

VEGETARIANISM: HEALTHY LOW COST MEAL PLANNING

By Gail Kreczkowski

The United States Department of Agriculture estimates that less than 7 percent of the Country's population is predominately vegetarian. Even so that figure represents more than 12.4 million people. Why are so many people resorting to a vegetarian diet?

1. *Longer, healthier life:* Vegetarians are at lower risk for cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure and obesity; only animal products contain cholesterol and saturated fat.
2. *Religious beliefs:* Among others, millions of Hindus and Seventh Day Adventists do not eat meat.
3. *Environment:* Meat production takes more resources, causing soil erosion, water depletion, pollution from pesticides and animal waste.
4. *Love of animals:* Some protest the cruel treatment of animals mass-produced for their meat.
5. *Pocketbook:* Raising grain and vegetables is cheaper than raising livestock, so it costs less to eat.

Types of Vegetarians:

- Lacto-ovo-Vegetarian (8 million) Eat no animal foods other than milk products (lacto) and eggs (ovo).
- Lacto - Eat milk, butter, cheese; no eggs
- Vegan - Consume no eggs or milk products and nothing that flies, swims, or walks.

Protein for the Vegetarian:

The lacto-ovo vegetarian who consumes two cups of milk or the equivalent in milk products and two

cups of legumes is guaranteed an adequate intake of protein with a complete array of amino acids. The vegan, who cannot rely on milk and milk products to deliver complete protein in a single food, has to know how to combine plant proteins that are missing, or low in, one or more essential amino acids.

Mixtures that Provide Complete Protein:

Legumes, including peanuts and soy products + Grains (corn, oats, rice and wheat)

Legumes, including peanuts and soy products + Seeds (Sesame or sunflower seeds)

Leafy vegetables + Grains (corn, oats, rice and wheat)

Vitamins and Minerals for the Vegetarian:

The lacto-ovo vegetarian generally will not have problems getting enough vitamins and minerals, but the vegan will need to have a reliable source.

- Vitamin D: There is no practical source of vitamin D in plant foods. Regular (not extreme) exposure to the sun will prevent a deficiency.
- Iron: Dark green vegetables, dried fruit, nuts, seeds, dried beans, black-strap molasses, as well as iron fortified cereals and breads. A tip: Eating these at the same meal with foods rich in vitamin C such as an orange, green pepper, tomato, lime, lemon or broccoli helps the body use iron more efficiently.

Complimentary Protein Menus

Serving meals without meat several times a week can be a delicious and nutritious way of cutting costs. Remember to compliment proteins in each meal so that the maximum protein value is obtained.

Milk Stuffed Zucchini Sliced Tomatoes Whole Wheat Toast
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1. Stuffed Zucchini

Slice 3 medium Zucchini in half length-wise. Scoop out insides.

Sauté in butter:

chopped zucchini pulp
1/2 lb. chopped mushrooms
1 lrg. chopped onion

Beat 3 eggs, mix with:

1 1/2 c cottage cheese
1/2 c wheat germ
3 TBSP soy sauce
1 c grated cheese
1 c cooked rice

Add the sautéed vegetables, stuff zucchini.

Bake at 350° for 40 minutes

Servings: 6

Grains and vegetables can supply all the protein we need. The key is variety and enough calories to meet our energy needs.

Here are some recipes that combine complimentary plant proteins:

Milk Caribbean Beans & Rice Cooked Spinach Banana & Pineapple mix
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2. Caribbean Rice & Beans

Soak overnight:

2 c pinto or kidney beans
6 c water
1 TBSP salt

Bring to a boil, simmer 40 minutes.

Drain. Reserve liquid.

Heat in skillet:

2 TBSP oil

Add:

2 green onions
1 lrg tomato
1 tsp crushed garlic
1/4 tsp pepper
drained beans

Sauté 5 minutes.

Add:

2 c rice
4 c bean liquid

Bring to a boil, cover, reduce heat and simmer 20-25 minutes

Servings: 4

Resources:

- Sacramento Vegetarian Society, 455-0563, for information on their monthly pot lucks.
- Marline Balbachas, 448-3327, publisher "Health Wise," an herbal newsletter that also contains vegetarian recipes.
- Learning Exchange, 929-9200, occasionally offers vegetarian cooking classes.

