

# **It's Easy Being Vegan in the Kitchen**



**By Christine Cook**

### **What's a Vegan?**

A vegan (VEE-gun) is someone who doesn't eat any animal products including meat (red meat, poultry and seafood), eggs and dairy. Some vegans also avoid the use of honey and palm oil. Vegans may also be called herbivores. Healthy vegans eat a variety of foods including fresh fruits, vegetables, beans, legumes, whole grains, nuts and seeds. Some vegans enjoy transition or convenience foods such as vegan meats and cheeses.<sup>1</sup>

### **Vegan Cooking**

Vegan cooking isn't much different than cooking with meat, eggs or dairy. Both require a bit of planning. Cooking healthy meals for you and your family can be simple if you stock your kitchen well and plan meals in advance.

**Make time for cooking.  
Enjoy the process. You  
are making healthy food  
to nourish your body.  
This is yoga.**

Cooking is one of the most important skills you can have to take control of your health. If you don't know how to cook, learn. You can watch cooking channels on TV, YouTube videos, read cookbooks or attend a cooking class. When you cook your own food, rather than eating out or taking-in, you control what you eat. You will know the exact ingredients you are consuming. You will also save money by making food at home.

In just a few steps, you can eliminate the need to eat out last minute or pick up something "quick" on the way home. In this guide, I will show you how to stock your pantry, refrigerator and freezer; plan meals in advance; and prep your food, so that creating delicious, home-cooked meals becomes a healthy habit and not a chore. Let's get started.

## Get Organized

A well-stocked kitchen allows you to throw a healthy meal together—because you already have the basic ingredients for many types of simple dishes.

### Stock Your Pantry

- Beans, dry and canned, such as pinto, kidney, cannellini, black, lentil and refried
- Canned tomatoes, diced, crushed, sauce, whole, paste
- Canned pumpkin
- Canned hearts of palm or artichokes
- Canned coconut milk
- Garlic
- Onions
- Potatoes
- Brown rice, quinoa, barley and other whole grains
- Whole wheat pasta
- Oatmeal, rolled and steel cut
- Whole grain bread
- Assortment of nuts and seeds: Cashews, walnuts, pecans, sunflower, pumpkin, chia, hemp and ground flax
- Soy sauce, Tamari or Bragg's Liquid Aminos
- Olive and canola oil
- Alternative sweeteners: Maple syrup, agave nectar, brown rice syrup, blackstrap molasses
- Vinegars: Balsamic, apple cider and rice
- Lemon and/or lime juice
- Nutritional yeast
- Sea salt, unbleached
- Black pepper
- Spike No-Sodium Natural Seasoning or Mrs. Dash
- Vegetable broth or bouillon
- Dried mushrooms
- Vanilla extract
- Dried herbs and spices: Cinnamon, nutmeg, oregano, basil, dill, red pepper flakes, cayenne, cumin, coriander, rosemary, thyme, turmeric, etc.
- Arrow root powder
- Flours: 100% whole wheat, whole wheat pastry, all-purpose, rye, corn meal
- Baking powder and baking soda
- Cocoa or carob powder
- Shelf-stable soft silken tofu
- Dried fruit: Raisins, cranberries, dates, figs, etc.
- Apple butter
- Apple sauce
- Smoothie protein powder
- Sundried tomatoes
- Nut butters: Peanut, almond, tahini, etc.
- Crackers
- Sesame sticks
- Granola and/or cereal

### Stock Your Refrigerator

- Condiments: Mustard, ketchup, vegan mayo, etc.
- Fresh fruits: Apples, bananas, avocado, etc.
- Fresh vegetables: Broccoli, mushrooms, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, carrots, celery, etc.
- Salad greens: Spinach, kale, arugula
- Olives
- Whole-grain tortillas
- Fresh extra-firm tofu and baked tofu
- Tempeh and/or seitan
- Hummus
- Vegan cheese
- Miso
- Non-dairy milk(s) and yogurt

### Stock Your Freezer

- Frozen fruit: Blueberries, mango, strawberries, etc.
- Frozen vegetables: Broccoli, corn, peas, edamame, etc.

### In the Kitchen

Using the proper tools for the job is essential for successful endeavors in the kitchen. You wouldn't use a screw driver to chop wood, would you? So let's make sure your kitchen is stocked appropriately.

### Important Tools\*

- Chef's knife
- Paring knife
- Wood cutting board
- Blender
- Round pie dish
- Baking sheet
- Food processor
- Garlic press
- Basic utensils: Wire whisk, wooden spoon, spatula, etc.
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Large soup pot
- Medium sauce pan
- Rectangle casserole dish
- Small loaf pan
- Cast-iron skillet (large or medium size)
- Steamer insert
- Large glass bowl

### Nice to Have Tools\*

- More knives
- High-powered blender
- Immersion blender
- Slow cooker
- Pressure cooker
- Wok
- Toaster oven
- Salad spinner
- Oil mister
- Glass measuring pitchers (2 and 4 cup sizes)
- Assortment of different size skillets

*\*Use uncoated pots and pans when possible. There are safety concerns around non-stick cooking surfaces. Glass and well-seasoned cast iron are excellent alternatives.*

## 7-Day Sample Vegan Meal Plan<sup>2</sup>

### Saturday

**Breakfast:** Tofu scramble wrapped in a tortilla

**Lunch:** Big salad. Add a whole grain, like quinoa or brown rice, to make it more filling.

**Snack:** Piece of fruit

**Dinner:** Lentil loaf, roasted cauliflower or lasagna

**Dessert:** Banana "ice cream"

### Sunday

**Breakfast:** Pancakes

**Lunch:** Leftovers from Friday's dinner plus fresh fruit

**Snack:** Handful of nuts

**Dinner:** Vegan Chili (soup or stew), cornbread muffins

**Dessert/Snack:** Fudgy balls

### Monday

**Breakfast:** Leftover tofu scramble

**Lunch:** Big Salad

**Snack:** Dark chocolate

**Dinner:** Spaghetti and red sauce. Add sautéed mushrooms or steamed broccoli.

**Dessert/Snack:** Fresh Fruit

### Tuesday

**Breakfast:** Granola and vegan yogurt, fruit

**Lunch:** Vegan chili and green salad; Toast smeared with ripe avocado

**Snack:** Raw vegetables, such as carrots and celery sticks, and/or crackers with hummus

**Dinner:** Tofu and vegetable stir fry

**Dessert/Snack:** Fresh fruit

### Wednesday

**Breakfast:** Steel Cut Oats from the slow cooker (or Simple Oatmeal from rolled oats)

**Lunch:** Go out to lunch

**Snack:** Dark chocolate

**Dinner:** Macaroni and "cheese" with mushrooms and broccoli, small green salad

**Dessert/Snack:** Dried fruit and nuts

### Thursday

**Breakfast:** Cereal with almond milk and fresh fruit

**Lunch:** Big salad

**Snack:** Edamame

**Dinner:** Veggie and bean burrito, brown rice and small green salad

**Dessert/Snack:** Fudgy balls

### Friday

**Breakfast:** Green smoothie

**Lunch:** Veggie and baked tofu wrap

**Snack:** Vegan cheese and crackers

**Dinner/Dessert:** Go out to dinner!

## Sample Vegan Recipes

### Tofu Scramble

*Makes 4-6 servings*

Tofu scramble is an easy substitute for an egg breakfast. It's simple to make and tastes great.

Crumble extra-firm tofu in a big bowl. Add a tbsp of turmeric, 1/2 tsp of garlic powder and 2 tbsp Bragg's Liquid Aminos. Mix and let sit.

Chop up the vegetables of your choice and sauté in olive oil. Add tofu to vegetables after about five minutes. Continue cooking until all the vegetables are soft and tofu is warmed through.

This scramble included onion, garlic, green pepper, mushrooms, broccoli, vegan sausage and tomatoes.



### Banana-Pumpkin Steel Cut Oats

*Makes 4-6 servings*

This recipe uses a slow cooker. The best way to cook steel-cut oats is in the slow cooker, in my opinion. Here's why: I have been cooking them on the stove for several years and had never been able to cook the oats just right, and then I cooked them in a slow cooker. When steel cut oats are cooked in a slow cooker, they turn out creamy and cooked perfectly—every time. I make this oatmeal often and now I only cook steel-cut oats using this method. This recipe uses a four-quart slow cooker.

1 ripe banana  
1 cup steel cut oats  
1/2 can of pumpkin  
1 tsp cinnamon  
1 tsp vanilla  
3-1/2 cups unsweetened, vanilla-flavored almond milk

In the bottom of the slow cooker, mash a ripe banana. Add remaining ingredients and stir well. Cover and cook on low for eight hours or overnight. Serve with a bit of maple syrup drizzled on top with chopped nuts, if desired.

Leftovers reheat well in the microwave or on the stovetop. Just add a little non-dairy milk, heat and stir.

### **Simple Oatmeal**

*Makes 4-6 servings*

Oatmeal is a breakfast staple in my home. I usually cook two cups of rolled oats at a time which yields five large servings. I store the leftovers in individual glass containers that we can reheat and eat quickly the next day. This makes breakfast really simple and healthy. I typically eat it with fresh, chopped fruit or raisins.



- 2 cups rolled oats, cooked
- Vanilla-flavored almond milk, amount desired
- Chopped fresh or dried fruit of your choice
- Chopped pecans, optional

Add two cups rolled oats and four cups water to a medium size pot. Bring water to a boil and cook about 5-7 minutes, or until oats are soft and much of the water is absorbed. Scoop oatmeal into individual containers and stir in almond milk and then add fruit and/or nuts. Serve immediately. Store the leftovers to enjoy later in the week.

### **Easy Homemade Granola**

*Makes 8-10 servings*

- 4 cups old-fashioned, rolled oats
- 1/4 cup pecans, chopped
- 1/4 cup walnuts, chopped
- 1/4 cup almonds, chopped
- 1/4 cup sunflower seeds
- 1/4 cup pumpkin seeds
- 1/4 canola oil
- 1/4 agave syrup
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup raisins



Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a large baking pan with oil and add oats. Add oil and mix. Add agave, then mix. Add the cinnamon and vanilla extract and stir until well combined. Lastly, add nuts and seeds to baking pan and stir together. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes, stir the mixture after 15 minutes. Add the raisins after the granola is finished baking. Move granola to a glass container to cool. Do not leave it on the baking sheet or it will stick. Store granola in a seal-tight container at room temperature. Serve with non-dairy milk or yogurt.

## **Green Smoothie**

*Makes 2 large servings*

Raw greens like kale or spinach (fill canister about 1/3 full)

Banana

Apple

2 handfuls of frozen blueberries

5-6 frozen strawberries (or handful of your favorite berries)

5-6 slices of frozen peaches (or a handful of pineapple shown here or mango)

2 scoops berry-flavored Vega meal replacement powder (or another protein powder)

Approximately 5 cups of cold, filtered water (substitute one cup orange juice for an extra sweet flavor)

Blend all ingredients in a blender. (A high-powered blender works best.) I drink half immediately and save the other half for the next morning. It keeps well in the fridge. Re-blend the leftover serving for a minute before serving.

If the greens scare you like they did me initially, just start with a handful and add more as you feel ready. You can switch up the fruit to find your favorite mixture too. I always use a banana and apple as the base.

## **"Christine" Salad (aka a Big Salad)**

It's a common misconception that vegans eat nothing but rabbit food. Salads make a hearty and healthy meal when done right. Best of all, you can prepare about five days worth of ingredients in less than an hour—making a salad an easy go-to meal. Get your veggies ready on Sunday and you will be all set for the week. Then all you have to do is throw a salad together each day and a meal is made. Easy.



## **Suggested Salad Fixin's**

- Greens: Spinach, arugula or kale are great choices. Use different lettuces each week to maximize your nutrient intake.
- Grape or cherry tomatoes: Wash and dry. Nothing else to do but drop a few in your salad.
- Brown rice or quinoa: Adding a grain to your salad will make it more like a meal.
- Tofu: Baked tofu works great. Plain will do in a pinch.
- Beans: Try a new type each week. Drain a can of bean and store in a seal-tight container. They will last about five days.
- Peppers: red, green, yellow or orange. Chop and store.
- Onions: Any type will do. Chop and store.
- Olives: Drop a couple into your salad.
- Carrots: Chop and store.

## It's Easy Being Vegan in the Kitchen

- Celery: Chop and store.
- Nuts and seeds such as walnuts, almonds, pecans or sunflower seeds
- Dried fruit such as raisins or cranberries

### **Simple Dressing**

1/2 cup olive oil

1/4 balsamic or white wine vinegar

2 tbsp mustard (Dijon is best)

Drizzle of agave or maple syrup, if desired

Pinch of salt and pepper

Store in glass bottle in the fridge

Store everything in tightly sealed containers, and you'll have at least five meals ready to go in about five minutes.

### **Hummus**

*Recipe by Bill Mania*

If you haven't made hummus before, you should give it a try. It's super easy and tastes much fresher than store-bought. You will find with this recipe that the texture is thicker and heartier than the brands you will find at the market.

1 can chickpeas (or approx. 1.5 cups)

1 cup tahini

2 tbsp olive oil (+ more as needed)

1 tbsp lemon juice

2 cloves garlic (more if desired)

1 tsp Cumin

8 Coriander seeds, ground (or about 1/4 tsp. ground)

Pinch of sea salt

Add all of the ingredients to a food processor and process until smooth. Add more olive oil, as needed.

Tip: Buy dried chickpeas and cook them yourself instead of buying them in a can. Some cans may contain BPA. You will save money. Plus, they taste fresher. You can cook beans in a pressure cooker in about 30 minutes.

Bonus Tip: You can make this same recipe with almost any type of bean. Recently, we have used black beans and black-eyed peas.

## **Vegan Chili**

*Makes 8 servings*

1 can of chili beans or vegan chili  
1 can of diced tomatoes with juice  
1 medium onion chopped  
1 green pepper chopped (red, yellow, or orange peppers also work)  
1 can corn with juice  
1 package sliced mushrooms  
Carrots shredded, amount desired  
1 zucchini sliced thin (steamed)  
1 can kidney or pinto beans  
Chili seasoning, amount desired  
Cilantro and vegan sour cream, optional

Sauté onion and peppers in oil. Add mushrooms and work until tender. Puree can of chili beans or vegan chili in blender. Add to onions, peppers and mushrooms. Add tomatoes including juice. Add chili seasoning. Add beans, carrots and steamed zucchini. Cook on medium-low and simmer for about 1 hour. Just before finished, add corn and heat through. Top with cilantro and vegan sour cream, if desired.

Approximate spicy heat level with chili seasoning:

Mild = 1 tsp

Medium = 2 tsp

Hot = 1 tbsp or more

## **Roasted cauliflower**

*Makes 4 servings*

1 head of cauliflower  
2 tbsp olive oil  
2 tbsp nutritional yeast  
Salt, to taste  
Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Cut the cauliflower into small florets. Add the cauliflower to a large bowl with the other ingredients. Mix well. Place the cauliflower on a pre-greased baking sheet. Bake on 375 degrees for 25-30 minutes or until the cauliflower is soft.

Tip: You can roast other vegetables using this recipe including broccoli, potatoes or Brussels sprouts.

### **Peanut Butter Banana Ice Cream**

*Adapted from the blog, What Stephanie Made*  
*Make 4 small servings*

Cut two ripe bananas into 1/2" slices and freeze. This can be done 3-4 hours beforehand or even days or weeks in advance. I keep a supply of frozen bananas in my freezer, so I can make this whenever I want a healthy, sweet treat.

2 ripe bananas, sliced and frozen  
2 tbsp all-natural peanut butter  
1/4 cup vegan chocolate or carob chips, optional  
Non-dairy milk, if needed

Add all the ingredients (except non-dairy milk) in the food processor and mix. If the mixture is too thick and jams up in the food processor, add non-dairy milk a tbsp at a time until the mixture moves through the processor again. Continue until all the ingredients are mixed well. Serve immediately.

### **Fudgy Balls**

*Adapted from recipe by Lindy Stockton*  
*Makes approximately 12-16 balls*

1/2 cup all-natural nut butter  
1/2 cup pitted dates  
1 tbsp cocoa powder  
Shredded coconut, if desired



Soak dates in water for about an hour. Drain dates.

Using a food processor, combine the nut butter, dates, and cocoa. Once mixture is well-combined, use your hands to roll mixture into small, bite-size balls. Next, roll balls in shredded coconut as shown above, if desired. Refrigerate for approximately 30 minutes so the balls will become extra firm. Store fudgy balls in the refrigerator.

Variations:

- You can use any kind of nut butter (cashew, almond, pistachio, etc.).
- Instead of cocoa, try carob powder.
- If you don't like coconut, try rolling the balls in ground flax seed or leave them naked, which is my personal preference.
- I have also added a pinch of cinnamon and a little bit of vanilla before when using raw almond butter.
- Mix in dried fruit like cherries or cranberries.

Get creative with this simple recipe and have fun in the kitchen. You will not miss the white sugar and flour one bit.

For the completely lazy, you can skip making the balls and just store the mixture in a sealed container in the fridge. Eat a spoonful whenever the desire for a sweet snack takes hold.

## Helpful Tips

### Preparation

- Spend time one day a week prepping food. Chop up veggies so you can toss together a salad in about 5 minutes throughout the week. Cook rice and/or quinoa to have on hand for the week.
- Keep a running grocery list that everyone in your family can update. When you are running low on a staple, add it to the list immediately. We keep a running grocery list on our fridge. It may require a bit of training to get your family to participate, but I assure you it's worth the effort and will save you time keeping your kitchen well stocked.
- Make large batches of soups, stews and casseroles, then freeze a few servings to enjoy at a later date.
- Keep your knives sharp. It will make chopping and dicing easier and safer. Dull knives tend to slip and increase the chances of injury.

### Food

- Read food labels: Choose foods with fewer ingredients. If you can't pronounce an ingredient, then you probably want to skip that product. Focus on whole foods as much as possible.
- Make your food last longer by storing organic fruit in the fridge and storing fresh vegetables in seal-tight containers.
- Fruit is a fast food. Carry an apple with you for a quick snack. (Nuts and trail mix also make good snacks.)
- Try Agave Nectar or Maple Syrup instead of honey.
- In some recipes, you can use apple sauce instead of oil to reduce fat when baking.
- Organic vs. conventional foods: Organic fruits and vegetables are healthier for you and the environment. According to the Environmental Working Group<sup>3</sup>, there are certain foods that should be eaten only when they are organic including:
  - Apples
  - Celery
  - Sweet bell peppers
  - Peaches
  - Strawberries
  - Nectarines (imported)
  - Grapes
  - Spinach
  - Lettuce
  - Cucumbers
  - Blueberries (domestic)
  - Potatoes
  - Green beans
  - Kale/Greens

If you can't afford these organic foods, then it may be better to avoid them all together and buy other conventional fruits and vegetables that are considered less harmful, such as oranges. Typically foods with thick skins are safer when grown conventionally.

- Always try to buy food that's grown as close to home as possible and in season.

## Health

- It's a good idea to keep frozen veggie burgers, vegan meats and other convenience foods on hand for a quick lunch or dinner, but don't rely on them for every meal. Be sure to primarily eat whole foods like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans/legumes and nuts/seeds.
- Because B-12 is only available in animal products, be sure to have your levels checked and supplement when necessary.<sup>4</sup>
- It's a myth that vegans are unable to meet daily protein requirements. If you eat a wide variety of whole foods on a daily basis, it's likely you will meet your protein needs without any issues. Learn more by reading *Vegan for Life*.<sup>4</sup>

## Resources

You can use the Internet to find vegan recipes. If you want to make pancakes, search "vegan pancakes." It's likely you will find multiple recipes to choose from. Your favorite search engine will be your best friend in finding new recipes. Cookbooks are only one of many sources. I have many cookbooks that I use but I'm constantly trying new recipes I find on the web too.

### Recommended General Cookbooks

*Veganomicon: The Ultimate Vegan Cookbook* by Isa Chandra Moskowitz and Terry Hope Romero

*Vegan Cooking for Carnivores* by Roberto Martin

*The Ayurvedic Vegan Kitchen* by Talya Lutzker

### Recommended Specialty Cookbooks

*Artisan Vegan Cheese* by Miyoko Schinner

*The Saucy Vegetarian* by Jo Stepaniak

*The Ultimate Uncheese Cookbook* by Jo Stepaniak

*Fresh from the Vegetarian Slow Cooker: 200 Recipes for Healthy and Hearty One-Pot Meals That Are Ready When You Are* by Robin Robertson

### Recommend Gluten-Free and Allergen Resources

*Food Allergy Survival Guide: Surviving and Thriving with Food Allergies and Sensitivities* by Vesanto Melina, Dina Aronson and Jo Stepaniak

*Great Gluten-Free Vegan Eats: Cut Out the Gluten and Enjoy an Even Healthier Vegan Diet with Recipes for Fabulous, Allergy-Free Fare* by Allyson Kramer

### Recommended Food Substitution Books

*Food Substitution Bible, Second Edition* by David Joachim

*Skinny Bitch Book of Vegan Swaps* by Kim Barnouin

*The Complete Guide to Vegan Food Substitutions: Veganize It! Foolproof Methods for Transforming Any Dish into a Delicious New Vegan Favorite* by Celine Steen and Joni Marie Newman

### **Recommended Food Reference Guides**

*Field Guide to Produce: How to Identify, Select and Prepare Virtually Every Fruit and Vegetable at the Market* by Aliza Green

*The New Food Lover's Companion, Fourth Edition* by Sharon Tyler Herbst and Ron Herbst

### **Recommended Blogs**

itseasybeingvegan.com

fatfreevegan.com

vegnews.com

vegetariantimes.com

veganyummy.com

theppk.com

### **Further Reading**

*Eat to Live* by Dr. Joel Fuhrman

*Eating Animals* by Jonathan Safran Foer

*The China Study* by T. Colin Campbell

*Yoga and Vegetarianism* by Sharon Gannon

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup>Additionally, vegans avoid buying and wearing animal products including fur, leather, wool, silk and down. Vegans also avoid using products tested on animals including cosmetics, chemicals and household cleaners. Veganism is a lifestyle, not just a diet.

<sup>2</sup>This sample meal plan does not take into consideration Ayurvedic principles or special dietary requirements, such as a gluten-free diets.

<sup>3</sup>Environmental Working Group's Shopper's Guide to Pesticides in Produce™:  
<http://www.ewg.org/foodnews/summary/>

<sup>4</sup>Read *Vegan for Life: Everything You Need to Know to Be Healthy and Fit on a Plant-Based Diet* by Jack Norris and Virginia Messina to learn more about B-12 requirements for vegans as well as other nutritional needs.

## **It's Easy Being Vegan in the Kitchen**

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