

Vol. 42, Issue 1, 2023

Vegan Journal

Health, Ethics & Environment since 1982

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Nutrition Hotline

Lowering LDL Cholesterol

Reed Mangels, PhD, RD



QUESTION: As a vegan with weight and blood pressure well within acceptable ranges and a relatively healthy diet, I've been dismayed to see that my total and LDL-cholesterol have been creeping up. While they are not considered "high," they are "borderline." I'll admit to not being as active as I used to be. My doctor suggests eating a healthy diet, getting more exercise, and retesting in three months. Do you have any specific suggestions for lowering my cholesterol? **C.D., via email**

ANSWER: Your vegan diet, weight, and blood pressure are all positives. There are some things that you can try that may be helpful in lowering your total and LDL-cholesterol. These are beneficial for overall health also.

Increasing exercise can lower LDL-cholesterol and raise HDL-cholesterol. Recommendations for adults call for at least 150 to 300 minutes a week of moderate intensity exercise or 75 to 150 minutes a week of vigorous intensity exercise.¹ Examples of moderate intensity exercise include walking briskly at a pace of at least 2½ miles per hour, biking, or playing doubles tennis. Examples of vigorous

intensity exercise include running, swimming laps, or jumping rope. Physical activity should be increased gradually, keeping in mind that any increase in activity is beneficial. Discuss your plans for increased activity with your health care provider.

A dietary modification that can help to lower cholesterol to a more acceptable level is to boost intake of soluble viscous fiber and of legumes. Higher intakes of soluble viscous fiber—a type of fiber found in abundance in foods such as oatmeal, oat bran, barley, eggplant, okra, citrus fruits, and apples—are associated with lower total and LDL-cholesterol.² Legumes (dried beans, peas, and lentils) also reduce LDL-cholesterol.³ Try adding one or more servings of these foods to your daily meal plan.

Vegan diets are typically low in saturated fat, but there are some vegan foods that have significant amounts of saturated fat. These include coconut oil, palm oil, palm kernel oil, coconut milk, and vegan items made with these products such as cheese, ice cream, and yogurt. Reducing saturated fat and replacing it with unsaturated fat can result in lower LDL-cholesterol levels.⁴

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Vegan Journal

(formerly *Vegetarian Journal*)

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Vegan Journal is one project of The Vegetarian Resource Group. We are a nonprofit that educates the public about veganism and the interrelated issues of health, nutrition, environment, ethics, and world hunger. To join VRG and receive *Vegan Journal* in the U.S., send \$25 to The Vegetarian Resource Group, P.O. Box 1463, Baltimore, MD 21203, or go to vrg.org/donate. Additional donations support our outreach and research.



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Note from the Coordinators



Activists In and Outside the Spotlight

Vegetarian Resource Group intern Julia Comino wanted to interview a veg activist from the 1970s who created a ton of media for vegetarianism, as well as influenced other vegan activists. The potential interviewee responded, although she was very appreciative to be considered, as she has done most of her work anonymously, she would rather it stay that way. Though there are some people in movements who put themselves in the limelight, change happens because of everyone, whose activism takes place in varied ways. The person Julia wanted to interview was on some major television shows and in national media, but she never saw it about herself.

For another story, Julia was researching one of our members, Albert Gordon, a Freedom Rider who traveled from New York to Mississippi (where Julia grew up) in the 1960s to protest segregation, risking violence and arrest. In an archived video, Albert wondered why some people see there should be change and others don't, and why some people take risks for change and others don't. Of course those have been unanswered questions for thousands of years, if not longer. Thank you to all our volunteers, staff, and supporters behind the scenes and in "front of the camera" whose priority is not only themselves, but also creating a better world (even if some of us are a little quirky at doing this).

We enjoyed having Odette Olivares as an intern for her masters in nutrition requirement. We tremendously appreciate her continued work with VRG after the internship to help us promote vegan foods among Latino communities and beyond. For example, see her article on iron in traditional Latin American foods on page 24.

Former intern Laura McGuinness sent this nice note: "Just wanted to shoot you an email. I'm in Boston for an archives conference, and it is my first conference attended since VRG sent me to the Animal Rights one in 2013 and the Gender Equity one a few years later. I just wanted to let you know that, if I hadn't attended that conference with you way back in 2013, I think I'd be a lot more overwhelmed. Now I know what to expect! It's important for people to know the internship gave me a lot of 'firsts' that have helped with my career. At the time I didn't realize, but I see it now!"

Thank you to all our interns who took advantage of our varied learning experiences, and especially the ones that paid it forward by continuing to be involved with The Vegetarian Resource Group activism. And thank you to all our subscribers, members, donors, volunteers, and staff, who enable us to continue to assist young people and future activists to improve the world for people and non-human animals.



Debra Wasserman & Charles Stahler
Coordinators of The Vegetarian Resource Group

VRG's MEMORIAL and HONORARY GIFT PROGRAM

How often have you wanted to make a gift in honor of a loved one or friend but weren't sure which charities are vegan-friendly, pro-environmental, or pro-animal rights? Please remember The Vegetarian Resource Group. You can make a gift in memory of a loved one or as a living tribute to honor someone on a special occasion, such as a wedding or birth. We'll send an acknowledgement to you and to the recipient(s) you choose. Your gift will support educational outreach programs and help promote veganism.

Memorials & Honorary Gifts

In memory of: _____

In honor of: _____

Please send acknowledgement to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

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Make checks payable to The Vegetarian Resource Group and mail to P.O. Box 1463, Baltimore, MD 21203, or donate at vrg.org/donate

Thanks to Madeline Akers, Franchesca Reece, and William Samuel for their support of VRG's 40th Anniversary.

Thanks to the following individuals for volunteering to staff VRG booths: Phil Becker in CA; Cathy Conway, MS, RD, in FL; Whitney McVerry in NC; and Elsa Spencer, PhD, and Julia Comino in VA

Vegan Options Growing in Italy

I'm traveling in Italy right now with my parents, and today I was inquiring about vegan options at a local café, and they had both vegan croissants and brioche, as well as non-dairy milk! I am used to some accidentally vegan cuisine in Italy, but not pastries and other options that have been specifically tailored to the vegan diet! I was so pleasantly surprised! I've definitely noticed a huge shift from when I became vegan to now (coming up on my 4-year veg-aversary!), and the fact that a meat-heavy country like Italy is becoming increasingly plant-forward brings me much hope. I know that all that you guys do at The VRG is a huge aid to that, and for that I am so thankful. That was a small moment of victory today for me as a vegan, so I thought I'd share!
Sicile, N-G. (2022 VRG Scholarship Winner), via email

Thank You for Your Issue 3 2022 Article, 10 Ways to Reduce Sodium in Your Diet

I would like to elaborate on the first and last of the strategies:

1. Read the Nutrition Facts section of the label—I have observed that organic canned

beans tend to be much lower in sodium than conventional canned beans.

2. Be aware of salty ingredients like miso, soy sauce, tamari, and liquid aminos—I have found that coconut aminos are often much lower in sodium than soy sauce, tamari, etc., but contribute a similar flavor while requiring no additional salt (this fits under the first strategy as well).

Bonnie B., RD, via email

No-Sodium Vegetable Broth Mix

As always, I read *Vegan Journal* from cover to cover. In Vol. 41, Issue 3 2022, you write about reducing sodium in the diet. I have never bought vegetable broth, nor do I intend to. Years ago, I developed a recipe for vegetable broth that works every time. (It's adapted from *The Meatless Gourmet*, by Bobbie Hinman.) Find my recipe here: vrg.org/blog/2022/08/16/make-your-own-vegetable-broth-mix

Diane S., via mail

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Beautiful website, so informative. You are making the world a better place.

Krishna, via VRG Blog comment

Letters to the Editors can be sent to: Vegan Journal, P.O. Box 1463, Baltimore, MD 21203. You may also e-mail letters to vrg@vrg.org or send a message to us on Facebook: facebook.com/thevegetarianresourcegroup

Coming in the next issue...

GRAIN-BASED BOWLS REVIEWED

Plus: *Learn to Love Leeks, Forage for Your Next Meal, VRG's Video Contest Winners, and More!*

Skillet Suppers

by James Craig Thieman

What's easier than supper cooked all in one pan? These recipes are designed to be satisfying but easy to put together. Simple steps build up to unique flavors in each dish, making for dinners that are fun to prepare and to serve in bowls. Custom toppings allow for endless variations.

Deconstructed Blackened "Fishy" Taco

(Serves 6)

Fishy Filling

Two 14-ounce cans hearts of palm

1 Tablespoon kelp granules

¼ teaspoon black pepper

Drain and rinse hearts of palm, and roughly chop into small pieces. Add hearts of palm, kelp, and pepper to a zip-top bag or sealed container. Shake well so hearts of palm are covered, and marinate for 6-8 hours or overnight in the fridge.

1 red onion, sliced into half-moons

1 red bell pepper, deseeded and chopped

3 cloves garlic, minced

1 jalapeño pepper, deseeded and diced small, or to taste (optional)

½ cup water

⅓ cup orange juice

1 teaspoon chili powder

1 teaspoon cumin

1 teaspoon coriander

3 cups red cabbage, thinly shredded

1 cup vegan low-sodium salsa

One 6-ounce bag unsalted baked tortilla chips

1 avocado, deseeded and diced, to serve (optional)

½ sheet nori, cut into thin strips, to serve (optional)

Juice of a fresh lime, to serve (optional)

In a large pan, sauté onions, bell peppers, garlic, and jalapeños in water and orange juice over medium-low heat until fragrant. Add Fishy Filling, all spices, and

cabbage, and cook another 3-4 minutes. After onions and cabbage are soft, add salsa. Cook 3 minutes, stirring to blend flavors.

Serve immediately over tortilla chips, with optional toppings.

Cook's Notes: Kelp granules are found in the spice or natural foods aisle in large grocery stores or online.

Nori sheets are found with Asian foods or online. To customize this recipe consider your favorite taco toppings, such as nutritional yeast, sliced radishes, or a pinch of vegan cheese shreds.

Total calories per serving: 176

Carbohydrates: 37 grams

Sodium: 194 milligrams

Fat: 1 gram

Protein: 5 grams

Fiber: 5 grams

Skillet Chili Mac

(Serves 6)

- 2 cups cauliflower, roughly chopped
- 1 yellow onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- Non-stick cooking spray
- Two 15-ounce cans kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- Two 14.5-ounce cans no-salt chopped tomatoes, with juices
- 1 cup water
- 1 diced green bell pepper
- 1 ear fresh corn, cut off the cob
- 2-3 Tablespoons chipotle peppers in adobo sauce, chopped, or to taste
- 1 Tablespoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 8-ounces (½ box) macaroni, gluten-free if desired, cooked according to box directions
- 2 Tablespoons vegan cheddar shreds or nutritional yeast, to serve (optional)

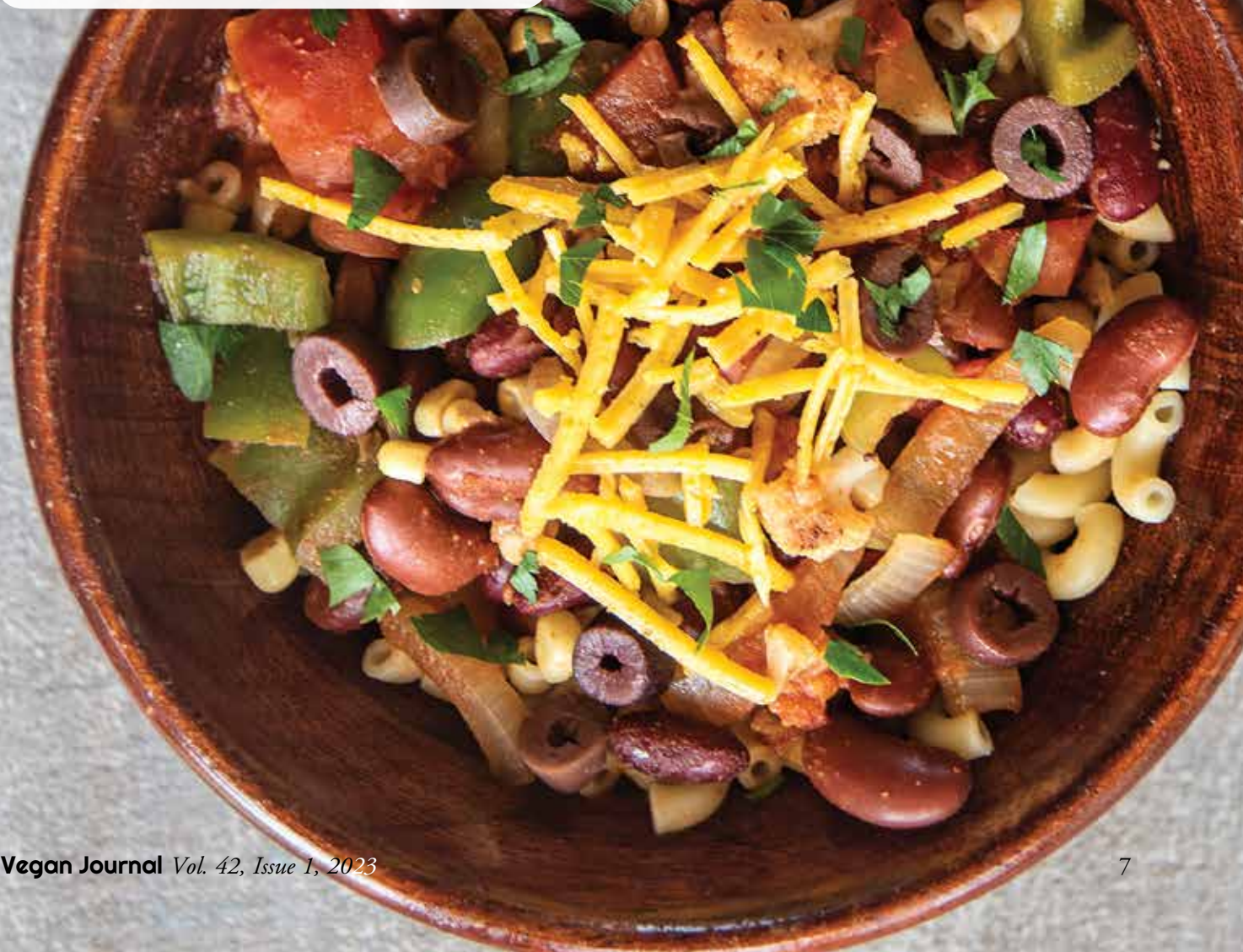
- 2 Tablespoons sliced black olives, to serve (optional)
- 2 Tablespoons fresh cilantro or parsley, chopped

Prepare a large pan with a few spritzes of cooking spray, and sauté cauliflower, onions, and garlic over medium heat for 5-7 minutes. When the cauliflower is getting tender and onions are lightly browned, add kidney beans, tomatoes, water, bell peppers, corn, chipotle peppers in adobo sauce, chili powder, and cumin. Cook about 8-10 minutes until all veggies are tender.

Serve over cooked macaroni and top with vegan cheese or nutritional yeast, olives, and cilantro.

Cook's Note: Chipotle peppers in adobo sauce are found in the Latin section of most larger grocery stores.

Total calories per serving: 328	Fat: 1 gram
Carbohydrates: 64 grams	Protein: 15 grams
Sodium: 154 milligrams	Fiber: 9 grams



Italian-Style Eggplant on Zoodles

(Serves 6)

One pound eggplant

Ice water to cover eggplant

½ lemon, sliced

8 roma tomatoes, chopped

**1 habanero or jalapeño pepper, deseeded and
minced, or to taste (optional)**

2 sweet banana peppers, deseeded and chopped

3-4 cloves garlic, minced

2 teaspoons Italian seasoning blend

1 Tablespoon olive oil

**4 cups (5-ounce bag) fresh spinach,
roughly chopped**

⅓ cup fresh basil, sliced

4 zucchini, spiralized into zoodles (see note)

4 Tablespoons pepitas, to serve (optional)

**4 Tablespoons vegan mozzarella shreds,
to serve (optional)**

Dice eggplant and place into a bowl. Cover with ice cold water and lemon slices to help lessen bitterness. Drain after 30 minutes.

In a large sauté pan, combine tomatoes, peppers, garlic, Italian seasoning, and olive oil. Cook, stirring often, until fragrant, about 3-4 minutes. Add drained eggplant and cook until softened, about 4-6 more minutes. Add spinach and basil, and cook until just wilted, about 2 minutes. Serve over raw or cooked zoodles. Top with pepitas and vegan mozzarella shreds.

Cook's Note: Raw zucchini or yellow summer squash can be used to make “zoodles” vegetable noodles. Many grocery stores sell prepackaged zoodles in the produce area. You can make your own using a spiralizer or a vegetable peeler.

Total calories per serving: 97

Carbohydrates: 15 grams

Sodium: 36 milligrams

Fat: 3 grams

Protein: 4 grams

Fiber: 6 grams

Kimchi Tofu and Stir-Fry Veggies

(Serves 6)

Kimchi Tofu

¾ cup water

2-3 Tablespoons Asian red pepper paste, or to taste

2 Tablespoons miso

1 Tablespoon low-sodium tamari or soy sauce

4-5 cloves garlic, roughly chopped

2 teaspoons peeled, roughly chopped ginger

1 teaspoon smoked paprika

Pinch cayenne, or to taste

One 14-ounce box firm tofu, drained and cubed

Place all ingredients except tofu in a blender or food processor and blend into a smooth sauce. Add to tofu in a zip-top bag or sealed container and shake to combine thoroughly. Refrigerate and allow to marinate at least 4 hours and up to overnight in the refrigerator.

Stir-Fry Veggies

1 yellow onion, chopped

4 carrots, shredded

6-8 radishes, chopped

3.5-ounce package shiitake mushrooms, sliced

⅓ cup water

½ medium-sized head napa cabbage, thinly sliced

In a large skillet, sauté onions, carrots, radishes, and mushrooms in water over medium heat for about 8-10 minutes, until soft. Add Kimchi Tofu cubes and all leftover marinade sauce. Sauté until tofu is lightly browned, adding more water if needed to prevent sticking. Toss in napa cabbage and cook another 4-6 minutes, until slightly softened.

To Serve

6 cups cooked jasmine rice

6 green onions, sliced diagonally

3 Tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped

3 Tablespoon sesame seeds

Serve immediately over cooked jasmine rice and garnish with green onions, parsley, and sesame seeds.

Cook's Notes: Asian red pepper paste is found in the Asian food section of most grocers, or use hot sauce.

Total calories per serving: 366

Fat: 7 grams

Carbohydrates: 57 grams

Protein: 18 grams

Sodium: 438 milligrams

Fiber: 4 grams

Jackfruit BBQ and Slaw

(Serves 6)

Slaw

One 14-ounce bag shredded coleslaw mix
2 shredded carrots
½ English cucumber, deseeded and thinly sliced
⅓ cup vegan mayonnaise
1 Tablespoon apple cider vinegar
1 Tablespoon Dijon mustard
1 Tablespoon maple syrup
½ teaspoon celery seeds
Sprig fresh dill, chopped

In a large bowl, combine all ingredients together well. Cover and chill in fridge until ready to serve.

Salt-Free Dry Rub

2 Tablespoons smoked paprika
1 Tablespoon organic sugar
2 teaspoons garlic powder
2 teaspoons onion powder
1 teaspoon black pepper
1 teaspoon cumin
1 teaspoon Italian seasoning blend
½ teaspoon mustard powder
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper, or to taste

Add all ingredients to a jar with a lid, screw lid tightly, and shake to combine. Store in pantry for up to 6 months. Use with tofu, squash, tempeh, or other spicy BBQ meals.

Jackfruit BBQ

Two 20-ounce cans jackfruit, drained, rinsed, and roughly chopped
1½ Tablespoons Salt-Free Dry Rub
Olive oil cooking spray
1 yellow onion, sliced
1 green pepper, sliced
One 8-ounce box white mushrooms, sliced
One 14.5-ounce can no-salt chopped tomatoes, with juices
4 Tablespoons vegan cheddar or nutritional yeast, to serve (optional)

In a large skillet dry-sauté chopped jackfruit over low heat about 5-7 minutes until thoroughly dried out and slightly browned. Add dry rub and stir to coat. Spritz lightly with cooking spray and add onions, peppers, and mushrooms. Sauté 2-5 minutes until fragrant. Add tomatoes with juices and cook, stirring often, until everything is warm and tender, about 2-3 minutes.

Serve immediately over slaw and garnish with vegan cheddar or nutritional yeast.

Total calories per serving: 183	Fat: 8 grams
Carbohydrates: 25 grams	Protein: 3 grams
Sodium: 294 milligrams	Fiber: 8 grams

Sweet Taters and Greens

(Serves 4 as a side dish)

- 1 large sweet potato, peeled and cubed
- 1 cup water
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon dried dill
- Pinch salt and ground black pepper,
to taste (optional)
- 1 red bell pepper, deseeded and diced
- 1 bunch (about 1 pound) fresh curly kale or
Swiss chard, stemmed and chopped
- 4 teaspoons sunflower seeds, to serve
- Fresh lemon juice, to serve

Place sweet potatoes and water into a large skillet and cook with garlic, olive oil, basil, oregano, dill, salt, and pepper, over medium heat until potatoes are fork-tender, about 12-15 minutes. Add bell peppers and greens, and cook about 3-5 minutes, just until the greens look vibrant.

Serve immediately with a sprinkle of sunflower seeds and splash of fresh lemon juice.

Total calories per serving: 89

Fat: 3 grams

Carbohydrates: 15 grams

Protein: 2 grams

Sodium: 30 milligrams

Fiber: 3 grams

Food Photos by Rissa Miller

James Craig Thieman, retired from the Navy, is a FEMA reservist, responding to disaster when called. When not responding to disaster, he is a real estate agent in western North Carolina. He enjoys cooking, and hiking with his dog Lily May.



SCIENTIFIC UPDATE by Reed Mangels, PhD, RD, FADA

A REVIEW OF RECENT SCIENTIFIC PAPERS RELATED TO VEGETARIANISM

Early Menopause

Typically, natural menopause occurs between age 45 and 55. Early menopause, defined as the cessation of menstrual periods before age 45, is associated with an increased risk of osteoporosis, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. Early menopause may be partially due to genetics, but diet may also play a role.

A recent study involved more than 116,000 women who were followed for more than 20 years. Participants' diets were evaluated using a "healthful plant-based diet index" and an "unhealthful plant-based diet index." The researchers identified "healthful plant foods" as whole grains, beans, fruits, vegetables, nuts, and vegetable oils. Less healthful plant foods were identified as fruit juices, sugary desserts, sugar-sweetened beverages, refined grains, and potatoes. Those eating more foods from a group (like unhealthful plant foods) received a higher score in that group. As the unhealthful plant-based diet index score increased, subjects' risk of early menopause increased.

In this study, a "plant-based diet" is not a vegetarian diet but is a diet that is higher in plant foods. Higher scores on the healthful plant-based diet index were not associated with risk of early menopause.

Grisotto G, Langton CR, Li Y, et al. Association of plant-based diet and early onset of natural menopause. *Menopause*. 2022;29:861-867.

Organic, Plant-Based Diets Are Good for People and the Earth

Organic farming has been shown to offer environmental benefits, including enhanced biodiversity and improved soil health; however, little is known about the human health benefits of organic food consumption. A large study from France compared the health of consumers using generous amounts of organic foods to non-consumers. High-organic-food consumers were much more likely to be vegetarians than were

non-consumers and ate more nutritious diets that were more in accord with dietary guidelines. High organic food consumers were less likely to develop diabetes, metabolic syndrome, post-menopausal breast cancer, and lymphomas.

Not surprisingly, the cost of a diet based on organic food was higher than one including more conventional food. Cost figures do not take into account the cost of health impacts, air and water pollution, and biodiversity loss that are associated with the current food system. The researchers note that higher costs of organic foods contribute to health inequalities and that these higher costs should be addressed by governmental interventions. This study was part of the French BioNutriNet Project whose main conclusion is "organic-based diets should be accompanied by dietary shifts toward plant-based diets to allow for better planetary and human health."

Kesse-Guyot E, Lairon D, Allès B, et al. Key findings of the French BioNutriNet Project on organic food-based diets: Description, determinants, and relationships to health and the environment. *Adv Nutr*. 2022;13:208-224.

The Dietary Pattern in Dietary Guidelines for Americans Could Easily be Made Vegan and Nutritionally Adequate

Dietary Guidelines for Americans is a document the U.S. government produces every 5 years and used as the foundation for federal nutrition education materials as well as being used by schools, the food industry, and many others. The most recent *Dietary Guidelines*, released in 2020, endorses "a healthy vegetarian dietary pattern" as one of three recommended dietary patterns.

The "Healthy Vegetarian Dietary Pattern" includes eggs and has no suggestions for vegan foods that could replace eggs.

A recent study provides evidence that it would be

easy to modify the vegetarian dietary pattern in *Dietary Guidelines* to make it vegan. In this study, the “dairy food group” was replaced with fortified soymilk and fortified soy yogurt. Eggs were replaced with a combination of beans, peas, lentils, nuts, seeds, and soy foods. Vegan patterns were created to be similar in calories to the original “Healthy Vegetarian Dietary Pattern.” The resulting vegan dietary patterns were analyzed for nutritional adequacy and compared to the original “Healthy Vegetarian Dietary Patterns,” which contained dairy products and eggs.

The vegan patterns were higher in iron, copper, vitamin D, riboflavin, vitamin B12, and vitamin K. Protein was slightly lower but still adequate. Sodium, cholesterol, and zinc were lower in the vegan patterns. Other nutrients were similar in both patterns.

This study only looked at nutritional adequacy for non-pregnant, non-lactating adults. The hope is that future studies will examine other age and life-cycle groups. Additional studies should examine the use of other fortified plant milks and determine the minimum amount of these products needed and examine the need for supplements if fortified foods are not used as sources of vitamin D, calcium, and vitamin B12.

We hope that the results of these and similar studies will be used to include vegan dietary patterns in the next edition of *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

Hess JM. Modeling dairy-free vegetarian and vegan USDA food patterns for non-pregnant, non-lactating adults, *J Nutr*. 2022;152:2097-2108.

Tomatoes as a Vitamin D Source?

Generally, plants are poor sources of vitamin D, but a recent report suggests that tomatoes, and possibly other plants, could be genetically altered to increase their vitamin D production. Researchers used genetic engineering to increase production of vitamin D3 in tomato plants. This did not involve the use of any animal cells or genes and the modifications did not affect the growth, development, or yield of the plants. Tomatoes from these plants would need to be exposed to ultraviolet light to increase their vitamin D content. Following that exposure, one tomato would have around 10% of the Daily Value for vitamin D. The leaves of the genetically altered tomato plant could be used to manufacture a vitamin D3 supplement that could be used by vegans. These products (tomatoes and plants) are not commercially available.

Li J, Scarano A, Gonzalez NM, et al. Biofortified tomatoes provide a new route to vitamin D sufficiency. *Nat Plants*. 2022;8:611-616.

Dairy Products and Prostate Cancer Risk

After skin cancer, prostate cancer is the most common cancer in American men. Prostate cancer risk was recently studied in more than 28,000 men enrolled in the Adventist Health Study-2, a large long-term study of Seventh-day Adventists. The risk of prostate cancer was approximately 25% higher among men with the highest daily consumption of dairy products (about 14 ounces daily) compared to those with the lowest consumption (less than an ounce a day). The least risk was seen in those not consuming dairy products, who had approximately a 60% lower risk of developing prostate cancer compared to those with the highest dairy product consumption.

The increased risk of prostate cancer seen with higher dairy product consumption did not appear to be related to calcium. Those with higher and lower calcium intakes—whether from diet, supplements, or a combination of diet and supplements—did not differ in their risk of prostate cancer. The researchers analyzed the data both with and without vegans since there could be other protective factors in vegan diets in addition to avoidance of dairy products.

Even without vegans, those who consumed large amounts of dairy products still had a markedly higher risk of prostate cancer than did those not consuming dairy products. The increased risk of prostate cancer associated with dairy products appeared mainly to be due to greater consumption of milk; yogurt and cheese consumption did not seem to influence the risk of prostate cancer. Cow’s milk consumption, whether reduced-fat or full-fat, did.

Orlich MJ, Mashchak AD, Jaceldo-Siegl K, et al. Dairy foods, calcium intakes, and risk of incident prostate cancer in Adventist Health Study-2. *Am J Clin Nutr*. 2022;116:314-324.

Study Compares Vegan Cheeses

by Reed Mangels, PhD, RD

One trend that I've been excited about is the proliferation of vegan cheese products. I can sprinkle shreds on pizza, spread vegan cream cheese on a bagel, and savor a wedge of vegan cheese with apple slices. I've enjoyed sampling vegan cheese at Riverdel a vegan version of a classic artisanal cheese

shop in New York City. While I am a fan of vegan cheeses, I'm also aware that these items are not necessarily the most healthful products on the market.

Dr. Winston Craig of Loma Linda University, Dr. Cecelia Brothers of Walla Walla University, and I recently investigated the nutritional content (as reported on the product label or website) of 245 vegan cheeses sold in the United States. Our results appeared in a scientific journal, *Nutrients*.¹

Coconut oil, either alone or with cashews, was the most common product base. Products were also based on almonds, cashews, oats, palm fruit oil, soy, and other blends. According to the package or website, a serving of cheese was between 14 grams (about 0.5 ounce) and 40 grams (almost 1.5 ounces) depending on whether the product was shreds, slices, blocks, or other forms.

A serving of cheese generally had between 60 and 100 calories. Only 3% of the cheeses had 5 grams or more of protein; typically they had 0 to 3 grams of protein. Thus, most of these commercial cheeses could not be considered a good source of protein. This is not a problem since there are many other vegan foods that are good sources of protein. The only concern would be if someone was eating a lot of vegan cheese, thinking that they were getting a lot of protein, and ignoring other protein sources such as beans and nuts.

Almost 60% of the vegan cheeses surveyed had high levels of saturated fat (more than 20% of the Daily Value). Excessive dietary saturated fat is associated with an increased risk of heart disease. Close to a third of products were classified as high sodium, having more than 10% of the Daily Value for sodium. Some products had vitamins or minerals added; 19% were fortified with calcium, 14% with vitamin B12, and 1% with vitamin D.

Our published article concluded with some recommendations to manufacturers encouraging development of "products with a better nutritional content



and a healthier profile.” We suggested increased use of legumes for producing vegan cheeses as a way of reducing saturated fat and boosting protein. We also called for increased consideration of fortifying vegan cheeses with nutrients including calcium, vitamin D, and vitamin B12.

Knowing what I do, I plan to continue to use vegan cheeses to add interest and flavor to dishes. I’ll be moderate in the amount I use and will look for products with lower amounts of saturated fat.

Reference

¹ Craig WJ, Mangels AR, Brothers CJ. Nutritional profiles of non-dairy plant-based cheese alternatives. *Nutrients*. 2022;14(6):1247.

Read more about vegan cheese:

- vrg.org/blog/2017/05/30/the-vegetarian-resource-groups-guide-to-vegan-cheese
- vrg.org/journal/vj2008issue2/2008_issue2_cheeseless_sauces.php
- vrg.org/blog/2022/05/02/fava-bean-based-vegan-cheese
- facebook.com/groups/VeganCheese

Photos by Rissa Miller



NOTES FROM THE VRG SCIENTIFIC DEPARTMENT VEGAN EDUCATION

The Vegetarian Resource Group did an in-service for 10 University of Maryland dietetic students. They already have their undergrad nutrition degrees, but are doing their one-year training towards becoming registered dietitians. Thank you to:

- Reed Mangels, PhD, RD, who shared evidence-based information about raising vegan children.
- Whitney McVerry, a former VRG intern and VRG’s Volunteer Coordinator, who now has twin vegan toddlers, for presenting practical tips about vegan foods for kids.
- Odette Olivares, MS, a former VRG intern, gave out information on traditional vegan Latino foods that are good sources of calcium (See: vrg.org/journal/vj2021issue2/2021_issue2_latin_american_calcium.php).
- Chen Zeng, a VRG volunteer graduating with a food technology degree from Cornell, gave out info on vegan Asian dishes.
- Ruby Sturm, VRG Intern, shared her knowledge on vegan foods in Germany.
- Nadely Requena, VRG Intern, spoke about her experiences of eating vegetarian in parts of Texas.

Jeanne Yacoubou contacted companies to find out if magnesium stearate (sometimes used in pharmaceuticals) is animal derived. See: vrg.org/blog/2022/08/12/alpha-gal-syndrome-magnesium-stearate-and-stearic-acid-in-pharmaceuticals-are-they-beef-derived

Time for Tea

Sophisticated Bites for an Afternoon Spread

by **Hannah Kaminsky**

Tea is more than a drink, more than a designated hour or moment on the clock. First and foremost, it's a state of mind. Teatime fits neatly into the yawning chasm that separates lunch from dinner, providing a break to refuel with a light snack and a warm drink, although that hasn't always been the case. Some people in Britain refer to their main evening meal as "tea" rather than "dinner" or "supper," with or without any steeped beverage at hand.

Once an elaborate affair reserved for the wealthy, it's time we reclaim tea. Leave the good china in the cabinet, forget the frilly doilies and precious little cakes; modern teatime is an open invitation to all. Come as you are, eat what you want, and yes, you can bring a mug of coffee if you prefer.

Tea sandwiches are an essential piece of any spread, to stave off hunger until the main meal or act as an entrée themselves. Also known as "finger sandwiches," these dainty little rectangles, are classically stuffed with cucumbers and cream cheese, but there's plenty of room for creativity in that filling. In this case, briny olive tapenade enriched with tofu which adds both substance and style (opposite page). Paired with crisp fresh veggies and soft bread, they're especially well suited to balancing out a sweet or creamy tea.

What's a tea spread without scones? Impossibly fluffy yet flaky, the savory, summery taste of tomato and dill radiates through these British biscuits like mid-day sunshine (page 18). Nutritional yeast gives them an undeniably cheesy flavor.

For those with a heartier appetite, sausage rolls are always a hit (page 19). There's no need for meat, though, when you have a toothsome lentil pâté seasoned with aromatic herbs and spices instead.

Don't forget about dessert! Quick blueberry jam made with maple syrup and chia seeds adds the perfect fresh, subtly tart bite and chewy texture (page 20) in Jam Drop cookies (page 21). These are the unfussy cousins of thumbprint cookies. Crisp on the outside but soft and slightly cakey on the inside, a dollop of rich fruit jam in the middle brings everything together for a sweet finish.

When teatime comes early or guests are late to rise, breakfast and brunch fare is always a big hit. That's where chickpea egg bites, a cross between crustless quiches and single-serving frittatas, come in (page 22). Since the batter itself is made entirely from pantry staples, it's an ideal ace to keep up your sleeve for last-minute plans.

No matter what your cup of tea, these sweet and savory snacks will be the life of the tea party.





Cucumber Tapenade Tea Sandwiches

(Makes 16 small sandwiches)

Tapenade

8 ounces (½ package) extra-firm tofu,
thoroughly drained

1 clove garlic

1½ cups pitted Kalamata olives

2 Tablespoons red wine vinegar

2 teaspoons dried *Herbs de Provence*

¼ teaspoon ground black pepper

1 cup fresh parsley

Roughly crumble tofu and add garlic into the bowl of a food processor. Blend until mostly smooth and then add the olives, vinegar, *Herbs de Provence*, and pepper. Pulse until coarsely chopped. Using a rubber spatula, scrape down the sides of bowl to make sure everything is incorporated. Add the parsley last and pulse just until combined.

Tapenade will keep for 7-10 days refrigerated in an airtight container.

Sandwiches

1 thinly sliced English cucumber

16 slices whole-wheat or gluten-free sandwich bread

Use 2-3 Tablespoons of tapenade per slice and spread evenly over 8 slices of bread. Top generously with cucumbers, overlapping pieces to cover the surface completely. Cover with remaining bread slices to make 8 sandwiches.

Use a serrated knife to trim crusts from sandwiches. Save these and let them dry out to make breadcrumbs later. Cut each sandwich in half, creating 16 rectangles in all. Serve immediately.

Cook's Note: Extra-firm tofu contains little excess water. You can get the same sort of results by pressing firm tofu between two plates with a weight on top for 1-2 hours to remove most of the liquid.

Total calories per sandwich: 132

Carbohydrates: 17 grams

Sodium: 227 milligrams

Fat: 4 grams

Protein: 7 grams

Fiber: 3 grams



Cheesy Dill Scones

(Makes 8 scones)

- 2 cups white whole-wheat or all-purpose flour
- ½ cup nutritional yeast
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
- ½ teaspoon salt (optional)
- ⅓ cup fresh dill, minced
- ½ cup unsweetened applesauce
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 2 Tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 Tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 3-4 Tablespoons unsweetened plain vegan milk

Preheat oven to 425 degrees, line a baking sheet with parchment paper, and set aside.

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, nutritional yeast, baking powder, pepper, salt (if using), and dill. Stir well to combine.

In a separate bowl, mix the applesauce, olive oil, tomato paste, and vinegar until smooth. Pour liquid ingredients into the dry bowl and use a wide spatula to bring the dough together. Add vegan milk 1 Tablespoon at a time until dough holds together. It will be a very stiff, thick dough; try not to overmix for the most tender scones.

Divide the dough in half and shape each piece into a round. Use your hands to flatten them gently to about 1-inch thick. Cut into four equal pieces, yielding 8 triangles, and transfer them to your prepared baking sheet, spacing them out evenly.

Bake 12-15 minutes until golden brown. Allow to cool completely before serving.

Cook's Note: For a cheesier flavor, consider adding ½ cup of your favorite vegan cheese shreds into the dough and/or sprinkle a pinch on top.

Total calories per scone: 235	Fat: 8 grams
Carbohydrates: 31 grams	Protein: 9 grams
Sodium: 103 milligrams	Fiber: 4 grams

Lentil Sausage Rolls

(Makes 16 sausage rolls)

Sausage Filling

- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 8 ounces cremini or button mushrooms, roughly chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1½ cups cooked brown or green lentils
- 3 Tablespoons nutritional yeast
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon dried rosemary
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- ½ teaspoon salt (optional)

Make the filling in advance so it has time to cool.

Start by coating the bottom of a medium saucepan with olive oil. Set over medium heat and add the onions, mushrooms, and garlic. Sauté for about 10 minutes, until softened, aromatic, and lightly browned.

Meanwhile, place the lentils, nutritional yeast, paprika, rosemary, cumin, thyme, and salt (if using) in the bowl of your food processor. Add in the cooked vegetables and pulse to combine. The mixture should remain coarse; don't purée it to a hummus-like texture.

Transfer to a small bowl and allow to rest in the fridge, until thoroughly chilled, at least 2 hours.

Pastry Dough

- 1½ cups white whole-wheat or all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon salt (optional)
- ½ teaspoon coriander
- ½ teaspoon cumin
- ¼ cup cold water
- 3 Tablespoons olive oil
- 1 Tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 2 Tablespoons aquafaba (canned chickpea liquid)
- 1 teaspoon black sesame seeds or poppy seeds

When you're ready to make the rolls, preheat oven to 375 degrees, line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone baking mat, and set aside.

In a large bowl, mix the flour, salt (if using), coriander, and cumin. Add the water, olive oil, and vinegar, and stir to combine. If the dough is too dry, add more water 1 teaspoon at a time. Do not add more liquid than necessary.

On a lightly floured surface, roll the dough out to ⅛-inch thick. Aim for a rectangle that's about 10 inches wide, and as long as you can make it. Trim the edges and cut two 4-inch wide, long strips.

Spoon filling down the center of each strip, about 1 inch wide and 1 inch high. Gently stretch the dough to wrap around the filling, pinching the ends together when they meet in the center. Cut the long rolls into 1½- to 2-inch pieces, and transfer to your baking sheet, placing them with the seam-side down. Score one or two slits into the tops to allow steam to vent. Lightly brush with aquafaba and sprinkle with seeds.

Gather up the scraps of dough, roll it back out, and repeat the process. You will likely have extra filling. It's fantastic used as a pâté or spread.

Bake for 40-50 minutes, until lightly browned all over. Serve hot or at room temperature.

Cook's Notes: Sausage rolls are traditionally made with puff pastry, and you can easily find vegan options at most grocery stores. You can use this as a quick fix instead of making your own pastry; just plan ahead to make sure it's completely thawed.

Leftovers can be kept in an airtight container in the fridge for about 1 week. To reheat, pop them into a toaster oven for about 5 minutes, or microwave for 1 minute apiece.

Total calories per roll: 108	Fat: 4 grams
Carbohydrates: 15 grams	Protein: 4 grams
Sodium: 3 milligrams	Fiber: 2 grams



Blueberry Chia Jam

(Makes about 2½ cups)

3 cups frozen wild blueberries

¼ cup maple syrup

1 Tablespoon lemon juice

⅓ cup chia seeds

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Put blueberries into a medium saucepan. Add maple syrup and lemon juice, and stir to coat berries. Cook over medium heat for about 5-6 minutes, until the berries thaw and soften. Use a potato masher to roughly mash the cooked berries. Lower heat and continue cooking, stirring often, for about 7-10 more minutes, until liquid dissipates and jam thickens.

Stir in the chia seeds and cook for just 1 minute longer. Add vanilla, mix well, and turn off the heat. Cool completely; the jam will continue to thicken as it cools.

Transfer to glass jars and chill until firm before using in recipe. Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Cook's Notes: Any fresh or frozen fruit, such as cherries, strawberries, peaches, or even mango chunks, can work here. You might want to pulse larger pieces in a food processor before cooking, especially if they have a firm texture that resists mashing by hand.

Total calories per Tablespoon: 22
Carbohydrates: 3 grams
Sodium: 1 milligram

Fat: 1 gram
Protein: <1 gram
Fiber: 1 gram

Blueberry Jam Drops

(Makes 15 cookies)

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup tapioca starch flour
- 1 Tablespoon ground flaxseed meal
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ⅓ cup maple syrup
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- Zest of ½ lemon
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3 Tablespoons Blueberry Chia Jam (opposite)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees, line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone baking mat, and set aside.

In a large bowl, combine the flour, tapioca starch, flaxseed meal, and baking powder. Once thoroughly combined, add the maple syrup, olive oil, lemon zest,

and vanilla, stirring to incorporate. Stir just until smooth, being careful not to overwork the dough.

Portion out 1-Tablespoon balls of dough, and roll each with lightly moistened hands to make them perfectly round. Place them on your prepared cookie sheet spaced about 1 inch apart. Use your thumb to make an indent into the centers, but don't press all the way through. Spoon about ½ teaspoon of jam into the center of each cookie.

Bake for 15-18 minutes, until no longer glossy on top and lightly browned on the bottoms. Allow to cool on the baking sheet for 10 minutes before transferring to a wire rack to finish cooling completely.

Cook's Note: To simplify this recipe, use your favorite store-bought vegan jam instead.

Total calories per cookie: 89
Carbohydrates: 14 grams
Sodium: 14 milligrams

Fat: 2 grams
Protein: 1 gram
Fiber: <1 gram





Chickpea Egg Bites

(Serves 12)

- 1½ cups chickpea (garbanzo bean/gram) flour
- 3 Tablespoons nutritional yeast
- 2 teaspoons arrowroot powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon *kala namak* (black salt, optional)
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 cup frozen chopped spinach, thawed and drained
- ½ cup roasted red bell peppers, diced
- 2 scallions, thinly sliced
- 1 Tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1½ cups low-sodium vegetable stock

Preheat oven to 375 degrees, lightly oil a standard 12-cup muffin pan, and set aside.

In a large bowl whisk together the flour, nutritional yeast, arrowroot, onion powder, baking powder, *kala namak* (if using), and pepper. Once the dry ingredients are combined, add the spinach, bell peppers, and scallions, tossing to coat.

Add in the mustard and vegetable stock last, and stir thoroughly until the batter is smooth.

Distribute the batter equally among prepared muffin cups. It should fill them about ¾ of the way.

Bake for 14-16 minutes, until lightly browned around the edges and set in the centers. Allow to cool for 10 minutes before serving to enjoy warm.

Otherwise, allow to cool completely before storing in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 1 week. To reheat leftovers, cover with a lightly moistened paper towel and microwave for 1 minute each.

Cook's Notes: For smaller snacks, you can use mini muffin pans instead. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 minutes. This recipe will make 36 mini muffin-sized bites. *Kala namak*, otherwise known as black salt, isn't actually black in color. It's named for the black volcanic ash that gives it a distinctively sulfuric flavor, similar to scrambled eggs. It's found online and in Indian specialty markets.

Total calories per serving: 62	Fat: 1 gram
Carbohydrates: 9 grams	Protein: 4 grams
Sodium: 119 milligrams	Fiber: 2 grams

Hannah makes time for tea every day, if only as an excuse for a midday snack. Passionate about big flavors and simple techniques, she works in Austin, TX. She is the author of many cookbooks, including *Real Food Really Fast*, *The Student Vegan Cookbook*, and *Super Vegan Scoops!*



Photos by Hannah Kaminsky

Book Reviews

Love the Foods That Love You Back

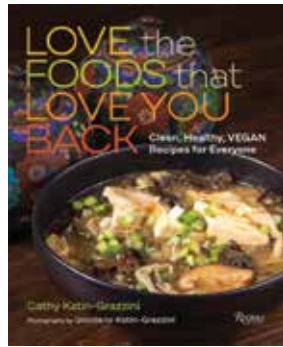
by Cathy Katin-Grazzini

This vegan cookbook serves up a huge variety of creative recipes along with 100 striking color photos shot by the author's husband. The Building Blocks chapter offers versatile dishes, including Garlic-Herb Sauce, Dried Fruit Paste, Artichoke Mousse, Creamy Vegan Ricotta, and Berbere. Move on to Lighter Fare, and you can prepare Buffalo Cauliflower, Layered Vegetable Torte, Zucchini-Potato Fritters, and more.

The Warm Belly chapter provides many types of soups, including Cuban Black Bean, Masoor Dal Squash Soup, and Creamy Tomato. Grains are highlighted in another chapter with dishes such as Polenta Stacks, Potato Gnocchi, and Butternut Risotto.

Who doesn't love freshly baked bread? This book offers recipes for Pumpkin Raisin Buns, Yufka Turkish Flatbreads, Parathas with Baby Greens, and more. And of course, no vegan cookbook is complete without delicious desserts, such as Roasted Plum Crostini, Chocolate Bites, and Ganache with Berries.

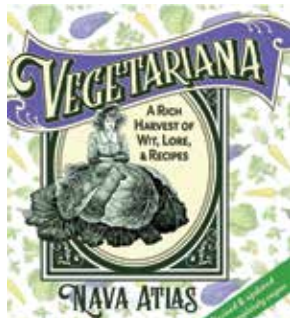
Love the Foods That Love You Back (ISBN 978-1-5996-2164-7) is a 256-page hardcover book. It is published by Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., and retails for \$39.95. Order this book online or at your local bookstore. *Debra Wasserman/VRG Co-Coordinator*



Vegetariana

by Nava Atlas

With its wonderful recipes and gorgeous hand-drawn illustrations, this was one of my favorite cookbooks when it was first published in 1984. Newly updated, the book is now completely vegan. Some of the recipes you'll find are Hearty Barley-Bean Soup, Asian-Style Cucumber Salad, Sesame-Ginger Dressing, Baked Corn Enchiladas, Cincinnati Chili Mac, Moroccan-Style Carrots, and Poached Pears with Chocolate Drizzle. At the end of the book you'll find a section describing herbs and



spices, which is an interesting read. Also, enjoy the historical quotes throughout the book.

Vegetariana (ISBN 978-1-7371-3340-7) is a 183-page hardcover book. It is published by Amberwood Press, Inc., and retails for \$28. Purchase this book online or at your local bookstore. *Debra Wasserman/VRG Co-Coordinator*

Fantastic Vegan Cookies

by Tiina Strandberg

Looking for some new creative cookie recipes? This cookbook from a Finnish author will make your mouth water, especially when you see the photos.

Enjoy Donut Cookies, Mocha Chocolate Chip Cookies, Strawberries and Cream Whoopie Pies, Cherry Linzer Cookies, Blueberry Yogurt Bars, Crispy Tahini Granola Cookies, Masala Chai Graham Cookies, Savory Pizza Cookies, and so many more. Start baking today!

Fantastic Vegan Cookies (ISBN 978-1-645673521) is a 152-page book. It is published by Page Street Publishing and retails for \$21.99. Order this book online or at your local bookstore. *Debra Wasserman/VRG Co-Coordinator*

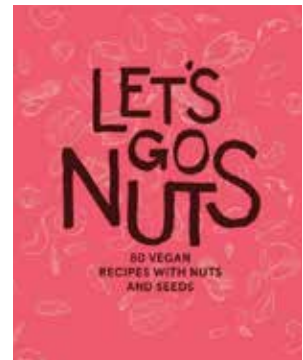


Let's Go Nuts

by Estella Schweizer

This beautifully photographed cookbook offers 80 vegan recipes highlighting nuts and seeds. At the beginning of the book, you'll find information on the various methods to cook nuts, as well as basic recipes for nut milks and nut milk products such as cheeses. Another section is devoted to dressings, marinades, and sauces. The remainder of the book is divided by season and offers dishes such as Oven-Baked Asparagus with Mango and Peanut Salsa, Caribbean Sweet Potato Soup, Nutty Meatballs with Cashew Sauce, Roasted Brussels Sprouts with Macadamias, and No Cheese Fondue.

Let's Go Nuts (ISBN 978-3-7913-8837-3) is a 256-page hardcover book. It is published by Prestel and retails for \$29.95. You can buy this book online or at your favorite bookseller. *Debra Wasserman, VRG Co-Coordinator*



Latin American Vegan Foods High in Iron

by Odette Olivares, MSN

The typical Latin American diet includes a lesser variety of food products than the myriad of Latin American fruits, vegetables, grains, and legumes that indigenous Latin American people used and still use today. Many interesting ingredients high in iron are available in indigenous and traditional Latin American gastronomy.

Iron is an essential nutrient that helps our blood carry oxygen inside our bodies. Both the World Health Organization and the U.S. Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) call for higher intakes of iron for vegetarians than for nonvegetarians.^{1,2} The U.S. RDA suggests that vegetarian/vegan men and women after menopause should consume approximately 14 milligrams of iron daily, and vegetarian/vegan premenopausal women 32 milligrams. You can read more about iron on The Vegetarian Resource Group's website, vrg.org/nutrition/iron.php

Beans are one of the best vegan iron sources. Not only do they have a high iron content but also they can undergo different processes, such as cooking, grinding, and fermenting, that can improve iron absorption. Beans are a staple food from Latin America and can contain from 2 to almost 7 mgs of iron per cup of cooked beans. There are around 150 varieties of beans worldwide, of which 50 are found in Mexico. The most commonly used beans in Mexico are common beans (such as black turtle beans), *ayocote*, *comba*, and *tepari*. Beans are categorized according to their color as black, yellow, white, purple, brown or *bayo*, *piebald*, and flecked or *moteado*.³ Black and brown beans are the most popular and are usually eaten fried, as a side dish known as refried beans. Chickpeas provide the most iron among beans, with 6.8 mg per cup of cooked chickpeas.

The genetic crop diversity of Peru is one of the most important genetic pool resources in Latin

America. In Peru, seaweeds that are high in iron are popular among indigenous people who live near the Andes.⁴ Fresh *yuyo* seaweed provides up to 10.6 mg of iron per 100 grams (about 3 ounces). It has a red color and is usually eaten raw. *Cushuro* seaweed is a blue-green alga with a spherical shape so that it resembles grapes. Both *yuyo* and *cushuro* are found in lagoons in the foothills of the Andes. Currently, the Peruvian government and universities are working on producing food additives and supplements made from *cushuro* to increase iron and protein consumption and reduce malnutrition.⁶

Another important source of iron is leafy green vegetables, such as *quelites*. The word *quelite* comes from the *Nahuatl* word *quilitl*, which means "tender edible plant." (*Nahuatl* is the language spoken by most indigenous people in Mexico, the *Nahuas*.) Though common in indigenous people's diets, *quelites* are not as common in the average Mexican diet. In Mexico there are more than 350 species of *quelites* including *chaya*,

chepiles, *huauzontle*, *quintonil*, *romeritos*, and *verdolaga*. *Quelites* might include the whole plant, branches, tender leaves, or stems.⁵ Iron is better absorbed from *quelites* when they are cooked.

Among Latin American vegetables high in iron, we find *crucetas*, *tomatillo*, and different types of chilies, such as *Xalapeño* (jalapeño) pepper and *chilaca*. These vegetables provide 2-6 mgs of iron per serving.⁶ Like cactus, *crucetas* form part of the cactaceae family. While they are similar to cactus in color, texture, and flavor, they look like a three-spike star or three-crossing layers. If you do not like cactus because of its mucilage, you might want to try *crucetas*.

Tomatillo is a small, green fruit like a tomato wrapped in a dry peel. It is fundamental in dishes in Mexico and Guatemala, such as green sauces, green

Beans are one of the best vegan iron sources. Not only do they have a high iron content but also they can undergo different processes, such as cooking, grinding, and fermenting, that can improve iron absorption.

chilaquiles, and taco sauce. Its vitamin C content helps to increase iron absorption.

In the tables on pages 25-27, you will find traditional Latin American foods and vegan dishes with the

highest iron content. In places, the tables mention traditional ways of eating, which include animal products. These can be replaced with vegan substitutes or omitted.

Examples of Latin American Vegan Dishes High in Iron

The U.S. RDA suggests that vegetarian/vegan women after menopause and men should consume approximately 14 mg of iron daily, and vegetarian/vegan premenopausal women 32 mg.

Food	Description	Serving	Iron (mg)
Taco Salad	Veganized recipe with a traditional Mexican taste. Made of soy crumbles, kidney beans, tortilla chips, green and red bell peppers, tomatoes, chili powder, and lettuce.	1 cup	5
<i>El Rico</i>	Hearty soup from Mexico that contains red kidney beans, tomato paste, green bell peppers, carrots, peanuts, and cilantro.	1 cup	4
Yucca and Avocado Stew	Stew from Mexico made with yucca, black beans, avocado, corn, tortilla chips, cilantro, green bell peppers, tomatoes, and carrots.	1 cup	4
Cold Quinoa Salad	Fresh salad that combines quinoa with black beans, corn, red and green bell peppers, mustard, and coriander. Quinoa was first used by Chilean and Peruvian people. Now, its nutritional qualities and great flavor make it possible to find it in almost any supermarket.	1 cup	3
<i>Puchero de Garbanzos</i>	Chickpea casserole from the Colombian Andes made with onion, garlic, tomatoes, cumin, oregano, and coriander. Usually served with rice.	1 cup	3
Grilled <i>Chiles Rellenos</i>	Traditional Mexican dish especially eaten on September 16 th when Mexicans celebrate their Independence Day. Poblano peppers, a large chili, are usually filled with meat and spices. A vegan version is made with pinto beans, red bell peppers, and vegan cheese.	1 filled poblano pepper	2

Commonly used Latin American ingredients and recipes are a delicious way to help you meet your iron needs. Rediscovering forgotten nutritious ingredients from Latin America could help us to better care for our health. This also helps to protect the varied genetic pool of plant foods, which serve as a powerful tool for coping with altered conditions due to climate change.

BEQUESTS

The VRG depends on the generous contributions of our members and supporters to continue our educational projects. Though the world may not become vegan in our lifetimes, we realize that we are planning and working for future generations.

- Your will and life insurance policies enable you to protect your family and also to provide a way to give long-lasting support to causes in which you believe. Naming The Vegetarian Resource Group in your will or life insurance policy will enable us to increase our work for veganism.
- One suggested form of bequest is: *I give and bequeath to The Vegetarian Resource Group, Baltimore, Maryland, the sum of _____ dollars (or if stock, property, or insurance policy, please describe).*
- To be sure your wishes are carried out, please speak with your attorney specifically about writing the correct information in your will.

Latin American Vegan Foods High in Iron

The U.S. RDA suggests that vegetarian/vegan women after menopause and men should consume approximately 14 mg of iron daily, and vegetarian/vegan premenopausal women 32 mg.

Food	Description	Serving	Iron (mg)
<i>Yuyo</i> , ⁸ cooked	Red seaweed usually eaten fresh in Peru.	1 cup (100 g)	10.6
<i>Cushuro</i> , <i>Nostco</i> Seaweed, dehydrated	Cyanobacteria in the form of little balls, that grows in lagoons below the Andes in Peru. It has more iron and other nutrients than legumes per 100 grams (3 ounces) of dehydrated food.	12 g (about 0.5 ounces)	10.4
<i>Miel Negra</i> (Black honey) or Blackstrap molasses	This ingredient is obtained by boiling sugarcane juice three times. It is popular in Paraguay to make Black Honey Cake.	2 Tbsp. (30 ml)	7.2
Chickpeas, canned or cooked	Used mainly in Mexico, Paraguay, and Puerto Rico. Usually eaten with carrots, tomato, and onion.	1 cup (150 g)	6.8
<i>Crucetas</i> , cooked	Green vegetable shaped like an elongated three-angle star, which gives them their name in Spanish, meaning “crossing.” They are from Mexico.	3 pieces about 4-inch/10 cm long, each (150 g)	6.8
White beans, cooked	White beans are traditionally cooked with sausage in various Latin American countries. Vegan sausage can be substituted.	1 cup (180 g)	6.6
Lentils, cooked	Latin American dishes combine lentils with bananas and eggs (could use a vegan egg substitute), or with pineapple. Lentils and pineapple are a traditional dish from Veracruz, Mexico.	1 cup (200 g)	6.6
<i>Mamey</i> , raw	Native to Mexico and Central America, <i>mamey</i> is an oblong tropical fruit with a taste compared to apricot, pumpkin, and raspberry. <i>Mamey</i> has a brown, rough peel and an interior similar to a baked sweet potato. Besides being high in iron, it is also high in vitamin C.	1 piece about 6¾-inch/17 cm (400 g)	6
<i>White or purple caimito</i> , ⁹ raw	Fruit from Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Ecuador. Also known as apple of milk, and milk breast, soap apple, star apple, <i>caimito</i> looks like a small purple or white balloon with white pulp. It is considered one of the best <i>sapotes</i> , a group of soft edible fruits native to southern Mexico and Central America, because of its sweet caramel flavor and soft texture. <i>Caimito</i> is usually eaten with lemon, but even alone it is high in vitamin C.	1 piece about 3-inch/8 cm diameter (200 g)	5.7
Soursop, <i>Guanabana</i> , ¹⁰ raw	Large fruit from Central America, especially consumed in Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela. It has a green and prickly peel and white pulp. Its flavor tastes like a mix of strawberry, banana, and apple with a little acid. Used in beverages, ice cream, or juices.	1 piece about 8-inch/20 cm (350 g)	5.5
White kidney beans, cooked	Known simply as <i>alubias</i> in Mexico, they are traditionally cooked with tomatoes, onions, jalapeños, coriander, and meat or sausages. A meat substitute will still maintain the dish's taste and texture.	1 cup (260 g)	5.4

Food	Description	Serving	Iron (mg)
Heart of palm, cooked	Traditional vegetable from Central and South America. The heart of palm is the inner core of palm trees, such as coconut and peach palm.	1 cup (146 g)	4.6
Breva Figs, <i>Breba</i> , raw	In Colombia, breva figs are eaten as a traditional dessert with <i>arequipe</i> (caramelized milk), cheese, or guava marmalade. Vegan cheese could replace dairy cheese.	5 pieces about 2¾-inch/7 cm long each (200 g)	4.4
<i>Giotilla</i> , raw	Small, green on the outside, and red inside, <i>giotilla</i> has several small black seeds. Also called chiotilla, it comes from a cactus. Its fruit is sweet and acidic. Traditional from Guerrero, Michoacán, Oaxaca, and Puebla in Mexico.	200 g (about 7 ounces)	4.3
Lima bean, <i>Haba de Lima o Ibes</i> , cooked	Known by many names: butter bean, <i>frijol ancho</i> , <i>garrofón</i> , <i>guaracaro</i> , <i>pallar</i> , or little bean from Cuba. Cultivated from Mexico to Perú.	1 cup (170 g)	4.2
Cashew fruit, <i>Marañón</i> , raw	Native to northeastern Brazil, Colombia, and Venezuela. The fruit is made up of two parts: the seed (cashew nuts) and the actual fruit. The mature fruit is eaten raw and used in marmalades, jellies, candies, and juices.	3 pieces about 3-inch/8 cm each (190 g)	4.1
<i>Cardona</i> Prickly Pear	This variety of prickly pear is completely red inside and out. It is used to prepare an indigenous fermented beverage called <i>colonche</i> .	2 pieces about 3-inch/8 cm each (250 g)	3.6

Sources: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service. FoodData Central, 2021. fdc.nal.usda.gov; Reyes García, M., Gómez-Sánchez Prieto, I., & Espinoza Barrientos, C. (2017). Tablas peruanas de composición de alimentos; Pérez, A.B., Palacios, B., Castro, A.L., & Flores, I. (2014). Sistema mexicano de alimentos equivalentes. México: Porrúa Hnos; University of Rochester Medical Center (2022). Healthy Encyclopedia. urmc.rochester.edu/encyclopedia

References and an expanded list of foods found in Latin America that are high in iron can be found online here: vrg.org/nutrition/latin-american-foods-High-in-Iron.pdf

Photos courtesy of Melissa's Produce, melissas.com



Mamey



Soursop, *Guanabana*

Sample Menu for Women Providing More than 32 mg of Iron

Breakfast: Cereal and Milk

1/8 cup chia seeds, **1.2 mg iron**
1/3 *mamey*, **2 mg iron**
1/2 cup cooked amaranth, **2.6 mg iron**
1 cup calcium-fortified soymilk

Soak chia seeds overnight with a bit of water. Chop the *mamey* in small pieces. Mix all the ingredients in a bowl with soymilk.

Cook's Note: If *mamey* is unavailable, soften a rounded 1/2 cup of dried apricots in water instead. They will taste different but provide a similar amount of iron.

Total calories per serving: 385	Fat: 15 grams
Carbohydrates: 52 grams	Protein: 17 grams
Sodium: 113 milligrams	Fiber: 14 grams

Snack: Guanabana Ice

1/2 small *guanabana*, **2.5 mg iron**
1 cup calcium-fortified soymilk
1/8 cup chia seeds, **1.2 mg iron**

Process all the ingredients in a blender, then pour mixture into popsicle molds and freeze.

Cook's Note: If *guanabana*, also called *soursop*, is unavailable, soak about 1/3 cup of dried peaches in water. They will taste different but provide a similar amount of iron.

Total calories per serving: 247	Fat: 14 grams
Carbohydrates: 23 grams	Protein: 11 grams
Sodium: 146 milligrams	Fiber: 12 grams

Lunch: Chickpeas with Crucetas and Quinoa

1 teaspoon chopped onion
1 garlic clove, minced
1 cup cooked quinoa, **2.7 mg iron**
1/4 medium onion, sliced
1 *xalapeño* (jalapeño) pepper, deseeded
and chopped
1 cup cooked chickpeas with liquid, **6.8 mg iron**
1/2 cup chopped carrots
1 teaspoon vinegar
2 bay leaves
Salt, to taste (optional)
3 pieces cooked *crucetas*, **6.8 mg iron**
1/4 avocado, to serve
lemon wedge to serve

In a skillet, gently fry onions and garlic for 5-6 minutes. Add quinoa and stir. Set aside. Using the same skillet, fry sliced onion and peppers for 5 minutes. Add chickpeas with their liquid, carrots, vinegar, bay leaves, and optional salt. Cook until carrots are soft and serve in a bowl with lemon juice squeezed over top. Place the quinoa, *crucetas*, and avocado in another dish.

Cook's Note: If *crucetas* are unavailable, 1 1/2 cups of cooked Swiss chard provide a similar amount of iron.

Total calories per serving: 610	Fat: 13 grams
Carbohydrates: 100 grams	Protein: 25 grams
Sodium: 68 milligrams	Fiber: 25 grams

Snack: Black Sapote and Orange Juice

1/2 cup black *sapote* pulp, **1.7 mg iron**
1/4 cup orange juice

Mix the black *sapote* pulp with the orange juice.

Cook's Note: You can't substitute the black *sapote* pulp in this recipe. However, eating a 1/2 cup of raisins would provide a similar amount of iron.

Total calories per serving: 89	Fat: <1 gram
Carbohydrates: 22 grams	Protein: 1 gram
Sodium: 1 milligram	Fiber: 1 gram

Dinner: Tofu Enfrijoladas

2 servings tofu processed with calcium sulfate
(6 ounces), **9.6 mg iron**
1/3 teaspoon garlic powder
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
2 Tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce
1/2 cup cooked black beans, **1.8 mg iron**
1/2 teaspoon oil
2 corn tortillas, **0.7 mg iron**
1/4 avocado
1/4 small onion, sliced
2 Tablespoons chopped cilantro
2 *Cardona* prickly pears, **3.6 mg iron**

In a bowl, marinate sliced tofu in garlic powder, black pepper, and soy sauce for 30 minutes. Crumble the tofu and fry in a skillet until it gets lightly browned and crisp, about 3-5 minutes. Set aside. Mash black beans and fry them in oil until they get creamy, but are still moist. Heat tortillas until they become pliable, about 1 minute per side.

Dip tortillas in beans so they are completely covered. Fold beans-covered tortillas in half, place in a dish, spoon the remaining beans over top, and top with tofu. Garnish with avocados, onions, and cilantro. Eat *Cardona* prickly pears as dessert.

Note: If *cardona* are not available, a large wedge of watermelon along with 1/4 cup of pumpkin seeds would provide a similar amount of iron.

Total calories per serving: 542 Fat: 18 grams
Carbohydrates: 64 grams Protein: 28 grams
Sodium: 1,161 milligrams Fiber: 17 grams

TOTAL FOR DAY: 1874 calories (18% protein, 29% fat, 55% carbohydrate), 43 mg iron



Sample Menu for Men Providing More Than 14 mg of Iron

Breakfast: Tofu Quesadilla, Mashed Black Beans, and Banana Shake

2 servings tofu processed with calcium sulfate
(6 ounces), **9.6 mg iron**
1/3 teaspoon garlic powder
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1/2 teaspoon curry powder
1 Tablespoon balsamic vinegar
Salt, to taste (optional)
Non-stick cooking spray
2 corn tortillas, **0.7 mg iron**
2/3 cup mashed cooked black beans, **2.4 mg iron**
1 cup calcium-fortified soymilk
1 banana, **0.3 mg iron**

In a small bowl, marinate sliced tofu in garlic powder, pepper, curry powder, balsamic vinegar, and salt if using, for 30 minutes. Spray pan and cook tofu until a little bit crispy, about 3-5 minutes. Heat tortillas 1 minute on each side until warmed, and fill them with tofu slices. Place them on a dish and garnish with beans.

Accompany with a banana shake (purée the soymilk and banana in a blender).

(Photo page 30)

Total calories per serving: 620 Fat: 14 grams
Carbohydrates: 86 grams Protein: 34 grams
Sodium: 220 milligrams Fiber: 16 grams

Snack: Soymilk, Chili Mango, and Squash Seeds

1 cup calcium-fortified soymilk
1 cup chopped mango with chili powder, **0.2 mg iron**
2 teaspoons salted, toasted squash seeds, **0.4 mg iron**

(Photo page 3, Table of Contents)

Total calories per serving: 216 Fat: 6 grams
Carbohydrates: 34 grams Protein: 10 grams
Sodium: 98 milligrams Fiber: 5 grams

Lunch: Broad Beans, Cactus Salad, and Grapefruit

2 tomatoes, chopped, **0.7 mg iron**
½ cup cooked and strained cactus, chopped
¼ medium onion, chopped
¼ cup fresh cilantro, chopped
½ avocado

In a bowl, mix tomatoes, cactus, onions, and cilantro together. Top with sliced avocado. Set aside in a dish.

1 tomato chopped, **0.35 mg iron**
¼ onion, chopped
1 garlic clove, minced
1 teaspoon oil
1 cup cooked broad (fava) beans, **2.6 mg iron**
2 Tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
2 corn tortillas, **0.7 mg iron**
1 grapefruit

Add oil to skillet and fry tomatoes, onions, and garlic for 3 minutes. Add cooked broad beans and stir. Place the broad beans mixture in a serving bowl and top with fresh cilantro. Warm the tortillas and eat on the side. Eat grapefruit as dessert.

Total calories per serving: 698	Fat: 18 grams
Carbohydrates: 119 grams	Protein: 25 grams
Sodium: 51 milligrams	Fiber: 29 grams

Snack: Orange Juice and Chia Seeds

¼ cup chia seeds, **2.4 mg iron**
1 cup orange juice

In a bowl, cover chia seeds with water and soak them overnight. Add chia seeds to orange juice and stir well.

Total calories per serving: 344	Fat: 18 grams
Carbohydrates: 41 grams	Protein: 9 grams
Sodium: 17 milligrams	Fiber: 11 grams

Dinner: Enfrijoladas and Tangerines

1 cup cooked black beans, **3.6 mg iron**
½ teaspoon oil
2 corn tortillas, **0.7 mg iron**
½ avocado, sliced
¼ small onion, sliced
2 Tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
2 tangerines

Mash beans and fry with oil until slightly dry and creamy. Heat tortillas until crispy, about a minute per side. Dip tortillas in beans to cover, fold in half, fill with remaining beans, and put on a plate. Top with avocado and onion slices and cilantro. Eat tangerines as dessert.

Total calories per serving: 631	Fat: 15 grams
Carbohydrates: 94 grams	Protein: 18 grams
Sodium: 174 milligrams	Fiber: 25 grams

TOTAL FOR DAY: 2500 calories (15% protein, 26% fat, 60% carbohydrate), 25 mg iron

Odette is from Mexico and recently completed her master's in nutrition and health at Wageningen University, The Netherlands. She teaches at Anahuac Cancún University.



Veggie Bits

Spicy Tahini Sauce

The Mighty Sesame Co.'s Harissa Tahini is a versatile sauce for anyone who cares about flavor but does not have time to mix up a dressing from scratch. Tahini is ground sesame butter, and Tunisian paste harissa lends roasted red pepper, herbs, and spices to it for a more complex flavor profile. It was woody, spicy, and aromatic without being hot. As such, it can happily serve as a dressing without any preparation. It is easy to drizzle over a salad or sandwich, as it is more fluid than creamy, and with a more consistent texture than traditional tahini. It comes in a squeezable bottle. It can also be used as a vegan mayonnaise replacement, or, like regular tahini, can form a key ingredient in homemade hummus and baba ghanoush. Gluten-free, halal, and kosher. Available on Amazon and at major grocery stores. More information at mightysesameco.com
Simon Brown/VRG Volunteer



Just Like Homemade Tortillas

If you've tasted scratch-made corn or flour tortillas, you have an idea what Vista Hermosa's authentic tortillas are like. Fresh to touch and smell, pleasingly thick, and made with extremely simple ingredients, these tortillas will level-up your burritos, enchiladas, tacos, and wraps, no matter if you stuff them with refried beans, seasoned veggies, or tofu scramble. Warm both varieties on the stove for a minute to make them easily pliable and even more savory. Non-GMO. Available in 2,000 stores in 38 states. Whole Foods and elsewhere, as well as from Fresh Direct and Misfit Markets. Find more info at vistahermosaproducts.com
Rissa Miller/Senior Editor



No Added Sugar Granolas

Only granola experts at Nature's Path could serve up a perfectly balanced, organic, vegan offering with no added sugar and no aftertaste from fake sweeteners. Almond Butter Vanilla Granola and Mixed Berry Granola are crunchy and cravable, and they're sweetened with date powder. Testers enjoyed both flavors straight out of the bag, but they're delicious in breakfast yogurt parfaits, baked into vegan cookies for texture, sprinkled on salads, or topping vegan ice cream. The granolas make a great counterpoint to fresh fruit. Even kids gave this fuss-free granola the thumbs up. Available at major grocers nationwide, including Target, Walmart, Wegmans, and Whole Foods, or online from Amazon. Learn more at naturespath.com
Rissa Miller/Senior Editor



Real Deal Veg Burgers

Veggie burgers made from nothing but veggies? Yup, Actual Veggies burgers are the real deal. Each burger is a full quarter pound and thick cut. They hold up well in a sauté pan and on the grill, never getting crumbly. The Black Burger with black beans and quinoa was a great match with salsa chopped onto a taco salad, and two Orange Burgers with sweet potatoes, carrots, and red peppers turned into four tasty wraps for on-the-go lunches. Tossed into a vegan pesto pasta, the Green Burger with broccoli, kale, and spinach, added substance without bringing mystery ingredients to the table. The Purple burger, with beets and red onions, was colorful and filling for a weekday lunch. Burgers are gluten-free, kosher, non-GMO, nut-free, and soy-free, with no saturated fat in any variety. Available at major grocers nationwide, including Fresh Market, Wegmans, and Whole Foods, or online. Find more information at actualveggies.com
Rissa Miller/Senior Editor



Support VRG Outreach

Julia Comino

My VRG Virtual Internship Creating a Vegan World



Having grown up in a small, southern town in Mississippi, I had never experienced being a part of a community of individuals who were as passionate about plant-based living and environmental justice as I was until I began my internship with

The Vegetarian Resource Group. Within my first week, my relationship with advocacy and how I view my choice to be a vegetarian evolved immensely.

When I made the decision to switch to a vegetarian diet four years ago, I did so rather nonchalantly. I saw this decision as a simple switch toward a more sustainable lifestyle. I stand by my reasoning for my initial choice, but now, after learning about the history of the vegan movement, discussing the positive effects of vegan diets on one's health and the environment, and becoming a part of a community of plant-based individuals, I value my choice much more.

As someone who hopes to pursue a career in journalism, I appreciated this chance to not only view, but experience the editing process and gain a

better understanding of what it takes to compose a well-written and well-researched published piece. Whether creating infographics or reviewing vegan products for Veggie Bits, working with the Senior Editor of *Vegan Journal* was always a joy because of Rissa's cheerful personality. I also had the opportunity to participate in The VRG's Zoom seminar with Professor McShane's class of University of Maryland dietetic students. I listened in on Dr. Reed Mangels' (The VRG Nutrition Advisor) riveting presentations on veganism and nutrition, and had a chance to speak about my experience as a teenager.

One characteristic of this internship that I appreciated the most was the freedom and creativity that I was allowed to have with my projects. While working with Dr. Mangels for the Teen FAQ section on the website, I was able to not only write an article sharing my experience of eating vegan as a low-income teenager but also was encouraged to create other forms of media. I designed a graphic and created a video for The VRG's social media.

I collaborated with another intern, Shantika Bhat, interviewing past VRG interns for the 40th anniversary edition of *Vegan Journal*. This experience taught me how to work with others in a virtual setting, but I also gained a new friend. Through my projects, I was able to connect with the other summer interns. I am truly sad that my internship with The VRG is coming to an end. My time with The VRG not only improved my skills as a writer but also as an advocate.

Editors' Note: Julia was invited back to do a second internship with The Vegetarian Resource Group. For information about The VRG internships, see vrg.org/student/index.php

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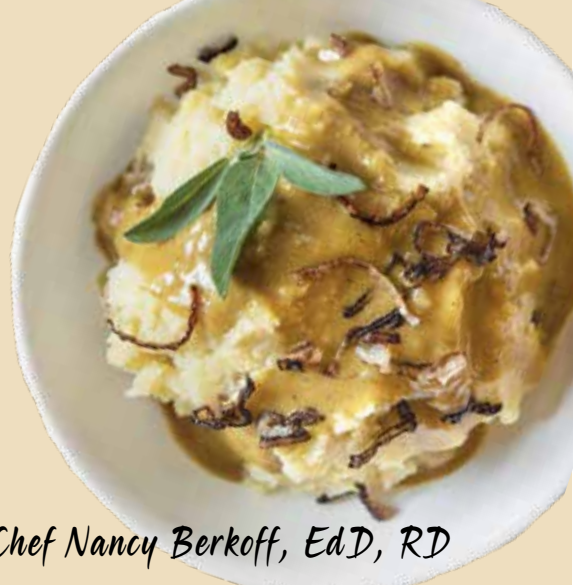
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Vegan Cooking Tips

Quick and Easy Ideas to Make

Gravy

by Chef Nancy Berkoff, EdD, RD



A splash of gravy livens up a meal! A classic sauce in international cooking, try creating flour-based gravy. Once you've had practice, it should take no more than 15 minutes to prepare.

To make **flour-based gravy**, you'll need:

- **All-purpose flour and vegan margarine or oil:**

You can experiment with different flours and oils until you find the combination that yields flavor and texture you like. If you haven't prepared gravy before, all-purpose flour and vegan margarine are very reliable.

- **Warm stock or broth:** The liquid you select determines your gravy's flavor. You can use mushroom or vegetable stock or broth, or vegetable juice blends (excluding tomato juice as it interferes with attaining thickness).

- **Seasonings:** Salt and black pepper are traditional. Create your signature gravy with lite soy sauce, seaweed or mushroom powder, miso, dried parsley, rosemary, sage, poultry seasoning (it's vegan!), thyme, or garlic or onion powder.

When you have gathered your ingredients, this is how to proceed. In a medium pot, melt margarine or heat oil over medium heat. When the fat is melted/hot, lower heat and quickly whisk in flour with a fork or whisk. Keep whisking until a smooth paste is formed. This is called a "roux" (pronounced like "roo" in "kangaroo"). A rule of thumb for roux ingredient amounts is 1:1. For example, four Tablespoons of margarine/oil to four Tablespoons of flour. The darker in color you like your gravy, the longer you would "toast" your roux; this rarely takes more than one to two minutes.

Once the roux is toasted, slowly whisk in the heated liquid of your choice. A rule of thumb for a medium-thick sauce is 4 Tablespoons of roux (2 Tablespoons of fat, 2 Tablespoons of flour) to 8 ounces (1 cup) of liquid. As you whisk and stir, the gravy will

heat and thicken. Keep on stirring until you have attained the thickness you want. This should take only two or three minutes, unless you are preparing a quart or more. Lower the heat, stir in your seasonings, allow to simmer for a minute or two for the flavors to develop, and you have gravy! This gravy can be cooled and refrigerated for about five days. Avoid freezing, as the gravy will lose its texture if frozen and reheated.

An alternative to flour-based gravy: **Purée**. Drain canned or cooked beans of your choice and place in blender canister. Add a small amount of cooked or frozen, thawed veggies (carrots, peas, butternut squash, or mixed veggies work well). Blend to purée. Thin out to the consistency you would like with mushroom or vegetable stock, vegetable juice (carrot or veggie blends work well), or hot water and then season with dried herbs or spices. Heat on top of the stove, stirring occasionally, or heat in a microwave, stirring at least once.

For **creamy gravy**, place a 12-ounce package soft, silken tofu in a blender. Add a small amount of canned creamed corn (the "cream" comes from cornstarch, so it's vegan!) and blend to form a base for the gravy. You can then add cooked or drained, canned mushrooms and a small amount of minced onions, with a sprinkle of garlic powder, thyme, and white pepper for a creamy mushroom gravy. Purée to the smoothness and texture you prefer. For **creamy vegetable gravy**, use cooked vegetables and an herb blend of your choice. For **creamy tomato gravy**, add a small amount of canned tomatoes (with the liquid), a spoonful of tomato paste, dried oregano, and dried basil.

These creamy sauces can be served heated or cold. If you prepare overly creamy gravy, thin it out with vegan milk of your choice. Add cooked, diced potatoes or cooked pasta; and serve it as a soup instead.

Carole Sargent

Peace Advocate

by Amy Burger



Photo by Sunny Neelam

Carole Sargent made the connection between advocating for peace and choosing a vegan lifestyle while writing her latest book, *Transform Now Plowshares*. It chronicles the story of Sister Megan Rice, a biologist and nuclear disarmament activist who was arrested in 2012 at the age of 82 for breaching the site where the atomic bomb was developed.

Sister Megan, a biologist, nun, and advocate for nonviolence, lived in West Africa for 40 years. While there, she found that local cuisine was less dependent on animal products compared to her familiar American diet. Sister Megan's love of animals, background in biology, and commitment to peace led her to quietly stop consuming animal products. In turn, writing about Sister Megan and her fellow activists influenced Sargent to strive for unity between her words and her lifestyle.

One of the foremost ways Sargent puts this harmony into practice is by offering vegetarian meals at the Beehive Interfaith House, a hospitality house for visiting scholars located in Washington, D.C.'s Georgetown neighborhood. The facility, which Sargent

calls "a house of peace and prayer," opened in May of 2019. One early resident was a vegetarian theologian, so, to honor her, the kitchen adopted the practice of serving vegetarian meals.

Residents take turns cooking, and many offer their own culinary contributions. One Italian resident helped Sargent develop a deeper appreciation for zucchini, which she says is a staple in Italian cuisine. Her favorite preparation is the plant's blossoms, fried, but she notes that stuffed zucchini is a great way to use the fruit. Sargent also points out that it was Italians who persuaded diners to embrace the tomato, previously suspected of being poisonous.

A love of produce comes naturally to Sargent; her mother was from Oklahoma, and enjoyed gardening, especially okra, corn, squash, and broad beans. Sargent remembers a garden of plants that dwarfed her mother. She adds that plants have uses outside of the kitchen, detailing how Sister Megan and fellow activists planted seeds, especially those of sunflowers, when they visited nuclear sites to help clean contaminants from the soil (a technique also used in Japan after the 2011 nuclear accident at Fukushima).

Sargent's goal is for peace to flow through her in both her words and her actions. She aims to do so through her writing and her kitchen.

To learn more about Sargent and her work, check out the Beehive Interfaith House's website at publishingadvising.com/house.html, on Facebook at facebook.com/gtownbookhouse, or Sargent's faculty page at gufaculty360.georgetown.edu/s/contact/00336000014RIViAAK/carole-sargent

Amy Burger is a former VRG intern. She has been vegan for four years and lives in the southeast with her husband and their companion animals.





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FROM THE VRG BLOG

Cierra Peterlin, University of Maryland Dietetic Intern, shares ideas for zero-waste meals and snacks featuring creative ways to use what you have to reduce food waste (*Panzanella* photo below). See: vrg.org/blog/2022/07/19/vegan-zero-waste-recipes-2/



California Governor Gavin Newsom's 2022-2023 budget features funding for plant-based school meals in public elementary and secondary schools. See: vrg.org/blog/2022/07/29/california-budget-includes-money-for-plant-based-meals-in-schools/

The Vegetarian Resource Group submitted testimony about the scientific questions that will inform the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025-2030. See: vrg.org/blog/2022/06/14/vrg-testimony-on-2025-2030-dietary-guidelines-for-americans/



Paranormal Pizza, 100% vegan pizzeria, in Bethlehem, PA, paranormalpizzaco.com

CHECK OUT THE VEGETARIAN RESOURCE GROUP'S ONLINE GUIDE TO VEG RESTAURANTS IN THE USA AND CANADA

Despite the pandemic, supply chain issues, and rising economic costs, more and more vegan restaurants are opening throughout the USA and Canada! VRG's online restaurant guide offers diners a chance to enjoy a wide variety of vegan cuisine. You'll find vegan Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Mexican, Thai, and other ethnic restaurants. Also dine at vegan bakeries, bars, burger joints, coffeehouses, delis, donut shops, food trucks, ice cream shops, juice bars, pizzerias, and more. Visit: vrg.org/restaurant/index.php

Photos by Rissa Miller
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