

SHORT-CUT VEGAN!

People frequently request tips on how to incorporate vegan meals into a busy schedule. A number of cookbooks tackle this question, including Maribeth Abrams and Anne Dinshah, *The 4 Ingredient Vegan*; Nava Atlas, *Vegan Express*; Kathy Hester, *The Easy Vegan Cookbook*; Lorna Sass, *Short-Cut Vegetarian*, re-released as *Short-Cut Vegan*; and Robin Robertson's *Quick-Fix Vegetarian*, *Quick-Fix Vegan*, and *More Quick-Fix Vegan* (all different). Most are available in the Monroe County Library System, as well as from book sellers. Here's a distillation of the advice found in those books.

TIPS FOR EFFICIENT COOKING

Keep an organized kitchen and pantry.

Read all recipes through in advance.

Keep a list of meals you have made that you and the entire family liked. Consider putting copies of those recipes in an easy-reference binder.

Plan meals and menus in advance, for the week or at least for several days.

Make a master grocery list, organized on the lines of the store you shop at most frequently, and make xerox copies.

Keep a well stocked pantry.

Stock pantry items--in the freezer, in the refrigerator, and on the pantry shelf or kitchen counter--that are conducive to quick but delicious meals.

Develop a repertoire of quick-cooking dishes that make use of frozen or canned foods, as well as long-lasting fresh vegetables such as cabbage, potatoes, and carrots.

Keep on hand a variety of condiments or "secret ingredients" (such as flavored vinegars) that add a great deal of flavor.

Buy selected instant or prepared foods (like a simmer sauce) that allow you to put together a meal in a flash when necessary.

Make one-pot meals.

When you have the time or inclination, cook large quantities and freeze food in batches, or refrigerate for meals later in the week.

Use leftovers. Last night's dinner can be the next day's bagged lunch. Leftover cooked beans, veggies or sauces can be incorporated into whole new dishes such as soups, stews, and sauces for pasta.

If and when you are inclined, make your own "convenience foods" to use when you have less time, like cookie mixes or homemade vegetable broth.

Discover kitchen tools that help you make quick meals, such as an immersion blender for homemade creamy soups.

Be intuitive, creative and flexible when following recipes. Don't be afraid to substitute a vegetable, a type of bean, or a pasta shape to "change up" a recipe.

SHORT-CUT VEGAN PANTRY ITEMS

All of these items can figure as ingredients in quick, delicious vegan meals.

In your vegetable larder

- Cabbage and carrots last a long time in the refrigerator and can form a centerpiece or addition to many meals. Potatoes, sweet potatoes, onions and garlic last a long time at room temperature. Store potatoes away from the light.

In the freezer:

- Frozen vegetables, especially peas, corn and spinach which compare well with fresh.

- Frozen pie crusts or doughs; frozen pizza

In the refrigerator:

- Soy products and other meat analogues: tofu, tempeh, gluten, veggie burgers and crumbles, sausages and hot dogs.
- Tortillas and other flatbreads
- Deli items (Kalamata olives, stuffed grape leaves)
- Vegan "dairy" items: cheeses, cream cheese, sour cream, mayo, milk, and creamer
- Nuts and seeds (these keep freshest if stored in refrigerator or freezer)
- Miso (fermented soybean paste)

In the pantry (These items are shelf stable until you open them, after which most items should be refrigerated. Opened containers of dry pasta, grains and beans can be covered and stored at room temperature. Vinegar and soy sauce can also be safely stored at room temperature after opening.):

- Breads such as pitas (store in refrigerator or freezer for longer life)
- Short-cooking grains (instant brown rice, couscous, quinoa)
- Dried pasta (none take longer than 10 minutes to cook)
- Packaged prepared pasta and grains (gnocchi and polenta)
- Canned beans (Eden brand is expensive but has a healthier liner than others)
- Lentils (15 to 45 minutes to cook)
- Instant dried beans (found in cartons)
- Tomato products: canned tomatoes, tomato sauce, and tomato paste
- Bottled marinara sauce
- Canned chipotle peppers in adobo
- Sun-dried tomatoes (oil-free version comes in packets)
- Roasted red peppers in jar
- Artichokes, canned or jarred
- Toasted sesame oil (adds great flavor)
- Olives, tapenade mixes, pickles, capers
- Nut and seed butters: peanut, almond, and cashew butters, tahini (sesame butter)
- Soups (canned, dried in tubs, prepared in aseptic packages) (but watch oil and sodium content)
- Bouillon (cubes, or paste in jar)
- Condiments: ketchup, mustard, relish, salsa, hot sauce including sriracha, BBQ sauce, salad dressings (or make your own)*, marinades, vinegars, soy

sauce, hoisin sauce, curry paste, chutney, etc.

- Nutritional yeast (available in bulk, or in bag or jar)
- Plant milks in aseptic packages
- Canned coconut milk
- Dried fruits
- Dried herbs and spices

QUICK VEGAN MEALS

Come up with a list of 6 to 10 quick meals that lend themselves to many variations, that you can rotate through. Think ethnic:

- Chinese/Asian--stir-fry with brown rice
- Indian--curry with brown rice
- Italian--pasta with tomato sauce or pesto and veggies
- Middle Eastern--hummus with tabouleh
- Mexican/Latin--beans and rice/tacos/tortillas/burritos
- "American"--vegetable soup or stew; veggie burger with sides

Q: Give us some of your favorite easy meal ideas for those nights when you're tired, hungry and didn't make it to the grocery store. All my "go-to" last-minute easy meals are not vegan--grilled cheese sandwich, tuna sandwich, omelet, hot dog, burger, pasta.

A: You can have vegan variations on all of those last-minute easy meals.

Grilled cheese sandwich: try making it with Daiya or Chao cheese, which you can buy shredded or in blocks or slices (in Wegmans Nature's Marketplace and the health food stores; it makes a good grilled cheese sandwich, goes well on pizza or wherever you want melty cheese.

Tuna sandwich: try mashing garbanzo beans/chick peas and adding whatever you usually add (vegan mayo, relish, minced celery and onion); sometimes people add seaweed flakes for the fishy flavor.

Omelet: Scrambled tofu: sauté veggies in oil or water; mash tofu, add to the veggies and heat through; add nutritional yeast, turmeric, soy sauce.

Hot dog: many vegan varieties: those made by Tofurky and Yves area especially good; Lightlife Smart Dogs are pretty good too (not all Lightlife products are vegan but this one is)

Burger: many vegan varieties: Boca Vegan Burgers (but not all Boca burgers are vegan), Gardein burgers, etc.

Pasta with Sauce. An all time favorite easy meal. Use a whole-grain pasta; there are lots of vegan spaghetti sauces; sprinkle Fake Fake** on top. Add veggies to the sauce or serve them on the side. Add Nate's Meatless Meatballs to complete the experience.

Homemade salad dressing: 2 parts each balsamic vinegar, soy sauce and mustard, 3 parts each rice vinegar and ketchup

Fake Fake: In food processor combine 1 cup walnuts with 3 tbsp nutritional yeast, ½ tsp garlic powder, ¼ tsp salt. Good on steamed vegetables and salad as well as pasta. ❖

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SHORT-CUT VEGAN RECIPES

BEER-STEWED PINTO BEANS (Frijoles Borrachos) (vegkitchen.com, website of Nava Atlas, author of *Vegan Express*)
(Serves 6 or more)

“Borracho” was a 19th-century north-of-the-border term for a drunkard, so the name of this recipe literally means “drunken pinto beans.” Serve with tortillas or rice.

1 cup chopped ripe tomatoes or lightly drained canned diced tomatoes
Two 15- to 16-ounce cans pinto or pink beans, drained and rinsed
½ cup beer
2 scallions, white and green parts, thinly sliced
1-2 jalapeño peppers, seeded and minced, or one 4 oz. can mild green chilies
1 tsp ground cumin
1/3 cup chopped fresh cilantro
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Combine all ingredients except the cilantro, salt, and pepper in a wide skillet and bring to a simmer. Cover and simmer gently over low heat for 10 minutes. Mash enough of the beans to thicken the base (use a potato masher or a large fork) so that the mixture isn't soupy. Stir in the cilantro and season with salt and pepper. Cook for 5 minutes longer over very low heat, uncovered. If there's still too much liquid in the skillet, continue to cook until the bean mixture thickens, then serve.

MAPO TOFU (Kathy Hester, *The Easy Vegan Cookbook*)

8 oz. mushrooms, chopped (about 3 cups)
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 cup water or broth
3 tbsp tomato paste
1 heaping tbsp grated fresh ginger
2 tbsp soy sauce
1 tbsp rice wine vinegar
1 tbsp agave nectar
½ to 1 tbsp sriracha or other hot sauce (or less if you don't like spicy-hot)
1 package firm silken tofu, cut into cubes*
1 cup peas or chopped broccoli
Steamed brown rice, for serving

Add the mushrooms and garlic to a large saucepan and dry saute over medium heat until the mushrooms cook down, 5 to 10 minutes. Stir in the water or broth and sauce ingredients (tomato paste, ginger through sriracha). Bring almost to a boil, then add the tofu and peas or broccoli and lower the heat to medium-low. Cook until the veggies are tender, about 10 minutes, and serve over steamed rice.

CAPELLINI WITH WHITE BEAN AND GREEN OLIVE TAPENADE (Robin Robertson, *Quick-Fix Vegetarian*)

This versatile bean-tapenade sauce can be used not just on pasta, but as a spread for bruschetta or a dip for vegetables.

1 can white beans, drained
½ cup green olive tapenade, bottled or homemade*
¼ tsp red pepper flakes
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil (optional)
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 lb capellini, cooked al dente
¼ cup chopped fresh parsley

In a food processor, combine the beans, tapenade, and red pepper flakes. Process until blended, then add the olive oil, if using, and process until smooth. Add salt and pepper to taste. Blend in about ½ cup of the pasta water to make a smooth sauce, before adding to the hot cooked pasta. Serve at once sprinkled with the parsley.

Tapenade: In the food processor, combine 1 clove garlic, ¾ cup black or green olives (green olives with pimiento is okay), 1 tbsp capers, 3 tbsp chopped fresh parsley, ¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper, and an optional tbsp or so of extra-virgin olive oil.

[Editor's note: Capellini is a very thin spaghetti. You can also use angel hair, thin spaghetti, or even another size or shape of pasta.]

FETTUCCHINE WITH SPINACH PESTO
(Lorna Sass, *Short-Cut Vegan*)

[Editor's note: With this recipe you can make delicious pesto without fresh basil, using ingredients in your freezer or pantry.]

8 oz fettuccine, cooked *al dente*
1 10-oz pkg. frozen spinach, thawed
2 heaping tbsp walnut halves
1 tbsp fresh-squeezed lemon juice or 1 to 3 tsp balsamic vinegar
1 tbsp fresh basil or roasted garlic olive oil, or a combination
1 tsp Italian Herbs (store-bought, or recipe below)
1 small clove garlic
½ tsp salt or to taste
Freshly ground black pepper to taste

Place all the ingredients except the pasta in a food processor and blend for about 30 seconds to create a coarse paste, scraping down the sides of the bowl as necessary. Toss with the hot cooked pasta. Dust with nutritional yeast if desired.

Variation: Add 1½ cups diced plum tomatoes and 1-2 tbsp capers.

ITALIAN HERB BLEND
(Lorna Sass, *Short-Cut Vegan*)

1 tbsp each dried basil and oregano
2 tsp each dried rosemary and thyme
1½ tsp fennel seeds, ground in spice blender
1 tsp crushed red pepper flakes (optional)

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

1 tbsp olive oil or ¼ cup water or dry vermouth
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.

COCONUT CORN CHOWDER
(Robin Robertson, *Quick-Fix Vegan*)

2 tsp olive oil or ¼ cup water
1 small onion, diced
2 tsp grated fresh ginger
1 potato, diced
1 14-oz. can diced tomatoes with chile
3 cups vegetable broth
3 cups fresh or frozen corn kernels
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 can unsweetened coconut milk
3 tbsp chopped fresh Thai basil or cilantro
Sriracha or other hot sauce (optional)

Heat oil or water in large pot over medium-high heat. Add the onion, cover, and cook until softened, about 5 minutes. Stir in the ginger, then add the potato, tomatoes, and vegetable broth and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium, add the corn, and season to taste with salt and pepper. Simmer until the vegetables are tender, about 15 minutes. Stir in the coconut milk and basil or cilantro. To serve, drizzle a small amount of sriracha on each bowl of soup if desired. Variation: If you prefer a creamier soup, puree with an immersion blender. ❖

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