

10 Tempting Ideas for Using Tofu

Tofu has been loved in Asia for centuries. Just remember the basics. Firm tofu (the kind sold in tubs of water) is best for marinating, bgrilling, baking, broiling, stir-frying, and sautéing.

10 IDEAS FOR TOFU

Stir-fries: Heat peanut oil and stir fry cubed firm tofu until browned. Add fresh mixed vegetables. Stir in prepared stir-fry sauce and serve with steamed rice.

Fillings: Mix pureed firm tofu with ricotta cheese, jarred marinara sauce, chopped spinach, and dried Italian seasoning. Spoon into jumbo shells or manicotti shells or spread on lasagna noodles, then bake.

Soups: Cube firm or silken tofu and drop into broth-based soups like miso or noodle soups.

Stews: Simmer cubed firm tofu along with vegetables and/or meats. The tofu will stay firm and make a hearty dish. It works especially well with chilies.

Dips: Puree silken tofu with jarred roasted red pappers, cream cheese, scallions, and garlic. Serve with chips or fresh vegetables.

Salads: Toss cubed firm tofu with salad greens. Tofu's mild flavor complements bitter greens and vinaigrette dressings.

Pilafs: Stir chopped firm tofu into grain and vegetable pilafs.

Burgers: Mash firm tofu and combine with eggs, seasoned dry bread crumbs, cooked rice, Dijon mustard, and chopped onion. Pan-fry until browned.

Grilled or broiled: Marinate cubed firm tofu (and cut vegetables, if you wish) in stir-fry marinade or Italian salad dressing. Grill or broil on a vegetable grate. Works well with kabobs.

Scrambled: Cube firm tofu and use in place of eggs for scrambling. Wonderful cooked with cubed potatoes.

Quinoa & Smoked Tofu Salad

OR Fried

We took the tangy fresh flavors of tabbouleh and paired them with smoky tofu and quinoa to create a main-dish salad that's perfect served on a bed of greens. This salad is jam-packed with heart-healthy ingredients—whole grains (quinoa), legumes (soy-based tofu) and plenty of vegetables.

6 servings, about 1 1/3 cups each | Active Time: 25 minutes | Total Time: 35 minutes

Ingredients

- 2 cups water
- 3/4 teaspoon salt, divided
- 1 cup quinoa, rinsed well (see Tip)
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 small cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 1 6- or 8-ounce package baked smoked tofu, (see Tip), diced
- 1 small yellow bell pepper, diced
- 1 cup grape tomatoes, halved
- 1 cup diced cucumber
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh mint

Preparation

1. Bring water and 1/2 teaspoon salt to a boil in a medium saucepan. Add quinoa and return to a boil. Reduce to a simmer, cover and cook until the water has been absorbed, 15 to 20 minutes. Spread the quinoa on a baking sheet to cool for 10 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, whisk lemon juice, oil, garlic, the remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt and pepper in a large bowl. Add the cooled quinoa, tofu, bell pepper, tomatoes, cucumber, parsley and mint; toss well to combine.

Nutrition

Per serving : 228 Calories; 10 g Fat; 1 g Sat; 6 g Mono; 0 mg Cholesterol; 26 g Carbohydrates; 9 g Protein; 4 g Fiber; 376 mg Sodium; 418 mg Potassium

2 Carbohydrate Serving

Exchanges: 1 1/2 starch, 1 vegetable, 1 1/2 fat

Tips & Notes

- **Make Ahead Tip:** Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 1 day.
- **Tips:** Quinoa is a delicately flavored, protein-rich grain. Rinsing removes any residue of saponin, quinoa's natural, bitter protective covering. Find it in natural-foods stores and the natural-foods sections of many supermarkets.
- Precooked "baked tofu" is firmer than water-packed tofu and comes in a wide variety of flavors. You might also like flavored baked tofu on a sandwich or in a stir-fry.

Creamy Vegan Carrot Soup with Coconut

Ingredients:

- 2-3 large carrots, chopped small
- 1 onion, chopped small
- 1 tsp fresh ginger, minced
- 1 1/2 tsp curry powder
- 1 3/4 cup vegetable broth
- 1 14 ounce can coconut milk
- sea salt, to taste

Preparation:

Simmer the carrots, onions, ginger and curry powder in vegetable broth for 20-25 minutes, until carrots are so

Allow to cool slightly, and then puree in blender, working in batches if needed.

Return to heat and stir in coconut milk until well combined.

Season generously with sea salt, to taste.

Serve hot, or, chill until cold and serve as a gourmet vegetarian and vegan appetizer soup. This carrot soup will vegan carrot soup cold, you may want to add a bit extra liquid.

Strawberry and Tofu Smoothie

Recipe courtesy George Stella

Prep Time:

10 min

Level:

Serves:

Inactive Prep Time:

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Easy

4 servings, 6 ounces each

Cook Time:

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Ingredients

Smoothie:

- 1 cup frozen strawberries (don't defrost, if using fresh berries, freeze them first)
- 1 cup ice
- 1 cup ice water
- 1/2 cup heavy cream (to lighten up, substitute water)
- 1/4 cup sugar substitute (recommended: Splenda)
- 3 1/2 ounces soft or silken tofu
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract (there should be no sugar in the ingredient list—usually artificial types are best)

Garnish:

- 4 fresh strawberries
- 4 sprigs fresh mint

Directions

Make the Smoothie: Combine all the ingredients in a blender and pulse to chop everything up. Flip the switch to high and blend until smooth.

Pour the smoothie among 4 glasses, and garnish each with a strawberry and mint sprig.

HEALTH BENEFITS OF TOFU

Tofu is bean curd, made by adding a mineral salt (usually, calcium sulfate) and water to a soybean mash. The mineral salt makes the protein and fiber in the soy mash turn thick and smooth. Depending upon the amount of water it contains, tofu may vary in consistency.

Tofu is rich in calcium and is an inexpensive source of protein, making it a good vegetarian substitute for meat or dairy products. Plain tofu has almost no taste, but it readily absorbs the flavor of herbs and spices added when you prepare a meal. Tofu is a versatile food and an important part of East Asian cuisines. In fact, it's the main way that soy foods are eaten in China, Japan and Korea.

Studies indicate that regular tofu consumption is associated with:

- * reduced risk of heart disease
- * lower levels of cholesterol
- * improved bone density and reduced risk of fractures
- * decrease in the incidence of breast cancer and lung cancer

In The Fat Resistance Diet, high protein foods tend to suppress appetite better than foods with less protein, but a study in healthy humans found that tofu produced greater satiety than animal protein. The effect lasted for several hours and was not associated with a rebound increase in appetite when it ended.

The special health benefits of tofu have been attributed to two major components: isoflavones and amino acids. Isoflavones are a special group of bioflavonoids found more highly concentrated in soy than in any other food. They are:

* Potent antioxidants, like most other bioflavonoids. Antioxidants protect the cells in your body from damage to DNA and cell membranes. Regular consumption of tofu protects your blood vessels from the damaging effects of cholesterol by slowing the rate at which LDL-cholesterol is oxidized.

* Anti-inflammatory. Inflammation in the walls of blood vessels, caused by a chemical called "soluble vascular cell adhesion molecule-1 (sVCAM-1)", is a major cause of cardiovascular disease. Soy isoflavones specifically inhibit this type of inflammation.

* Anti-cancer. The isoflavones genistein and daidzein inhibit the growth of cancer cells. In Asia, higher consumption of tofu is associated with a decreased risk of lung cancer and breast cancer.

* Hormone modulators. Isoflavones have a structure somewhat similar to estrogen and modify the effects of estrogen in your body. It is believed that this hormone modulating effect accounts for the decreased risk of breast cancer and osteoporosis associated with regular consumption of tofu.

Soy foods reduce levels of cholesterol and triglycerides in your blood and can also reduce your blood pressure. Careful research has shown that the cholesterol-lowering effect of soy is due to the amino acid profile of soy protein. A unique fraction of soy protein called "7S globulin" increases your liver's ability to remove dangerous LDL-cholesterol from your blood.

How often should you eat tofu? That depends upon your own individual health risks. If you have seriously elevated cholesterol or a strong family history of coronary heart disease, you might benefit from eating tofu every day, as part of The Fat Resistance Diet. If your main concern is prevention of cancer or general health, using tofu once or twice a week appears to produce optimum benefits.

Vegetarian Diets

Fact Sheet No. 9.324

Food and Nutrition Series | Health

by J. Anderson and S. Prior*

Vegetarianism is a widespread practice. In fact, a large part of the world's population subsists on vegetarian diets. In many areas, people are vegetarians because of inadequate income, lack of animal products, and religious and cultural beliefs. Vegetarianism has long been practiced in American society by a small proportion of the population. Only within the second half of this century has there been an increase in the popularity of vegetarianism in the United States (approximately 2.5 percent of the population).

The American Dietetic Association has stated that vegetarian diets are healthful and nutritionally adequate during all stages of the life cycle, when appropriately planned. It is important that vegetarians understand the principles necessary to practice safe and healthy vegetarianism.

Types of Vegetarian Diets

A vegetarian is a person who does not eat some or any foods of animal origin. Vegetarians have different dietary practices, but most can be categorized into one of the following groups:

- **Lacto-ovo-vegetarians** eat plant foods, milk, milk products and eggs, but avoid flesh foods (meat, poultry and fish).
- **Lacto-vegetarians** eat plant foods, milk and milk products, but avoid eggs and flesh foods.
- **Ovo-vegetarians** eat plant foods and eggs, but avoid milk, milk products and flesh foods.
- **Pesco/pollo-vegetarians** eat meats like seafood and chicken, but do not eat other meats, such as beef, lamb, and pork.
- **Total vegetarians**, also called **vegans**, eat plant foods only.

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Why People Become Vegetarians

People adopt vegetarian diets for one or more of the following reasons:

Health

Many people believe they will be healthier if they are vegetarians. Vegetarian diets tend to be lower in saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium, and higher in fiber, magnesium, folate, potassium, and antioxidants than the typical American diet. There is considerable evidence to suggest positive relationships between a vegetarian diet and reduced risk for several chronic, degenerative diseases and conditions, including obesity, coronary artery disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and some types of cancer. Though there are positive health benefits of vegetarianism, it cannot prevent or cure disease. Vegetarians, like others, should seek necessary medical care.

Ecology

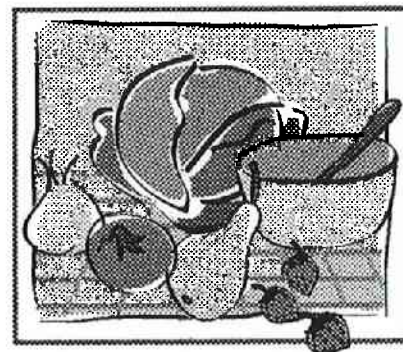
Some people feel that one way to combat environmental degradation and world hunger is to eat lower on the food chain. These vegetarians feel the practice of growing food to feed animals is wasteful – that more people could be fed if crops were used to feed people rather than animals.

Economics

Most plant foods are less expensive than animal foods. The cost of meat may limit the amount people eat.

Ethics

Ethical reasons for vegetarianism include philosophies such as nonviolence and reverence for life. Some people are opposed to killing animals for food and abstain from eating meat, poultry and fish.



Quick Facts

- Vegetarianism has become popular in the United States in the second half of this century.
- Vegetarians can be divided into different categories depending on which animal foods are restricted in the diet.
- People adopt vegetarian diets for many reasons, including health, ecology, economics, ethics and religion.

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Religion

Some religious groups have traditionally been vegetarian. Several Indian religious groups include vegetarianism among their tenets of faith. In the United States, Seventh Day Adventists are the largest traditional group following vegetarianism and are lacto-ovo-vegetarians. Some vegetarians are members of new religious groups with diet-related taboos.

Planning a Nutritious Vegetarian Diet

People on vegetarian diets generally receive adequate amounts of most nutrients. However, the following nutrients may be lacking. Vegetarians should make sure they get adequate amounts of these nutrients.

Energy

Energy is needed to sustain body processes and for physical activity. Energy in food is measured in calories. Calories are supplied by fat, carbohydrate and protein. Vegetarians tend to consume fewer calories and are thinner than meat-eaters. This is because plant foods are bulky and low in calories.

Most vegetarians eat enough food to meet their energy needs. Vegetarian children and adolescents will receive enough calories if their diets are well-planned. The less restricted the vegetarian diet, the easier it is to meet energy and nutrient needs.

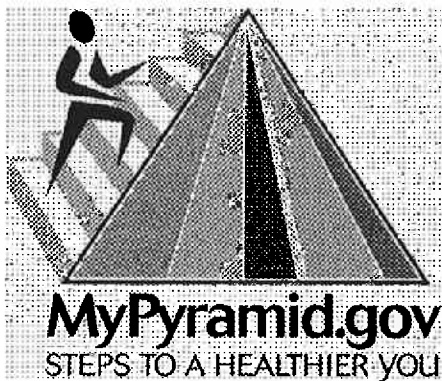


Figure 1: Go to the Web site www.MyPyramid.gov to find your personalized pyramid for good health. Although there is not a specific MyPyramid for vegetarians, it is possible to follow MyPyramid by making appropriate substitutions which fit your diet. For example, in the meat and bean category, meat can be replaced with meat substitutes; milk substitutes can be used in place of milk products, and so on.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids

An increasing body of research shows the many benefits of omega-3 fatty acids. These fats may reduce the risk for cardiovascular disease, improve cognitive function and vision, and act as an anti-inflammatory in the body. The primary sources of omega-3 fatty acids in the diet are fish, organ meats, and DHA-enriched foods, such as eggs. Based on these food sources, vegetarians may not get enough omega-3 fatty acids in their diet. However, vegetarians can choose from the increasing variety of DHA-enriched foods sold in the marketplace in order to boost their omega-3 fatty acid intake. Also, capsule supplements made from DHA-rich microalgae are available, but it is always important to consult a healthcare provider before taking a supplement.

Protein

Protein is needed for growth and maintenance of body tissues. It also is necessary for enzymes, hormones, antibodies and milk production in women who are breastfeeding. Plant sources of protein can provide adequate amounts of essential and nonessential amino acids, if they are reasonably varied and caloric intake is sufficient to meet energy needs. Whole grains, legumes, vegetables, seeds and nuts all contain essential and nonessential amino acids. Textured vegetable proteins and meat analogues, such as tofu and tempeh (usually made from soybeans and fortified with amino acids) are good protein sources.

Vitamins

Riboflavin helps the body break down carbohydrates, proteins and fats so they can be used for energy. It also is necessary for healthy skin, eyes and clear vision. The best sources are liver, milk products and red meats. When these foods are restricted or avoided, riboflavin must come from other sources, such as green leafy vegetables and fortified or enriched grains.

Vitamin B₁₂ is needed for normal red blood cell formation and normal nerve function. The body needs only small amounts and can store it in large amounts. Therefore, a deficiency takes a long time to develop, maybe several years. Once a deficiency does develop, however, it results in irreversible nerve damage. Therefore, vegetarians need to pay special attention to this nutrient.

In planning vegetarian diets of any type, choose a variety of foods that ensure caloric intake meets energy needs.

The "Dietary Guidelines for Americans" recommend a reduction in fat intake and an increased consumption of whole grains, vegetables and fruits. Well-planned vegetarian diets can effectively meet these guidelines and be a health-supporting dietary alternative.

Vegetarians should follow the prudent diet principles recommended in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Well-planned vegetarian diets can effectively meet these guidelines and be a health-supporting dietary alternative.

Cyanocobalamin, the human form of vitamin B₁₂, is available from nonanimal products such as fortified commercial breakfast cereals, fortified soy beverages, some brands of nutritional yeast, and other products.

A vegetarian who eats milk products daily will get enough vitamin B₁₂. Vegans, however, have little or no vitamin B₁₂ in their diets. They must obtain the vitamin through regular use of a vitamin B₁₂ source such as fortified soy milk or yeast, or a vitamin B₁₂ supplement.

Vitamin D is required to absorb calcium from the digestive tract and to incorporate calcium into bones and teeth. Few foods contain large amounts of vitamin D. The best sources – fortified milk, egg yolks and liver – are all of animal origin. Therefore, vegetarians, especially vegans, may not get enough.

Another source of vitamin D is sunlight. The body makes vitamin D from sunlight on the skin. People regularly exposed to sunlight can get enough vitamin D without having any come from food. However, sun exposure can be limited by several factors, including dark skin, pollution and northern latitudes. If sun exposure is limited and there are no animal products in the diet, a vitamin D supplement is needed.

Minerals

Calcium is needed for strong bones and teeth, for normal blood clotting, and for

Table 1. Daily food guide for vegetarians. Below are suggested daily servings, based on a 2000 calorie diet, from each of the food groups in MyPyramid.

Food group	Suggested Daily Amounts	Serving Sizes
Grains	6 ounces	1 slice bread; 1/2 cup cooked cereal, rice or pasta; 1/2 bagel or English muffin; 6" tortilla
Vegetable	2 1/2 cups	1/2 cup cooked, chopped or raw vegetables; 1 cup raw leafy vegetables; 3/4 cup vegetable juice
Fruit	2 cups	1 medium piece of fruit; 1/2 cup canned, chopped, or cooked fruit; 3/4 cup fruit juice
Milk and milk substitutes	3 cups	1 cup of milk or yogurt; 1 cup calcium and B ₁₂ fortified soy milk; 1 1/2 oz. hard cheese; 1 1/2 oz. calcium and B ₁₂ fortified soy cheese
Meat and fish substitutes	5 1/2 ounces	1 cup cooked dry beans, peas or lentils; 2 eggs; 8 oz. bean curd or tofu; 1/2 cup shelled nuts; 3-4 Tbsp peanut butter
Vegans*	1 serving daily	3-5 tsp vegetable oil + 1 Tbsp blackstrap molasses + 1 Tbsp brewer's yeast

* This is for vegans who do not consume fortified products. This group at the tip of the pyramid is for vegans who do not consume fortified products. The vegetable oil is for calories and essential fatty acid; the molasses for iron and calcium; and the yeast for B-vitamins, especially riboflavin. Fortified brewer's yeast has B₁₂.

normal muscle and nerve function. Most calcium in the American diet comes from milk and milk products. When these foods are avoided, calcium must come from other sources. Dark green leafy vegetables are the plant foods that provide the most calcium.

Certain plant components may inhibit the absorption of dietary calcium. In the context of the overall diet, however, this does not appear to be significant. Calcium from low-oxalate vegetable greens, such as kale, is absorbed as well or better than calcium from cow's milk.

Calcium deficiency in vegetarians is rare, and there is little evidence to show that calcium intakes below the Dietary Reference Intake cause major health problems in vegetarians. U.S. recommendations for calcium are relatively high compared to those for populations that eat a more plant-based diet. High levels of animal protein increase urinary loss of calcium. U.S. recommendations are designed to compensate for this. Studies show that vegetarians absorb and retain more calcium from food than do nonvegetarians.

Iron combines with protein to form hemoglobin, the substance in the blood that carries oxygen and carbon dioxide. An adequate intake of iron is necessary to prevent anemia. Many Americans, both meat-eaters and vegetarians, have a difficult time consuming enough iron.

Iron is found in animal and plant foods, but the iron in animal foods is more easily absorbed by the body. Also, the iron in plant foods may be less available to the body because of their high fiber content. Fiber is not absorbed into the body. It may tie up minerals, such as iron, so they, too, are not absorbed. For these reasons, vegetarians may be at a higher risk for

developing iron deficiency. Because women need more iron than men, they especially need to pay attention to iron.

Among plant foods, dark green leafy vegetables have the highest iron content. Dried fruits, such as raisins, apricots, peaches and prunes, also are high in iron. Eat plant sources of iron at the same meal as foods high in vitamin C (Brussels sprouts, strawberries, citrus fruits, broccoli, collard greens, mustard greens, cantaloupe, or vitamin C-rich fruit juices). Vitamin C increases the availability of iron in the intestinal tract. When vitamin C and iron are eaten together, more iron is absorbed into the body.

Legumes

Vegetarians, as well as meat-eaters, find that legumes – dry beans, dry peas and lentils – are an excellent food to extend or replace meat. Legumes are low in cost, high in nutritive value, and contribute iron and B vitamins to the diet. Although their protein quality is low, they can be combined with small amounts of animal food, such as milk, eggs or cheese, or with other plant foods, such as grains, to yield high-quality proteins.

Dry beans are rich in protein, iron, calcium, phosphorus and potassium. Many varieties of dry beans include black beans, garbanzo beans (also called chick peas), kidney beans, lima beans, navy beans and pinto beans.

Dry peas are good sources of protein, iron, potassium and thiamin. They are green or yellow and can be purchased split or whole.

Lentils are disc-shaped legumes similar in size to peas. They are rich in protein, iron, potassium, calcium and phosphorus.

Summary

A vegetarian diet can meet daily nutrient needs. Vegetarians should be aware of which nutrients may be lacking in their diets. Vegans need a reliable source of vitamins B₁₂ and D. Riboflavin, calcium and iron may also deserve special attention, although intakes usually are adequate if the diet contains reasonable variety and adequate energy.

Because it may be difficult for infants, young children, adolescents and pregnant and lactating women to get enough calories and nutrients, vegan diets for these groups should be well-planned and supervised by a qualified health professional.

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