1 carrot, finely chopped
- ¼ small onion, minced
- ¼ cup whole wheat flour
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 teaspoons oil

Mix ingredients except oil in a bowl. Form 6 flat patties. Fry in oiled pan over medium-high heat until burgers are golden brown on each side. Serve with a mushroom or tomato sauce, or as a burger with lettuce and tomato.

Total calories per serving: 133

Fat: 3 grams

Carbohydrates: 23 grams

Protein: 5 grams

Calcium: 34 milligrams

Fiber: 2 grams

From Simply Vegan - Quick Vegetarian Meals

Vegetarian Teaching Materials

Some of the brochures below are available at www.vrg.org. If you don't have access to the Internet, send requests with appropriate size SASE (self-addressed, stamped envelope) or payment to The Vegetarian Resource Group, P.O. Box 1463, Baltimore, MD 21203.

I love Animals and Broccoli Coloring Book: This (8½" x 11") 8-page booklet for 3- to 7-year-olds encourages healthy eating. One copy: Send 4 first-class stamps. For a quantity, please send a donation. (Coloring Book Lesson Plan by Humane Education Committee: Send 2 first-class stamps.)

El Arco Iris Vegetariano Coloring Book (Spanish): This (8½" x 11") 8-page booklet for 3- to 7-year-olds encourages healthy eating. Fruits and vegetables are divided by color on each page. One copy: Send 4 first-class stamps. For a quantity, please send a donation.

Vegetarianism in a Nutshell Handout: Basic information about vegetarianism plus quick recipes. Send SASE for one. To receive a quantity of these, send a donation for postage.

Spanish Brochures: We have two brochures written in Spanish. Send an SASE with 2 first-class stamps for a copy of each brochure. To receive a quantity of these brochures, send a donation for postage.

My Vegan Plate: Send SASE with 2 first class stamps. For a quantity, please send a donation.

Vegetarian Nutrition for Teenagers: Brochure by Reed Mangels, PhD, RD. For one send an SASE; quantity 15 cents each, plus \$5 shipping.

Vegan Diets in a Nutshell: Brochure by Reed Mangels, PhD, RD. For one send an SASE; quantity 15 cents each, plus \$5 shipping.

Vegan Nutrition in Pregnancy and Childhood: Brochure by Reed Mangels, PhD, RD, and Katie Kavanagh-Prochaska, RD. For one send an SASE; quantity 15 cents each, plus \$5 shipping.