

# VEGAN FOOD! Easy, Inexpensive, and Delicious

## COOKING VEGAN CAN BE EASY

Whatever your current relationship with food is, you can carry it over to vegan eating.

If you are an epicure and a gourmet cook, you can certainly do that as a vegan: there are a number of gourmet cookbooks, websites, restaurants, specialty products and produce items. If you are a fast food lover and don't like to cook, preferring to put together meals quickly from prepared food bars and the freezer or cool case, you can do that too as a vegan. And there are plenty of quick vegan meals that can be assembled on the fly. Canned beans along with pasta or quick-cooking grains plus some frozen vegetables and a bagged salad is a pretty good meal!

Don't be surprised, though, if, upon becoming vegan, you find that you are paying more attention to your food and spending more time with its preparation. Just be aware that whatever level of cooking and preparation you opt for, you are going to be healthier on a vegan meal plan.

Please write [rochesterveg@gmail.com](mailto:rochesterveg@gmail.com) or call 234-8750 for our "Short-Cut Vegan" handout, or find it at [rochesterveg.org](http://rochesterveg.org) on the home page.

## VEGAN FOOD CAN BE INEXPENSIVE

A vegan diet is inherently the most economical diet on the planet, and it can and should be available to everyone. It is based on beans and grains, which are cheap, easy to store, and readily available, even in an emergency and after the end of the growing season. Add to that whatever vegetables and fruits are available and most economical--this will probably be whatever is in season or is abundant--and you have a complete diet.

It's true that there are many expensive vegan specialty items on the grocery shelves and in the freezer and cool case. You may want to indulge in these from time to time; but they are not as healthy as whole foods--whole grains, legumes, vegetables and fruits, nuts and seeds--and they are not as economical as whole foods. With a little experience you can turn the basic building blocks into a delicious meal.

## VEGAN FOOD IS DELICIOUS!

Here is why you don't need to fear that your food just won't taste good on a vegan diet.

-You won't be missing out on things, you will just be eating different things. People who "eat everything" don't really do that; they tend to eat a pretty restricted array of foods from day to day and week to week. As a vegan, you will probably be trying more new foods, and enjoying a greater variety of foods, than you ever ate as an omnivore.

-Your sense of taste will open up. When you eat only from the plant kingdom, your taste buds tend to become more sensitive to nuances and delicate flavors. You will enjoy your food just as much as ever and probably much more.

-If you want to boost the flavor of your vegan diet, there are some tricks of the trade. Try roasting vegetables on a non-stick or lightly oiled baking sheet at 400 degrees for about 30 minutes or until soft to the fork. (Cover with foil and stir vegetables once.) Try dry toasting nuts and seeds in a pan on top of the stove or at 225 degrees F. in the oven for a few minutes (watch carefully to prevent burning), or dry toast grains in a pan, before adding water (2 to 3x the volume of grain) and cooking (this is the basis of a "pilaf").

-Use condiments to enhance the flavor of a dish. Soy sauce, vinegars, salsa or hot sauces, toasted sesame oil for Asian dishes, mustard and ketchup can add a delightful flavor bonus. A little fresh citrus (lemon or lime) at the end can "lift" the flavor of a dish, as can a little crushed red pepper added during the cooking (even if you don't like heat).

-Use spices to change the whole signature of a dish. Beans or tofu with rice or pasta may seem monotonous: but if you add cinnamon and coriander you have a Middle Eastern tagine; if you add cumin and oregano you have a Mexican dish; if you add basil and oregano you have Italian pasta; if you add curry powder you have an Indian curry. You can add soy sauce, ginger and rice vinegar to Chinese stir-fry and lime juice and coconut to Thai. Search on your computer for ideas about ethnic spice mixes as well as for vegan recipes generally.

-Don't hesitate to use vegan specialty items as special treats, and in moderation with your whole-food, plant-based diet. If you want melty cheese on a pizza or grilled cheese sandwich, try shredded Daiya or Chao slices. Tofutti cream cheese and sour cream are dead ringers for the real things. Miyoko's Creamery has a wonderful new line of vegan cheeses based on cashews and miso. And if you search "57 Reasons to Try Veganism" on [buzzfeed.com](http://buzzfeed.com), you will find that reason #18 is "So you can learn the slightly unfortunate secret that a little bit of Vegenaïse makes everything better." Vegenaïse is a brand of vegan mayonnaise--you can also try Hampton Creek's Just Mayo, or Earth Balance Mindful Mayo. While we're at it, Earth Balance margarine will make you forget butter and other margarines. But for the sake of your health, use these items in moderation.

-If you really miss a non-vegetarian item from your past, you can probably find a product that will please your palate and tide you over. We have heard that Gardein Fishless Filets are excellent. If you miss sausage, Field Roast Apple and Sage flavor is spot on, and we also like all the flavors of Tofurkey sausage; cut up small in a big pot of soup or stew, gumbo or jambalaya, these items can add a lot to a dish principally made of beans, grains and veggies. The same holds true of the Wegmans line of vegan "meats": Don't Be Chicken, Don't Be Piggy and Don't Have a Cow. A little goes a long way to make your vegan meal a joy.

## RESOURCES

### BEST VIDEOS

"Forks Over Knives" (health reasons)  
"Cowspiracy" (environmental reasons)  
"Peaceable Kingdom" (animal compassion)

### BEST WEBSITES (health)

[forksoverknives.com](http://forksoverknives.com); [nutritionfacts.org](http://nutritionfacts.org);  
[pcrm.org](http://pcrm.org); [doctorklaper.com](http://doctorklaper.com); [plantpurenation.com](http://plantpurenation.com);  
[theplantbasedlife.com](http://theplantbasedlife.com); [veganhealth.org](http://veganhealth.org)

### BEST WEBSITES (cooking, meal planning)

[ChooseVeg.com](http://ChooseVeg.com), [CookingWithPlants.com](http://CookingWithPlants.com),  
[FatFreeVegan.com](http://FatFreeVegan.com), [FettleVegan.com](http://FettleVegan.com), [Free-Easy-Vegan-Recipes.com](http://Free-Easy-Vegan-Recipes.com), [KeepinItKind.com](http://KeepinItKind.com),  
[OhSheGlows.com](http://OhSheGlows.com), [PlantPoweredKitchen.com](http://PlantPoweredKitchen.com),  
[RobinRobertson.com](http://RobinRobertson.com), [ThePPK.com](http://ThePPK.com),  
[TryVeg.com](http://TryVeg.com), [VeganChef.com](http://VeganChef.com), [VeganCooking.com](http://VeganCooking.com),  
[VeganCookingWithLove.com](http://VeganCookingWithLove.com), [VegKitchen.com](http://VegKitchen.com),  
[VegWeb.com](http://VegWeb.com), [ZsusVeganPantry.com](http://ZsusVeganPantry.com)

COOKING VIDEOS: Go to [theppk.com](http://theppk.com) or [plantpoweredkitchen.com](http://plantpoweredkitchen.com) and click on "Videos"; go to Youtube and search Vegan Cooking with Love, Vegan Zombie, or Veggieutorials.

FINALLY: When you use your search engine for "how to make a vegan diet tasty" you come up with lots of interesting things. Here are a couple of favorites:

"10 Easy Vegan Recipes Everyone Should Know" at [onegreenplanet.org](http://onegreenplanet.org)

"30 Delicious Vegan Meals You Can Make in Under 30 Minutes" at [buzzfeed.com](http://buzzfeed.com)

### EASY CHARD AND RED LENTIL SOUP (Robin Robertson, *Quick-Fix Vegan*)

1 tsp olive oil or ¼ cup water  
1 onion, shredded or finely chopped  
2 carrots, shredded  
3 cloves garlic, minced  
1 tsp ground cumin  
½ tsp ground coriander  
¼ tsp cayenne (or less to taste)  
1 14.5 oz. can diced tomatoes with juice  
¾ cup dried red lentils  
4 cups vegetable broth  
¼ tsp salt  
¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper  
4 cups coarsely chopped chard (8 oz.)

Heat oil or water in a large pot. Add the onions, carrots and garlic; cover and cook until softened, 5 min. Stir in the spices, then add the tomatoes, lentils, broth, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to medium and simmer, partially covered, until the lentils are tender, about 15 minutes. About 4 minutes before it is ready to serve, add the chard, stirring to wilt it. Serve hot. ❖