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Health, Ethics & Environment since 1982

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VRG.org

Nutrition Hotline

Are All Ultraprocessed Foods Bad?

by Reed Mangels, PhD, RD



QUESTION: What are ultraprocessed foods? Are they bad for me?

C.K., via email

ANSWER: Scientists in Brazil are credited with creating the term ultraprocessed food.¹ They wanted to distinguish between foods like apples, sweetened applesauce, and sugary fruit drinks, which could all be classified as “fruits” in traditional ways of grouping foods. They proposed an alternate system² that classifies foods into four groups, one of which is “ultraprocessed food.” These foods are ready to eat with little or no preparation. They have undergone processes such as salting, baking, frying, pickling, and canning. They are typically high-calorie, high-sugar, high-sodium, low-fiber foods that contain little protein and few vitamins or minerals. If we simply look at this definition, ultraprocessed foods should at least be limited, if not avoided. It’s more complicated, however.

Many foods eaten by vegans such as plant milks, veggie burgers, and plant protein-based meat and egg substitutes are being classified as ultraprocessed foods.³⁻⁴ Even traditional foods such as tofu and tempeh

have been categorized as ultraprocessed.⁵ This is concerning because fortified soymilk is wildly different from a sugary soft drink in nutritional quality. Classifying vegan foods rich in important nutrients, high fiber and low in sugar and saturated fat, as ultraprocessed foods, a category that people are being told to avoid, doesn’t seem right.

Ultraprocessed vegan foods can be helpful for those with limited cooking skills, cooking facilities, mobility, time, or energy. Selective use of vegan ultraprocessed foods can make it possible to eat a meal that could be better nutritionally than fast food or snack foods that don’t require any cooking. Look for vegan products based on whole grains, vegetables, and legumes and for products lower in sodium and saturated fats.

The choice is yours. You may opt to avoid ultraprocessed foods. You may use these foods occasionally, being aware of which ones are better choices. You may decide to use these foods fairly often but combine them with healthier foods. For example, instead of eating two vegan burgers, eat one burger with a salad and a sweet potato. Depending on your situation, you might use all of these

options variably. Food choices are driven by many factors and there are many ways to have a healthy vegan diet. Check vrg.org for a wealth of simple vegan meal ideas.

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Vegan Journal

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Vegan Journal is one project of The Vegetarian Resource Group. We are a nonprofit that educates the public about veganism and the interrelated issues of health, nutrition, environment, ethics, and world hunger. To join VRG and receive *Vegan Journal* in the U.S., send \$25 to The Vegetarian Resource Group, P.O. Box 1463, Baltimore, MD 21203, or go to vrg.org/ donate. Additional donations support our outreach and research.



Note from the Journal Editors

Are You a Vegan Biased Against Veganism?



Are you a vegan, vegetarian, or plant-based individual who unconsciously promotes myths about vegan, vegetarian, and plant-based diets? Many health professionals, researchers, journalists, VRG interns, and others will make glowing statements about plant-based diets, followed by contradictory negative comments. For example, someone might say vegetarians have been shown to have healthier diets, and then state vegetarians have to greatly worry about protein, iron, calcium, or other nutrient deficiencies. What they should be saying is everyone (vegan or meateater) has to get protein, iron, and calcium, and then if appropriate, they can provide a list of sources for those nutrients. You can be a meateater and live on potato chips and beer, or be a vegan and live on potato chips and beer; both may lead to deficiencies. You can be a meateater and eat lots of fruits and vegetables, or a vegan and eat lots of fruits and vegetables; both may be on a healthy diet.



We'll hear some say that a vegan diet is too expensive. In reality, most people worldwide don't eat much meat because meat is too expensive. What they actually mean is that, meateater or vegan, if you eat a lot of packaged processed foods, it will be more expensive. If people focus on eating more legumes (beans, tofu, tempeh, etc.), less processed food will be more affordable than prepared veggie burgers or steak.

People might say it's hard to find vegan options. What they mean is that some people are choosy, and some people can always make do. For example, a meateater may only go to her favorite fast food restaurant for the fried chicken she likes. A vegan may be happy wherever he eats. Or a vegan may feel comfortable only going to his favorite restaurant or packing his own lunch.



Sometimes VRG interns will write that it's socially hard to be vegan. What they actually mean is that some people have no problem being vegan socially, and others feel uneasy. As with any attribute, to some people it's just another part of who they are, and for others it's something to keep hidden, or to brag about.

At VRG, we try to think carefully about what we say to avoid perpetuating stereotypes about vegetarian/vegan lifestyles. We may qualify our comments, pointing out the broader perspectives of science and how people feel.

In this issue, we've had several writers who express their veganism in positive ways. Seth Tibbott (page 16) started making tempeh in his garage and got past many steep hurdles to get his products into most American health food stores and supermarkets. In Florida, Larry Rumbough (page 35) has been coordinating vegan events and VegFests for over 20 years. On page 22, Reed Mangels reviews a multitude of companies producing vegan mac and cheeses. We're thankful for everyone who educates others about veganism in an honest and encouraging way.

Charles Stahler, Debra Wasserman, and Reed Mangels
Vegan Journal Editors

VRG's MEMORIAL and HONORARY GIFT PROGRAM

How often have you wanted to make a gift in honor of a loved one or friend but weren't sure which charities are vegan-friendly, pro-environmental, or pro-animal rights? Please remember The Vegetarian Resource Group. You can make a gift in memory of a loved one or as a living tribute to honor someone on a special occasion, such as a wedding or birth. We'll send an acknowledgement to you and to the recipient(s) you choose. Your gift will support educational outreach programs and help promote veganism.

Memorials & Honorary Gifts

In memory of: _____

In honor of: _____

Please send acknowledgement to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

My name and address:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Make checks payable to The Vegetarian Resource Group and mail to P.O. Box 1463, Baltimore, MD 21203, or donate at vrg.org/donate

Thanks to Madeline Akers; Albert R. Kalter, DC; Michael A. Tedesco; and Mark Tomassoni for their donations.

Special thanks to Heather Francis for staffing VRG's table at the Boston, MA, Veg Food Fest and Elsa Spencer for staffing VRG's booth at the Charlottesville, VA, VegFest.

Thanks for VRG's Bumper Stickers!

Thank you for sending me the two bumper stickers. Soon they will be on my car. I love the slogan *Be Kind to Animals—Don't Eat Them!* but living in Texas, I fear many will take exception to the order "... don't..." and that someone will throw a hamburger at my car.

Austin has lots of good places to enjoy vegan meals, which is one of the few good points of living here. And while I'm on the subject, you may like my contribution to your goals. I look quite a bit younger than my 87 years, and when people comment on that I share a secret: Never in my whole life have I consumed any animals. It really can be done! Know that The Vegetarian Resource Group plays an important role in my life!

Ria R., via email

Thrilled to Meet Vegan Journal's Senior Editor

My family and I had the pleasure of meeting Hannah Kaminsky at Wheatsville Coop's Vegan tasting event in Austin, Texas. We connected because she had the current copy of *Vegan Journal* out on her sampling table and I commented on it. Great to meet

and be able to thank the current Senior Editor of *Vegan Journal*.

I shared with her how Charles Stahler and Debra Wasserman have been guideposts for me and my family since the *Journal* was called *Baltimore Vegetarians* MANY years ago, when it was only a few sheets of paper stapled together. It was a less friendly time for vegetarians and vegans. It was definitely wonderful to have supportive people around you then, as it is now.

Toni G., via email

Loved Issue 3 2024 Vegan Journal!

I found the Vol. 43, Issue 3, 2024, particularly enjoyable. When I finished reading the issue, I wondered why. I reviewed it and discovered the reason: six articles by Reed Mangels! The usual *Nutrition Hotline* and *Scientific Update*, plus *Textured Vegetable Protein (TVP)*, *Eat Some Broccoli and Call Me in the Morning*, *Thinking About Magnesium*, and *Am I Getting Enough Iodine?* All were enjoyable to read, informative, and educational: a great combination. Please don't overwork her so that Reed's articles can continue for many issues in the future!

Norman D., via email

Letters to the Editors can be sent to: Vegan Journal, P.O. Box 1463, Baltimore, MD 21203. You may also e-mail letters to vrg@vrg.org

or send a message to us on Facebook:

facebook.com/thevegetarianresourcegroup

Coming in the next issue...

LOWFAT DESSERTS

Plus: Ghanaian Recipes and Meal Plan, Cooking with Berries, 25 Hot Weather Dishes, and More!

Comfort Food to Warm Your Belly and Soul

by Amber Murtoff

Comfort food needs no explanation; it transcends cultures and generations, a universal language spoken in flavors and textures. Condense the feelings of love and safety, perhaps of simpler times, into something you can fit onto a fork or spoon. More valuable than family heirlooms, these morsels of memories are irreplaceable.

Plant-based meals can easily spark that same joy, even when the original inspiration was far from it, for the culinary world offers a vibrant symphony of vegan options that are just as heartwarming and soul-soothing as their traditional counterparts. In fact, having the ethical burden of supporting animal cruelty lifted adds an entirely new level of comfort.

When in doubt, risotto will never let you down. After a long day, you'll want to dive head-first into a bowl of creamy comfort with Butter Bean Cacio e Pepe Risotto. The classic combination of black pepper and cheese is one for the ages, further enhanced by homemade vegan Parmesan.

Takeout can be tempting when you're craving comfort, but nothing can compare to homemade Sticky Ginger BBQ Bao Buns. Savory yuba "pork" is drizzled with a sweet and spicy ginger BBQ sauce, all wrapped up in fluffy steamed buns, creating a mouth-watering fusion of flavors. Everything Spiced Edamame completes the meal on a bright, zesty note.

Shake off the frigid weather and warm up your taste buds with a slice of Winter White Focaccia Pizza. Thick, chewy flatbread serves as the base for creamy whipped tofu ricotta, sautéed winter greens, and a hint of salty, umami Parmesan.

Transforming hard winter squash into light, airy dumplings only seems like an impossible magic trick. This Butternut Squash Gnocchi recipe effortlessly produces pillowy dumplings infused with the rich, sweet flavor of roasted butternut squash, delicately balanced with hints of nutmeg.

Indulge in the timeless elegance of classic Mushroom Bourguignon, a luxurious twist on a favorite French dish. Rich red wine sauce smothers tender cremini mushrooms, wrapping them in a velvety blanket to unfurl across your tongue. Each spoonful is a symphony of unrivaled earthy goodness.

Finally, on warmer days, enjoy a Glow Bowl, a vibrant mix of kale, Brussels sprouts, quinoa, white beans, and juicy pear slices, topped with grilled tofu halloumi and crunchy Ceylon cinnamon walnuts. Drizzled with a sweet maple balsamic dressing, it's a nutritious and delicious bowl that will leave you feeling fully nourished.

Butterbean Cacio e Pepe Risotto

(Serves 4)

Risotto

- ¼ cup vegan butter
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup uncooked Arborio rice
- 4 cups reduced-sodium vegetable broth, kept warm
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- One 15-ounce can butter beans, drained and rinsed
- ½ cup nutritional yeast
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper, plus extra to taste
- Salt, to taste
- 2 Tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest

In a large skillet, melt vegan butter over medium heat. Add garlic and sauté for 1-2 minutes until fragrant. Add rice and stir to coat with the butter mixture. Cook for another 1-2 minutes until the rice is lightly toasted. Begin adding warm broth, one ladleful at a time, stirring frequently. Allow the rice to absorb the broth before adding more. Continue this process until the rice is al dente, about 18-20 minutes.

In a separate skillet, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add butter beans and cook 3-4 minutes, until warm all the way through. Use a fork to lightly mash, leaving some whole for texture.

Plant-Based Parmesan

- ½ cup hulled hemp seeds
- 2 Tablespoons nutritional yeast
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon onion powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- Pinch black pepper

While risotto cooks, combine all ingredients for the Parmesan in a food processor. Pulse into a coarse meal.

Once the rice is cooked, stir in the mashed butter beans, nutritional yeast, and black pepper. Salt to taste.

To serve, divide the risotto among plates. Garnish with parsley, Plant-Based Parmesan, lemon zest, and a generous sprinkle of additional black pepper.

Total calories per serving: 517 Fat: 16 grams
Carbohydrates: 63 grams Protein: 26 grams
Sodium: 290 milligrams Fiber: 11 grams



Sticky Ginger BBQ Bao Buns & Everything Bagel-Spiced Edamame

(Serves 5)

Bao Buns

- ½ cup warm water
- 1 Tablespoon organic granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon instant yeast
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 Tablespoon vegetable oil
- ⅛ teaspoon salt

In a mixing bowl, combine warm water, sugar, and yeast. Allow to sit for 5-10 minutes until foamy.

Add flour, oil, and salt to the yeast mixture. Mix with a spatula until a shaggy dough forms. Knead the dough on a floured surface for about 5-7 minutes until smooth and elastic. Place the dough in an oiled bowl, cover with a damp towel, and allow to rise in a warm place for about 1 hour or until doubled in size.

Punch down the dough and divide it into 10 equal portions. Roll each portion into a ball and flatten slightly into a disc shape. Place each disc onto a small piece of parchment paper and let them rest for another 15-20 minutes.

Steam the buns in a steamer basket for 10-12 minutes until puffed and cooked through.

Sticky Ginger BBQ Sauce

- ¼ cup reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 2 Tablespoons hoisin sauce
- 2 Tablespoons ketchup
- 2 Tablespoons rice vinegar
- 1 Tablespoon organic dark brown sugar
- 1 Tablespoon ground ginger
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes (optional)
- 2 Tablespoons water
- 1 Tablespoon cornstarch

In a saucepan, combine soy and hoisin sauces, ketchup, rice vinegar, sugar, ginger, garlic, sesame oil, and red pepper flakes (if using). Bring the mixture to a simmer over medium heat and let it cook for 5 minutes, until aromatic.





In a small bowl, combine water and cornstarch to make a slurry. Stir the slurry into the sauce and cook for an additional 2-3 minutes until it thickens. Remove from heat and set aside.

“Pork” Filling

- 1 teaspoon chili or vegetable oil**
- 2 cloves garlic, minced**
- 1 Tablespoon grated fresh ginger**
- One 5-ounce package dried yuba, rehydrated and shredded (see Cook’s note)**
- 1 Tablespoon reduced-sodium soy sauce**
- 1 Tablespoon organic dark brown sugar**
- 1 teaspoon rice vinegar**

Heat oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add garlic and ginger and sauté for 1 minute until fragrant. Add shredded yuba to the skillet and cook for 5-7 minutes until lightly browned.

Stir in soy sauce, sugar, and rice vinegar. Cook for another 4-5 minutes until the yuba is coated with sauce. Remove from heat and set aside.

To assemble, split the steamed buns open and fill each with a spoonful of the yuba “pork” filling. Drizzle the Sticky Ginger BBQ sauce over the filling. Serve the Everything Spiced Edamame on the side.

Everything Spiced Edamame

- 1 Tablespoon olive oil**
- 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil**
- 2 cups edamame in shells**
- 1 Tablespoon everything bagel seasoning, or to taste (see Cook’s note)**

In a large skillet, heat both oils over medium heat. Add edamame and cook for 3-4 minutes until hot all the way through.

Sprinkle everything bagel seasoning over the edamame. Stir well to coat evenly. Cook for another 2-3 minutes until fragrant. Remove from heat.

Cook’s Note: Yuba is a thin, high-protein sheet of soy-milk skin. You can purchase it dried, fresh, or frozen in Asian grocery stores. Everything bagel seasoning contains sesame seeds, poppy seeds, dried garlic and onion, as well as salt, and is sold in the baking aisle.

Total calories per serving: 461 Fat: 12 grams
Carbohydrates: 66 grams Protein: 21 grams
Sodium: 938 milligrams Fiber: 9 grams

White Winter Focaccia Pizza

(Serves 6)

Focaccia Dough

- 2¾-3 cups all-purpose flour, divided
- 1 teaspoon instant yeast
- 1 teaspoon granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup warm water
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil, plus more as needed

In a large mixing bowl, combine 2¾ cups flour, yeast, sugar, and salt. Gradually add warm water and olive oil, stirring until a sticky dough forms.

Knead the dough on a floured surface for about 5-7 minutes until smooth and elastic, adding more flour if needed. Place the dough in a lightly oiled bowl, cover with a damp towel, and allow it to rise in a warm place for about 1 hour or until doubled in size.

Whipped Plant-Based Ricotta

- One 14-ounce block extra-firm organic tofu, drained and crumbled
- 2 Tablespoons nutritional yeast
- 1 Tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 Tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 Tablespoon garlic powder
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Meanwhile, prepare the ricotta. In a food processor, blend tofu until it resembles the texture of ricotta cheese. Add remaining ricotta ingredients to the crumbled tofu. Blend for 2-3 minutes until creamy. Adjust seasoning to taste, adding more salt, pepper, or lemon juice if desired. Use immediately as a topping for pizza, pasta, or sandwiches, or store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

Toppings

- 2 cups chopped winter vegetables, such as kale, Brussels sprouts, and Swiss chard
- Plant-Based Parmesan cheese, to taste (recipe on page 7 or use store-bought)

To assemble the pizza, punch down the risen dough and transfer to a lightly oiled 9- x 13-inch sheet pan. Gently press and stretch the dough to form a

rectangular shape. Spread the tofu ricotta mixture evenly over the dough, leaving a small border around the edges. Scatter raw greens over the ricotta. Sprinkle Parmesan on top.

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Bake for 20-25 minutes, or until the crust is golden brown. Allow to cool slightly before slicing into squares or wedges and serve warm.

Total calories per serving: 432 Fat: 17 grams
Carbohydrates: 50 grams Protein: 22 grams
Sodium: 455 milligrams Fiber: 5 grams

Butternut Squash Gnocchi

(Serves 4)

1 medium butternut squash (about 2 pounds), peeled, deseeded, and diced

1 large russet potato, peeled and diced

2 Tablespoons olive oil

Salt and pepper, to taste

2-3 cups all-purpose flour or gluten-free all-purpose flour blend, plus extra for dusting

½ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon ground nutmeg

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Place butternut squash and potatoes on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Drizzle with oil and season with salt and pepper. Roast for 25-30 minutes, or until the squash is tender and lightly caramelized. Let cool.

To make the gnocchi dough, mash the vegetables in a large mixing bowl until smooth. Add 2 cups flour, salt, and nutmeg. Mix until a soft dough forms, adding more flour as needed. Form the gnocchi by first lightly flouring a clean work surface. Divide the dough into smaller portions and roll each portion into a long rope, about 1-inch thick. Using a knife, cut the ropes into 1-inch pieces. Optionally, you can use a fork to create ridges on the gnocchi.

To cook the gnocchi, first bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Carefully drop the gnocchi into the boiling water, working in batches if necessary to avoid overcrowding the pot. Cook the gnocchi for about 2-3 minutes, or until they float to the surface. Remove them with a slotted spoon and transfer to a plate.

Serve gnocchi with your favorite sauce, such as a sage-infused brown butter, creamy cashew sauce, or ginger squash bisque.

Total calories per serving (without sauce): 439

Carbohydrates: 84 grams

Sodium: 331 milligrams

Fat: 8 grams

Protein: 10 grams

Fiber: 7 grams



Mushroom Bourguignon

(Serves 4)

2 Tablespoons olive oil
1 cup pearl onions
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 carrots, diced or sliced
1 celery stalk, diced
1 pound cremini mushrooms, sliced
1 cup low-sodium vegetable broth
½ cup red wine (Burgundy or Pinot Noir) or water
2 Tablespoons tomato paste
1 Tablespoon reduced-sodium soy sauce or tamari
1 teaspoon dried thyme
Salt and pepper, to taste
2 Tablespoons all-purpose flour (optional)
Fresh parsley, chopped

In a large skillet or Dutch oven, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add pearl onions and sauté until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add garlic, carrots, and

celery. Cook for another 3-4 minutes until vegetables are softened.

Add mushrooms to the skillet and cook until they release their juices and become golden brown, about 8-10 minutes.

Pour vegetable broth and red wine or water into the skillet filled with the cooked veggies, stirring to combine. Add tomato paste, soy sauce, thyme, salt, and pepper. Stir well to incorporate.

Bring the mixture to a simmer and allow to cook for about 15-20 minutes, allowing the flavors to meld and the sauce to thicken slightly. If desired, sprinkle flour over the mushroom mixture and stir until well combined. Cook for an additional 3-4 minutes until the sauce thickens.

Garnish with parsley. Serve over cooked pasta, over mashed potatoes, or with crusty bread on the side for dipping.

Total calories per serving: 155 Fat: 7 grams
Carbohydrates: 15 grams Protein: 5 grams
Sodium: 207 milligrams Fiber: 3 grams



Cozy Glow Bowl

(Serves 4)

Cinnamon Walnuts

- 1 cup walnut halves and pieces
- 1 Tablespoon maple syrup
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- Pinch salt

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a small bowl, toss walnuts with maple syrup, cinnamon, and salt until evenly coated. Spread coated walnuts on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper and bake for 8-10 minutes, or until lightly toasted. Remove from oven and set aside to cool.

Tofu Halloumi

- One 14-ounce block extra-firm tofu, drained and pressed for 30 minutes
- 1 Tablespoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 Tablespoon lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ⅛ teaspoon ground black pepper

Cut tofu into ½-inch slices. In a shallow dish, whisk together oil, salt, lemon juice, oregano, and black pepper. Place tofu in the marinade and let marinate for at least 30 minutes.

Heat a grill pan or skillet over medium-high heat. Add marinated tofu and cook for 3-4 minutes on each side, or until golden brown and slightly crispy. Remove from heat and set aside.

Maple Balsamic Dressing

- 1 Tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 1 Tablespoon maple syrup
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and pepper, to taste

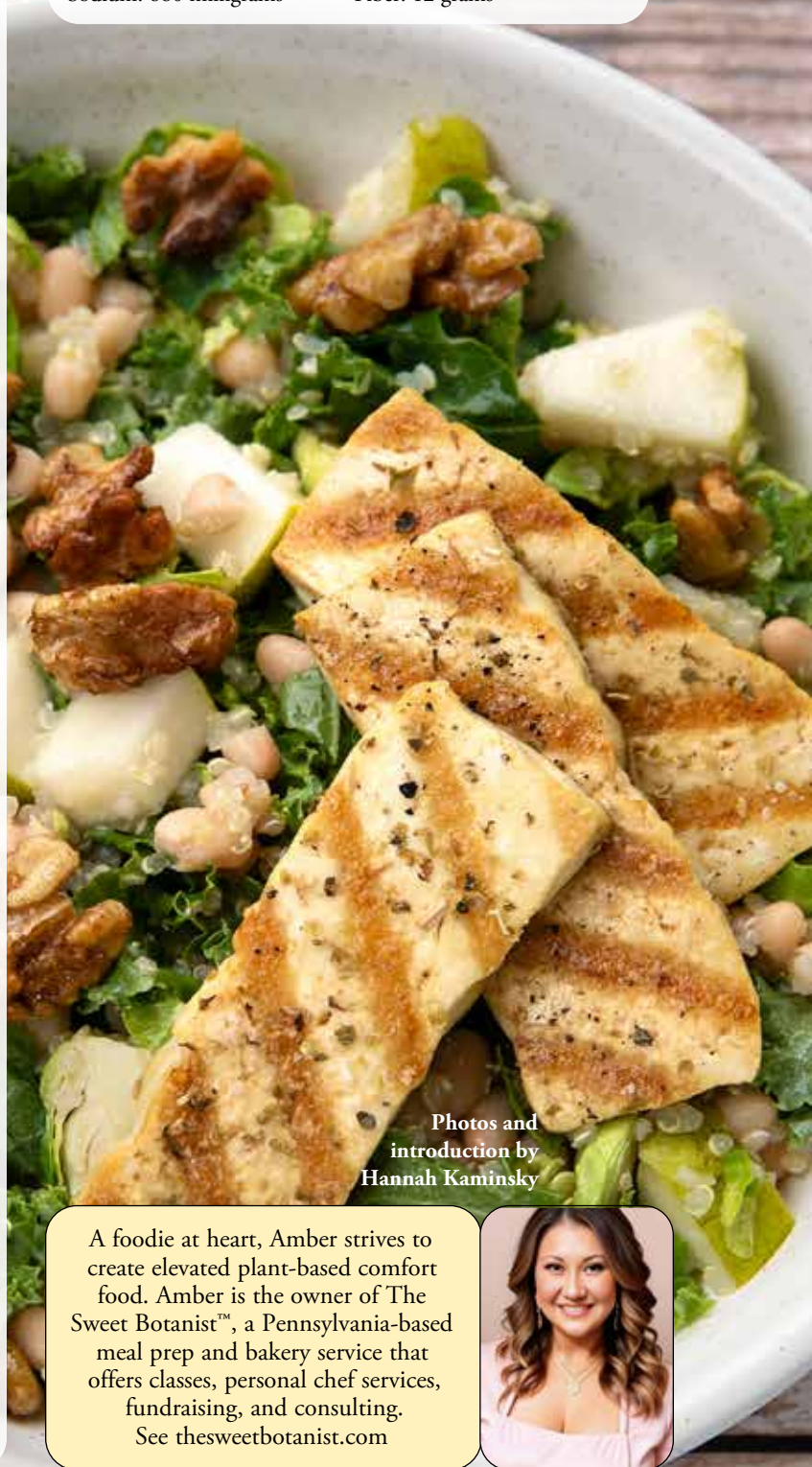
In a small bowl, whisk together all ingredients and set aside.

Glow Bowl

- 2 cups kale, stems removed and chopped
- 1 cup thinly sliced or shredded Brussels sprouts
- 1 cup cooked quinoa
- One 15-ounce can white beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 ripe pear, cored and diced

In a large mixing bowl, combine ingredients and divide among serving bowls. Top each bowl with walnuts and tofu halloumi. Drizzle the Maple Balsamic Dressing over the bowl just before serving.

Total calories per serving: 650 Fat: 40 grams
Carbohydrates: 49 grams Protein: 30 grams
Sodium: 660 milligrams Fiber: 12 grams



Photos and introduction by Hannah Kaminsky

A foodie at heart, Amber strives to create elevated plant-based comfort food. Amber is the owner of The Sweet Botanist™, a Pennsylvania-based meal prep and bakery service that offers classes, personal chef services, fundraising, and consulting. See thesweetbotanist.com



SCIENTIFIC UPDATE by Reed Mangels, PhD, RD, FADA

A REVIEW OF RECENT SCIENTIFIC PAPERS RELATED TO VEGETARIANISM

Whole-Food Plant-Based Diet During Treatment for Metastatic Breast Cancer

A recent pilot study examined whether the use of a whole-food plant-based (WFPB) vegan diet was feasible and beneficial during treatment for metastatic breast cancer. Breast cancer treatment has been associated with weight gain, increased blood cholesterol levels, and greater insulin resistance—factors that may result in poorer outcomes.

Thirty women who were being treated for stage 4 breast cancer were randomly assigned to either a WFPB diet or their usual diet for eight weeks. Those in the WFPB group received three prepared meals and a side dish every day. Meals included legumes, whole grains, nuts, seeds, fruits, and vegetables and did not include animal products or added fats and oils. Subjects were encouraged to add their own food as long as it followed the diet plan. Those in the usual diet group continued to eat the way they usually did. Both groups were given a daily multivitamin.

Over the eight-week study period, the WFPB diet group lost an average of nine pounds more than the usual diet group. This weight loss did not appear to be due to the women's cancer getting worse or to a loss of appetite. Total cholesterol and LDL cholesterol decreased more in the WFPB group, and this group had a greater decrease in insulin resistance. There was no significant difference in markers of cancer progression at the end of the study.

The researchers pointed out that this was a small pilot study that needs to be repeated for a longer time period and with more subjects.

Campbell TM, Campbell EK, Culakova E, et al. A whole-food, plant-based randomized controlled trial in metastatic breast cancer: weight, cardiometabolic, and hormonal outcomes. *Breast Cancer Res Treat.* 2024;205:257-266.

Vegan Diets for Male Bodybuilders

Can a vegan diet that doesn't include specialty foods, such as protein supplements, be planned to meet the calorie and nutrient needs of intensive training for male bodybuilders? Researchers used existing data about bodybuilders' height, weight, and physical activity to estimate calorie needs. They then used data about foods commonly eaten by vegans and increased the amounts of foods to develop theoretical vegan diets that would meet bodybuilders' calorie needs, which were estimated at approximately 4,200 calories per day. Diets that provided generous amounts of protein (1.8 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight) could be planned. The International Olympic Committee recommends that athletes who are training to maximize muscle size and strength take in at least 1.6 grams of protein per kilogram. The planned diets also included a recommended amount of leucine for those wanting to maximize muscle development. Leucine is described as the most important amino acid for stimulating muscle development. The diets met recommendations for all nutrients except for vitamin D, which was slightly below the RDA. Fortified foods or supplements may be needed to meet recommendations for vitamins B12 and D. The theoretical diets did not exceed recommendations for saturated fat. The researchers noted that this study modeled diets during the bodybuilding off-season as opposed to the dieting phase. During preparation for a bodybuilding contest, many competitive male bodybuilders use protein supplements to help to meet protein needs while keeping calorie intake low. Plant protein supplements may be helpful to bodybuilders following vegan diets during the dieting phase of contest preparation.

The results of this modeling study suggest that athletes can use vegan diets to achieve their muscle-building goals and meet nutrient needs while keeping saturated fat intake low.

Goldman DM, Warbeck CB, Karlsen MC. Completely plant-based diets that meet energy requirements

for resistance training can supply enough protein and leucine to maximize hypertrophy and in male bodybuilders: A modeling study. *Nutrients*. 2024;16:1122.

Does the Addition of Olive Oil Improve a Whole-Food, Plant-Based Diet?

You've probably heard the debate—Is it healthier to only get fat from whole-food sources such as olives, nuts, seeds, and avocados or from vegetable oils? Mediterranean diets, which appear to be heart healthy, include generous amounts of olive oil. On the other hand, whole-food sources of fat provide other nutrients in addition to fat.

The Recipe for Heart Health (RFHH) study had 40 adult participants, all of whom were considered to be at borderline to high risk for heart disease. They were assigned to follow either a whole-food plant-based (WFPB) vegan diet high in olive oil (4 Tablespoons per day) or a WFPB vegan diet with less than a teaspoon of olive oil per day for four weeks. After a one-week break from their diets, they switched to the other diet for four weeks so that those who previously had a high intake of olive oil now had a low intake and vice versa. Participants attended weekly cooking classes and kept records of what they ate. Prior to the study, subjects were not on a vegan diet.

Total fat intake averaged 48% of calories on the high olive oil diet and 32% of calories on the low olive oil diet. Sources of fat during the low olive oil phase were mainly nuts, seeds, olives, and avocados. Both diets led to a significant reduction in total and LDL cholesterol, blood glucose, and C-reactive protein (an indicator of inflammation) compared to baseline. There were greater decreases in LDL cholesterol after the low olive oil diet.

The researchers would like to do a longer study to see if their results would be sustained. They support the use of a WFPB vegan diet with relatively low olive oil to reduce the risk of heart disease.

Krenek AM, Mathews A, Guo J, et al. Recipe for heart health: A randomized crossover trial on cardiometabolic effects of extra virgin olive oil within a whole-food plant-based vegan diet. *J Am Heart Assoc*. 2024;13:e035034.

Vegan Diets in the United Kingdom

More than 1,500 self-identified vegan adults in the United Kingdom were compared to omnivores, “flexitarians” (rarely ate meat), pescatarians, and vegetarians. The majority of study subjects had followed their current diet for at least five years. All participants completed a questionnaire about the food that they ate. The results were compared between groups and with U.K. dietary guidelines.

Vegans, on average, consumed almost three ounces of plant-based meat alternatives (tempeh, textured vegetable protein, falafel, veggie burgers/sausages, soy burgers/sausages, seitan) and almost a cup of plant milks daily. Their intakes of grains, vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, and dried beans were higher than that of any other diet group. Vegans ate almost three times more dried beans than did omnivores. Vegans were most likely to use vitamin and mineral supplements (87.5% of vegans used at least one supplement). About a quarter of vegans took an omega-3 fatty acid supplement, and 35-40% took a vitamin B12 supplement.

On average, all diet groups met recommended intake for protein, calcium, vitamin B12, and zinc. Only vegans met the saturated fat recommendations. The calcium intake of vegans was markedly higher than in earlier studies of vegans, probably due to greater use of fortified plant milks. All groups met the iron recommendations for men and older women; only vegans met the iron recommendation for premenopausal women. None of the groups met the vitamin D recommendation. Vegans had the highest intakes of fiber, vitamin C, and vitamin E. A higher proportion of vegans compared to nonvegetarians had intakes of zinc, iodine, selenium, vitamin A, and vitamin B12 that were below recommendations. These results were only based on food intake and did not include supplement use.

Lawson I, Wood C, Syam N, et al. Assessing performance of contemporary plant-based diets against the UK Dietary Guidelines: Findings from the Feeding the Future (FEED) Study. *Nutrients*. 2024;16:1336.

Tempeh: An Ancient Innovation

by Seth Tibbott

While I must admit, I love a juicy Beyond Burger every now and then, my appetite for heavy, greasy food has its limits. It's fair to say there's increasing demand by vegans and omnivores alike for healthier options with fewer, simpler ingredients. Now is an exciting time in plant-based research labs around the world, as scientists experiment with new technologies like 3D printing and growing fungi in bioreactors to meet this need. Still, after years of tasting and creating cutting edge products, I keep coming back to my first love, the one that started me on this lifelong culinary journey: tempeh.

Tempeh (spelled "tempe" in Indonesia) hails from Indonesia where it is still eaten by people of all walks of life. There, it is almost always made strictly of fermented soybeans, cultured with a healthy member of the mold family, *rhizopus oligosporus*, and incubated for 24 hours at 88 degrees. No large industrial tempeh makers exist in that tropical land. Tempeh is made fresh daily by thousands of small family-run shops and sold within hours of completion. Though most Indonesian tempeh is fermented in plastic bags now, there are still shops fermenting tempeh in banana leaves. Fresh tempeh, sautéed lightly with veggies and a squeeze of lime over rice, is second to none.

Consider the simplicity of soy tempeh: soybeans, water, and culture. Nutritionally, tempeh punches above its weight. A 100-gram serving of tempeh contains around 20 grams of protein, 7 grams of fiber, 11 grams of fat, and just 14 milligrams of sodium. It's hard to think of a plant-based protein that tastes so good without adding salt! Let the naturally nutty, earthy flavors shine as is, or with just a bit of seasoning.

In Western countries, tempeh is vacuum-packed and sold in refrigerated cases alongside tofu. Contrary to the plain soybean offerings that are most common, tempeh can be made with nearly any beans or grains. Artisan brands are sprouting everywhere, using garbanzo beans, black beans, mung beans, brown rice, millet, quinoa, and even amaranth, in novel combinations.

Searching the internet, I see some comments about Western tempeh having a "bitter taste," which perhaps develops in the vacuum package over time. I find that marinating tempeh in lightly salted water, soy sauce, or lemon juice easily solves the problem. Additionally, while tempeh's older cousin, tofu, can be delicious served in cubes of ½-inch or more, tempeh is denser (and twice the protein as tofu) and is better suited to thinner, ¼-inch slices. Smaller pieces more effectively absorb the flavors from marinating and cooking.

If you really want to taste next-level tempeh, you should experiment with making your own from scratch. It's a fairly easy process to master and the gastronomic payoffs are huge. You can order home tempeh-making kits and learn more about this superfood at tempehwest.com

You'll never feel weighted down after eating a delicious meal of tempeh, whether it's stacked on a Reuben sandwich, stir-fried with vegetables, tossed into pasta sauce, or just lightly sautéed solo. I've been making tempeh both at home and commercially for over 47 years and still, the nutty, mushroomy taste and toothsome texture never cease to amaze me. Here are some of my oldest, most foolproof tempeh recipes that highlight the versatility of this true superfood.





Finger Lickin' Tempeh

(Serves 3)

8 ounces tempeh, cut into ¼-inch strips
⅓ cup reduced-sodium soy sauce or
1½ teaspoons salt
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger root
1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil (optional)
1½ cups water
1 Tablespoon olive oil

In a medium bowl, combine tempeh, soy sauce or salt, garlic, ginger, optional sesame oil, and water. Marinate for at least 20 minutes or overnight, covered in the fridge. Pat dry and sauté in olive oil over high heat until brown on both sides, 6-8 minutes. Serve hot.

Cook's Note: Make sure the oil is very hot, almost to the point of smoking, before adding the tempeh. Starting too soon will result in soggy, oily tempeh.

Total calories per serving: 202 Fat: 8 grams
Carbohydrates: 11 grams Protein: 16 grams
Sodium: 477 milligrams Fiber: 5 grams



Low-Sodium Tempeh

(Serves 3)

8 ounces tempeh, cut into ¼-inch strips

5 lemons, juiced

1½ teaspoons ground cardamom

1 Tablespoon olive oil

In a medium bowl, combine tempeh, lemon juice, and cardamom. Marinate for at least 20 minutes or overnight, covered in the fridge. Pat dry and sauté in olive oil over high heat until brown on both sides, 6-8 minutes. Serve hot.

Total calories per serving: 202	Fat: 8 grams
Carbohydrates: 14 grams	Protein: 15 grams
Sodium: <1 milligram	Fiber: 5 grams

Marian's Tempeh Stroganoff

(Serves 4)

4 Tablespoons vegan butter
2 medium yellow onions, diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
8 ounces tempeh, cut into ½-inch cubes
1½ cups sliced mushrooms (any variety)
2 Tablespoons reduced-sodium soy sauce
¾ cup low-sodium vegetable broth
1½ cups plain, unsweetened vegan yogurt
1 Tablespoon fresh parsley, minced
3 cups cooked pasta or rice, to serve

In a large skillet, melt the butter over medium heat. Add onions and garlic and sauté until golden brown, 8-10 minutes.

Add tempeh, mushrooms, and soy sauce and sauté until tempeh is light brown all over, about 6 minutes. Next, add broth, cover, and simmer for 5 minutes. Remove from heat, add yogurt, and stir to combine. Top with fresh parsley. Serve hot over noodles or rice.

Total calories per serving: 453 Fat: 15 grams
Carbohydrates: 44 grams Protein: 28 grams
Sodium: 455 milligrams Fiber: 8 grams

Tempeh Salad

(Serves 3)

8 ounces tempeh, diced into ¼-inch cubes

1½ teaspoons salt

1 quart water, divided

½ cup finely chopped celery

½ cup chopped fresh parsley

¼ cup minced red onions

¼ cup vegan mayonnaise

1½ teaspoons Dijon mustard

½ Tablespoon low-sodium soy sauce

1 Tablespoon lemon juice

½ teaspoon garlic powder

Salad or sandwich fixings, to serve (optional)

Fill a medium saucepan with about ½-inch of water. Bring the water to a simmer.

Place tempeh in a steamer basket and arrange the pieces in one even layer without overlapping. Lower the steamer basket into the saucepan, making sure it doesn't touch the water, and cover. Steam tempeh cubes for 20 minutes.

Transfer the tempeh to a large bowl. Add the salt and remaining water, and let soak for 15 minutes. Drain thoroughly and pat dry.

Add all the veggies to the tempeh. Mix mayonnaise, mustard, soy sauce, lemon juice, and garlic powder together and add to the bowl. Mix well and enjoy on salad or in a sandwich.

Cook's Note: Try adding toasted sesame seeds, fresh or dried dill, curry powder, or relish for different flavors.

Total calories per serving: 278 Fat: 16 grams
Carbohydrates: 15 grams Protein: 16 grams
Sodium: 839 milligrams Fiber: 6 grams





Tequila Tempeh

(Serves 6)

8 ounces tempeh, cut in half lengthwise, then into 2-inch squares, then into triangles

¼ cup olive oil

¼ cup tequila

¼ cup rice vinegar

2 Tablespoons lime or lemon juice

1 Tablespoon ground red chilies

2 cloves garlic, minced

½ teaspoon salt

Veggies, such as bell peppers, onions, zucchinis, etc.

In a medium bowl, combine tempeh, oil, tequila, vinegar, lime or lemon juice, chilies, garlic, and salt. Marinate for at least 2 hours or overnight, covered in the fridge.

Skewer and grill with veggies over a hot grill for 4-6 minutes. Alternately, brush tempeh with additional oil and place on a baking sheet lined with foil. Broil in the oven on high until golden brown, flipping once half-way through.

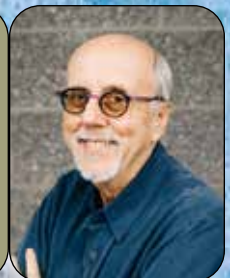
Cook's Note: If you cook on a hot grill, remember, "If you're not turning, you're burning!"

Total calories per serving: 147 Fat: 7 grams
Carbohydrates: 9 grams Protein: 8 grams
Sodium: 101 milligrams Fiber: 4 grams



Photos by Hannah Kaminsky

Seth Tibbott is the founder and former owner of Tofurky. Before starting the company, he was making tempeh at home for his friends and family. He now works with a variety of vegan charities and startups in the USA and around the world. He is the author of *In Search of the Wild Tofurky*.



Mac'd Out

Reviewing Packaged Vegan Mac and Cheese

by Reed Mangels, PhD, RD

Mac and cheese is a quintessential comfort food for many people. It's salty, creamy, and easy for anyone to make as a quick meal. Riding the wave of innovative new plant-based products, packages of vegan mac and cheese abound on supermarket shelves. VRG volunteer Mae Y. Seon and I evaluated 31 boxed vegan mac and cheese products from Annie's, Banza, Daiya, Goodles, Grown as Foods, Jovial, O Organics, Pastabilities, Upton's Naturals, and Wicked Kitchen.

We found lots of variations, with flavors ranging from the traditional cheddar cheese to jalapeño, barbecue, and truffle.

Preparation time for boxed vegan mac and cheese is generally short—boil water, cook pasta, make sauce, then mix pasta and sauce. Some varieties feature pre-made sauce; you just mix it in with the cooked pasta. From package to table, it may take 6-12 minutes, depending on the product. Some vegan boxed mac and cheese packages come with everything that you need, while others call for additional unsweetened non-dairy milk and vegan butter to mix with the sauce packet.

Most products report nutritional information both as purchased and as prepared. For products that did not include “as prepared” information, we calculated the nutrient content of a serving using unsweetened soymilk and Earth Balance vegan butter.

The labels on most products reported a serving size of 1 cup of prepared mac and cheese, although a couple of Banza products listed a ¾-cup serving size. One serving of prepared vegan mac and cheese provides between 200 and 550 calories.

The products we looked at had 4-22 grams of protein per serving, making them a reasonable source of protein. Products highest in protein were

Wicked Kitchen products that ranged from 18-19 grams of protein and Pastabilities Protein Pasta Ruffles & Vegan Cheese with 22 grams of protein in a 1-cup serving.

There was a lot of variability in fat in the products that we examined, with a range from 1.5-18 grams of fat per serving. Saturated fat ranged from 0-6 grams per serving.

Products found to be lowest in saturated fat were:

- **Annie's Vegan Mac GF Red Lentil Spirals & Sweet Potato Pumpkin** and **Annie's Vegan Mac Shells & Sweet Potato Pumpkin**—0 grams per serving
- **Annie's Vegan Mac GF Rice Pasta & Cheddar**—1 gram per serving
- **Banza Plant-Based Chickpea Mac & Vegan Cheddar** and **Banza Plant-Based Shells & Vegan White Cheddar**—1 gram per serving
- **Jovial GF Vegan Mac**—1 gram per serving
- **Upton's Naturals Deluxe Ch'eesy Mac**—1 gram per serving
- **Annie's Vegan Mac Macaroni & Cheddar**—1.5 grams per serving



The sodium content of products ranged from 260 milligrams per serving to a whopping 850 milligrams per serving. Label reading is especially important if you are sodium-sensitive.

Here are the lowest sodium products that we found:

- **Annie's Vegan Mac GF Red Lentil Spirals & Sweet Potato Pumpkin** and **Annie's Vegan Mac Shells & Sweet Potato Pumpkin**—260 milligrams per serving
- **Upton's Naturals Deluxe Ch'eesy Mac**—300 milligrams per serving

Many products supplied calcium; in some cases, the calcium content depends on whether a calcium-fortified non-dairy milk is used to prepare the sauce. Calcium content ranged from 0 to over 250 milligrams per serving.

Products supplying at least 100 milligrams of calcium included:

- **Annie's Vegan Mac Shells & Sweet Potato Pumpkin**, **Goodles Vegan is Believing Plant-based White Cheddar with Spirals**, and **Jovial Gluten Free Vegan Mac**—100 milligrams per serving
- **Goodles Gluten Free Vegan Be Heroes**, **Wicked Kitchen BBQ King Mac & Cheeze**, and **Wicked Kitchen This Is Nacho Mac & Cheeze**—approximately 120 milligrams per serving
- **Wicked Kitchen Smoky Picnic Mac & Cheeze**—130 milligrams per serving
- **Daiya Deluxe Mac & Cheeze, Cheddar Style**; **Daiya Deluxe Mac & Cheeze, White Cheddar Style**; and **Daiya Deluxe Mac & Cheeze, Alfredo Style**—approximately 200 milligrams per serving
- **Daiya Deluxe Mac & Cheeze, Cheddar Jalapeño Style**—240 milligrams per serving
- **Daiya Deluxe Mac & Cheeze, Four Cheeze Style with Herbs**—258 milligrams per serving

Products labeled as gluten-free included Annie's Vegan Mac Gluten Free Red Lentil Spirals & Sweet Potato Pumpkin and Annie's Vegan Mac Gluten Free Rice Pasta & Cheddar, Banza Mac and Cheese products, and all Daiya Mac & Cheese products. Additionally, there are Googles Gluten Free Vegan Be Heros, Jovial Gluten Free Vegan Mac, and O Organics Gluten Free Vegan Mac Cheddar Style.

Special thanks to Mae Y. Seon for her work on this project.

To see reviews of other vegan products, visit:

vrg.org/blog/2023/07/07/vegan-shelf-stable-entrees-how-do-they-compare
vrg.org/journal/vj2023issue2/2023_issue2_frozen_grain_review.php
vrg.org/blog/2022/10/21/vegan-butter-which-should-i-choose
vrg.org/blog/2022/10/18/vegan-cheese-for-pizza



NOTES FROM THE VRG SCIENTIFIC DEPARTMENT

VEGAN EDUCATION

Look for VRG intern Akua Oppong's article on Ghanaian West African vegan cuisine (including a meal plan, glossary of ingredients, and recipes) in the next issue of *Vegan Journal*. Thank you to Reed Mangels, PhD, RD, for supervising this project. We greatly appreciate Cathy and Jason for housing VRG's other intern from Texas.

A branch of the Canadian military contacted us after seeing one of our research articles on our website (vrg.org). Because of their members' preferences, they were looking for information on plant-based proteins. Additionally, a member of an equivalent U.S. military branch indicated she would like to share information about plant-based entrées. If any of our members serve or work for the military and have eaten or prepared vegan dishes there, please let us know specifics about your experiences and any hints or ideas.

Thank you to Heather Francis for coordinating a VRG booth in Boston, MA; Phil Becker in San Francisco, CA; Reed Mangels and Annie Alper at the Food as Medicine Health Conference in Santa Cruz, CA; Debra Wasserman and Charles Stahler in Clarksville, MD; and Elsa Spencer in Charlottesville, VA.

BEQUESTS

The VRG depends on the generous contributions of our members and supporters to continue our educational projects. Though the world may not become vegan in our lifetimes, we realize that we are planning and working for future generations.

- Your will and life insurance policies enable you to protect your family and also to provide a way to give long-lasting support to causes in which you believe. Naming The Vegetarian Resource Group in your will or life insurance policy will enable us to increase our work for veganism.
- One suggested form of bequest is: I give and bequeath to The Vegetarian Resource Group, Baltimore, Maryland, the sum of _____ dollars (or if stock, property, or insurance policy, please describe).
- To be sure your wishes are carried out, please speak with your attorney specifically about writing the correct information in your will.

Book Reviews

Baking Vegan Bread at Home by Shane Martin

Who doesn't love warm bread fresh from the oven? Shane Martin's cookbook offers a wide variety of vegan bread recipes you can make at home, starting with muffins, scones, and other breakfast breads. I'm thrilled to see recipes for Old-Style English Muffins and Jalapeño Cheddar Cornbread Muffins.



The next chapter includes biscuits, buns, and rolls, such as Sassy Sweet Potato Biscuits, Backyard Hamburger Buns, and Gluten-Free Dinner Rolls. The third chapter features loaves, including Rustic Homemade Rye Bread, Irish Soda Bread, Hometown Sourdough, and more. Rustic and European Bread options are a Simple French Baguette, Rustic Italian Bread, Swiss Braided Bread, and so many others.

Martin provides a chapter on Veggie, Nut, and Seed Breads, such as Morning Muesli Bread and Morning Glory Sunflower Seed Bread. His chapter on Fruit Breads and Sweet Loaves includes options like Island Coconut Pineapple Bread and Orange Cranberry Bread. Finally, Martin highlights the versatility of Flatbread with recipes for Garlic Herb Vegan Naan Bread, Rosemary Sesame Crackers, and Crunchy Breadsticks, etc.

Shane Martin is a food blogger and his artistry with photography shows throughout this book.

Baking Vegan Bread at Home (ISBN 978-0-7603-8624-8) is a 160-page hardcover book. It is published by The Harvard Common Press and retails for \$24.99. *Debra Wasserman/VJ Managing Editor*

It's All Y'all's Cookbook by Hannah Kaminsky

Hannah, senior editor of *Vegan Journal*, has been writing vegan cookbooks for a long time, and their latest work highlights the versatility of Texas-based, vegan protein producer All Y'all's Foods products such as vegan jerky and crunchy vegan bacon bits. Readers will quickly appreciate how adaptable



these items can be when preparing meals. Whether it be Summer Rolls, Cheesy Potato Soup, Mushroom Stroganoff, BBQ Sandwiches, or Maple Bacon Blondies, you'll savor these dishes. Hannah's gorgeous photos and creativity shine in this cookbook.

It's All Y'all's Cookbook is an 88-page self-published book. It retails for \$10. Order this book online at allyallsfoods.com/products/its-all-yalls-cookbook *Debra Wasserman/VJ Managing Editor*

The Be Kind Alphabet by Anouk Frolic

Anouk Frolic is a graduate of Ontario College of Art (OCADU) and a long-time vegan and animal rights activist. She has written and illustrated a fabulous children's alphabet book. One animal, including



common creatures such as bees, a fox, hens, an octopus, a raccoon, and others, is featured for each letter. Lesser known animals, such as an armadillo, gecko, jerboa, loris, numbat, umbrella bird, zebu, and many more, are also highlighted.

Descriptions of each animal are written in poetic verse along with a page featuring a gorgeous full-color illustration of each animal. Information on where each animal lives on earth, as well as interesting facts, are presented. Ways in which some of the animals are abused are discussed, in addition to what an animal may eat and natural predators.

Young readers will be inspired to respect animals in their natural habitats, care for our environment, and perhaps become young animal rights activists. The book will also lead to further educational discussions.

This book is geared towards second and third graders and would make a fabulous addition to any elementary school library or children's library.

The Be Kind Alphabet (ISBN 978-1-59056-708-1) is a 60-page hardcover book. It is published by Lantern Publishing & Media and retails for \$19.95. *Debra Wasserman/VJ Managing Editor*

Veganic Agriculture

As a Climate Crisis Solution

by Jeanne Yacoubou, MS

Vegetables are often grown using slaughterhouse byproducts. Fertilizers and soil amendments made primarily of blood, bone, feather, or fishmeal, not to mention manure, are common additives.

Unfortunately, even certified organic vegetables have likely been grown in fields literally brimming with excrement from livestock that was fed with pesticide-treated grains. The animals likely have been raised on synthetic hormones or prophylactic antibiotics to ward off disease from close confinement. As recent headlines about the H5N1 avian flu virus infecting cows and humans can attest, there are no ways to ward off all diseases in confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs).

So, what's a concerned consumer to do? Some individuals grow their own produce using vegan fertilizers. There are plenty of ways to concoct your own blend from only plant-based sources so you can rest assured that what you're eating is vegan.

Limited space is not a barrier to entry. Vegan gardening works in containers on balconies and stoops, in raised beds on rooftops, in backyard gardens, or in open community plots. Anyone can grow their own with a bit of persistence.

But there is another solution: seek out farms practicing veganic agriculture.

What is veganic farming?

There is no legal definition of veganic farming, nor is there an agreed upon definition among farmers and advocates who support or practice it. The general consensus, however, is that veganic farming is a way of growing food that does not rely on any *intentionally added* animal-derived contributions.

The phrase "intentionally added" is included because some natural agricultural events, such as pollination, are insect-driven. Without pollinators, we wouldn't have most vegetable crops at all.

Some biocontrol, such as ladybugs flying in on their own accord to eat aphids off of your still-ripening veggies, is another good example. Some vegans, however, draw the line at purchasing large numbers of predatory insects and releasing them for biocontrol on a veganic farm because mail-order ladybugs are mistreated, beginning with being harvested by the millions from the wild using a portable vacuum.

Analyzing other real-life cases may sound like splitting hairs but remain valid considerations when attempting to define *veganic farming*. For instance, Dr. Eric Brennan has studied biocontrol using hoverflies in organic lettuce production for over 12 years. He plants alyssum flowers among the lettuce plants. Hoverflies feed off the flowers, then lay their eggs in the inner folds of lettuce plants where aphids have infested them.

Hoverfly larvae consume up to 150 aphids per day before they mature enough and fly off to begin the cycle again. The question for veganic farmers and gardeners is: Would planting alyssum flowers in your lettuce plot to attract hoverflies be considered a veganic practice, or is this some form of animal exploitation?

Is veganic farming also organic farming?

One popular notion of *veganic farming* (as opposed to vegan farming) is that it's a union of veganism with organic farming. The latter does have a legal definition. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) oversees the National Organic Program (NOP), which sets organic standards on growing crops and raising livestock. NOP accredits individuals, companies, and states to certify farms and their products as 100% organic, organic, or made with organic ingredients. Each of these three labels has specific legal meanings.

Using this notion, veganic farming is a type of organic farming that excludes all animal inputs. Based on our research for this article, most growers practicing veganic farming are not certified organic (a costly process that involves much record keeping). However, like certified organic farmers, veganic farmers generally do not use synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), sewage sludge, or irradiation.

How many veganic farms are there?

There is a growing number of small farms practicing vegan agriculture in the United States and Canada. Dr. Mona Seymour, who researches veganic agriculture in North America, estimates there are approximately 75 active veganic farms. Most of them are a half acre up to 10 acres in size, but a few are 100 acres or more.

Animal agriculture dominates food production in most industrialized countries such as the U.S. So, it may be difficult to find vegetables grown veganically near you, but it's not impossible.

There are a few websites with maps of veganic farms. Start your search at [veganicworld](http://veganicworld.com/veganic-world/farm-map) (veganicworld.com/veganic-world/farm-map) or the VON Map (vonmap.uk).

Often, veganic farmers sell their produce at farmer's markets. Visit a few in your area and ask questions. You may hear about growers who are not on the veganic farming maps. If you do, tell them about the maps to reach new customers.

However, based on our research, veganic farmers may not need any more buyers unless they expand their acreage, because their food is already in great demand. High-end restaurants looking for quality produce are among the biggest accounts for veganic growers.

North American Veganic Certification Standard

Created by Canadian veganic farmer, author, and activist Jimmy Videle, the North American Veganic Certification Standard (NAVCS) is offered to veganic farmers as a way to inspire confidence in their products among purchasers. So far, at the time of writing, approximately 16 veganic farms have been granted certification in Canada, the U.S., and Kenya. At the moment, NAVCS is not recognized by any official governments. See: certifiedveganic.org/veganic-standard

Biocyclic Vegan Certification Standard

The German-based International Biocyclic Vegan Network founded the Biocyclic Vegan Certification Standard (biocyclic-vegan.org/Background/#Standard) in 2017. This certification is recognized by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (ifoam.bio/sites/default/files/2020-05/familyframe_web_0.pdf). This standard is more detailed than the NAVCS standard but almost identical in basic principles of completely animal-free and synthetic pesticide- and fertilizer-free agriculture that is focused on building soil health. At the time of writing, there are 32 farms certified biocyclic vegan and four distributors of their certified products.

Veganic agriculture as a climate crisis solution

The Vegetarian Resource Group has published several articles addressing the multiple environmental and climatic harms caused by animal agriculture. See: vrg.org/environment

One of the most serious problems of existential proportions facing the human race is the climate crisis. The latest peer-reviewed estimations from 2021, published in *Nature*, attribute **20%** of global greenhouse gas emissions to animal agriculture. Projections (science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aaw9908) using advanced modeling techniques considering the carbon sequestration by land reverted to natural forests or grasslands if it were not used by livestock boosts that figure to **28%**.

This is strong evidence in support of veganic farming as a climate-imperative replacement of animal agriculture. If an energy transition from



fossil fuels to renewables were accompanied by a food transition, there would be a 28% reduction of greenhouse gases sent into the atmosphere. There is no denying that this figure represents a significant mitigation of the climate crisis.

In addition to this monumentally important conclusion, there would be no animal manures full of nitrogen and phosphorus to pollute waterways and contaminate groundwater. A cascade of positive environmental outcomes would emerge from the elimination of toxic algal blooms and the formation of marine dead zones, both caused by excess synthetic fertilizers and manure.

Although veganic farming does require adequate nitrogen and phosphorus as two critical nutrients for growth, veganic farmers focus on building soil organic matter through sustainable techniques, which significantly limit the amount of additional fertilizers regularly applied to fields by both industrial and organic farmers.

Gardening tips based on veganic practices

A garden is a small farm and so many techniques of veganic farmers are directly applicable to vegan gardeners. Differences stemming from the soil type and health, weather, and climate of a particular location will determine what your garden needs to thrive; so consult the resources listed on page 29 to help you succeed.

There are some basic principles to follow in veganic gardening that will yield positive results over time. Keeping in mind the central principle that building the soil is key to a productive garden will reap benefits in the long term.

Here are some ways to get started:

1. Make your own compost. This way you can be sure it doesn't have weed seeds, pesticides, or animal-derived substances in it. Kitchen scraps, including coffee grounds, plus yard "waste" like fallen leaves or grass clippings in a 1:2 ratio is ideal. A compost bin, tumbler, or backyard pile work fine. It may take up to one year to form something that resembles soil (AKA *black gold*). Once it's formed, add to your plot throughout the year.

2. Use veganic seeds if possible. Jimmy Videle, Canadian veganic farmer and author, also sells seed through lafermedelaube.com. The next best thing is certified organic seed. Choose heirloom or open-pollinated varieties (not hybrids) and save your own seed for next year.

3. Many gardeners advocate rotating crops every season. A four- to seven-year cycle is optimal. This is a good way to avoid soil-borne pathogens. Others suggest intercropping, where you plant different crops close to each other for various ecological benefits. For instance, placing companion plants like corn, squash, and green beans next to each other is an indigenous practice that promotes growth of all three sister plants. Another idea is to place related crops, such as brassicas (e.g. cabbages and kale), that are preyed upon by the same insects, far apart from each other to minimize an infestation. Planting certain seeds, such as chard or leeks, around the borders of flower beds, away from other vegetables that may be attracting insects will add to your garden aesthetic and reduce insect infestation. Similarly, insects and deer are often repelled by marigolds, basil, nasturtium, and mint; so plant those species around the perimeter and among the rows. Lastly, allow a carrot or two to flower because they attract insects that would otherwise ravage your garden. See the resources on page 29 for other ideas.

4. Draw a garden map each year. Strategically arrange crops according to sun exposure and soil moisture conditions, which could vary even a few feet away. Some crops, like peppers, tomatoes, and squash, need warm temperatures, but others are frost-tolerant and may yield a harvest in 6-7 weeks after planting. Try spinach, radish, bok choy, and baby kale or collards to extend your growing season. Although a sunny spot is certainly good for an outdoor garden, a few crops, like lettuces, do well in a shadier location to prevent bolting (plant goes to seed prematurely), which turns leaves bitter.

5. For people doing container gardening, biennial crops such as kale or collards will keep on producing edible leaves (as long as you remove one or two per day) for 9-10 months of the year. Chives and other herbs are very easy to grow in

pots and will keep on giving as you remove leaves. On the other hand, perennial berry plants do better outside where they have space to grow. Cold temperatures help produce sweeter fruit later.

6. To protect soil microbes, which are vital to growing all plants, do not disturb the soil by turning it over. Hand weed without moving the soil too much.

7. Plant a cover crop (or a mix) after harvest and leave it in place over the winter. That crop is preventing erosion and keeping weeds at bay. Meanwhile, the roots of that crop are pulling up moisture and nutrients closer to the surface to nourish your garden later. Leguminous cover crops add nitrogen to the soil, reducing the need for additional fertilizers. There are many possible cover crops to choose; some do better in certain areas. With certain low-growing cover crops, you could transplant seedlings right into this living mulch. With other cover crops planted in between rows, you could mow it down, forming a green manure to suppress weeds from emerging. Cover crops that are killed by frost should be left on the soil to protect and nourish it through decomposition. Consult the resources at right for more info.

8. In early March before planting, do a basic soil test to determine nutrient levels. The resources at right will have a listing of reputable labs. Use your county's extension agent for additional tips. At this point, apply additional compost if needed, as dictated by soil test results.

9. Sow large seeds directly into the plant residues remaining over the winter. For small-seeded crops, start seedlings indoors in late February under proper lighting or in a heated propagator. Use a soil mix containing your compost or a veganic soil starter mix (plantbased-plants.com/products/veganic-seed-starter-mix). Transplant seedlings into the plant residues once the seedlings are 4-6 inches tall and the soil temperature is 55-60° F. Agro-forestry (agroforestry.org) incorporates trees into agriculture to create a system that mimics natural ecosystems. This practice could work in outdoor gardens. To minimize the chance of small mammals nibbling your fruit tree roots, plant daffodils or mint around the base of trees to deter

them. To prevent birds from eating the fruit, a fine mesh netting over the tree is recommended. Note that the netting would also prevent birds from eating any insects that may also be feeding on the fruit.

10. Every 3-4 years, leave your garden area fallow (don't plant). This gives the soil a rest. Continue to keep it covered with compost, wood chips, fallen leaves, etc., to continually enrich the soil. In the meantime, consider gardening somewhere else.

Veganic Farming and Gardening Resources

There is a wealth of information online. If you're new to veganic farming or gardening, these resources will prove to be invaluable.

- **Seed the Commons** webinars with veganic farmers and veganic supporters are full of useful information. See: seedthecommons.org
- **Veganic Agricultural Network** (goveganic.net) is for veganic gardeners and farmers, as well as people looking to purchase veganic produce. The founders offer an online veganic gardening course and host the Veganic Summit (veganicsummit.com).
- **Stock-Free Farming** is based in the UK, but a plethora of case studies are applicable to the U.S. See: stockfreefarming.org
- **Veganic Organic Network**, also based in the UK, has a variety of programs, especially for schools, to promote veganic agriculture. See: veganorganic.net
- All of the products at **One Degree Organics** are veganically grown. Two items contain honey. To the best of our knowledge, this is the only online company rooted in veganic agriculture. See: onedegreeorganics.com
- **The Veganic Grower's Handbook** by Jimmy Videle is one of the best veganic agriculture reference books. Available from lanternpm.org
- The **Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)** program, supported by the USDA's *National Institute of Food and Agriculture*, publishes two manuals that would be helpful to veganic growers: *Managing Cover Crops Profitably* and *Crop Rotation on Organic Farms*.
- On **The Vegetarian Resource Group** website, see: vrg.org/links/#veganic-farming

Veggie Bits

THEO's Plant-Based BEET Jerky

No, that's not a typo; beets, not beef, are at the heart of this vegetable-forward jerky. No one would accidentally mistake these savory snacks for meat, but that's part of the appeal. Aside from the visuals that are a clear giveaway, the texture is soft and dense, like dried fruit but without the sugar. You get the whole beet, including the stem, peel, and root, increasing the fiber, nutrition, and flavor while preventing food waste. Ginger Teriyaki, Salt & Pepper, Savory BBQ, and Spicy Sriracha enhance without obscuring the flavor of the beet, which will help kids learn to love their veggies, too. Certified organic, gluten-free, and upcycled. Available in boutique grocery stores, Amazon, and theosplantbased.com

Hannah Kaminsky/Senior Editor



Edward & Sons Purple Rice & Black Sesame Exotic Rice Toast

More than mere rice crackers, Exotic Rice Toast by Edward & Sons provides a sturdy base for dipping, topping, or straight-up snacking. Made with whole grain brown jasmine and purple rice flour with black sesame seeds, the texture is both light and crisp, with a uniquely nutty, toasted flavor. That subtle flavor pairs beautifully with just about anything, including sweet toppings like fresh berries, jam, and vegan cream cheese frosting, to create a stunning dessert charcuterie board as well. Let your creativity run wild! There's no risk of breakage even if you double dip, too; they can stand up to chunky guacamole and runny salsa without cracking or crumbling. Certified gluten-free, non-GMO, kosher, low-sodium, and palm oil-free. Available at Amazon, select Sprouts Farmers Markets, and Whole Foods, many co-ops and local stores, as well as edwardandsons.com

Hannah Kaminsky/Senior Editor



Community Goods Toiletries

It's time to clean up your act when it comes to single-use plastics.

Community Goods puts the planet first by using entirely compostable packaging and sustainable, eco-friendly, and still effective ingredients in their nourishing shampoo bars and conditioners, deodorants, and toothpaste tablets. Whether you're working towards reducing your carbon footprint, eliminating waste, or simply wanting better body, hair, and oral care, you'll be rewarded with fresh scents like Citrus Squeeze, Coconut Vanilla, Lavender Rosemary, and Peppermint Ice, all without sulfates, parabens, phthalates, silicones, or palm oil. A little bit goes a long way; so you'll likely save money in the long run, too. Available online through communitygoods.co

Hannah Kaminsky/Senior Editor



Dr. Praeger's Crunchy Veggie Burgers

Addressing the common complaint that veggie burgers can be too mushy, Dr. Praeger's takes their latest line of crunchy patties in the opposite textural direction. Either cauliflower or sweet potatoes are at the core of the two distinctive variants, joined by whole grains and vegetables, such as oats, peas, quinoa, and zucchini. A coating of finely ground brown rice is the secret to their crunchy exteriors, lending an additional touch of nutty flavor when sautéed, grilled, or air-fried to a golden-brown finish. Though more like crispy fritters than meaty burgers, they stack up just as nicely on a bun with all the classic fixings. Their unconventional flavors make them equally well suited to serve at the center of the plate with pasta or mashed potatoes, tossed in green salads, or on top of rice bowls. Certified gluten-free, non-GMO, and kosher. Available at HEB, Publix, Safeway, Sprouts Farmers Market, and Whole Foods, and many more stores. Find recipe ideas and additional information at drpraegers.com

Hannah Kaminsky/Senior Editor



Veggie Bits

Unlimeat Kimbap

Don't call them oversized sushi; Korean kimbap are a wholly unique sensation making big waves. Typically made from rice wrapped around a generous helping of pickles and meat or eggs, Unlimeat Kimbap are ground-breaking for their use of not only completely plant-based ingredients, but also upcycled oat konjac rice. Konjac is higher in fiber and lower in calories than conventional white rice. Craving some heat? Bulgogi kimbap replicates the spicy, smoky barbecued beef in an elegant, compact bite. For those seeking a fishless fix, tuna kimbap is stuffed with an oceanic filling that tastes like tuna salad, minus the mayonnaise. Both are paired with crisp carrots, pickled radish, burdock, and garlic stems. Sold frozen, they're ready to eat after just 2½ minutes in the microwave. Certified non-GMO and nut-free. Available at Central Market and DashMart. Read more at unlimeat.co
Hannah Kaminsky/Senior Editor



GOOD PLANeT Olive Oil Cheese Slices

Sidestepping commonly used saturated tropical oils, GOOD PLANeT offers a premium vegan sliced cheese made with high-quality olive oil instead. When it comes to making an epic sandwich, especially grilled cheese, these are the gloriously gooey fillings you've been craving all along. Sharp Cheddar has a distinctly tangy, robust flavor, while Smoked Gouda lives up to its name with a sultry, smoky finish. Both are soft and buttery right out of the package, fully enjoyable even cold, but only get better when melted—and melt, they do. Bridging the gap between artisan and everyday cheese, they're a reasonable little luxury for any cheese-lover. Certified gluten-free, non-GMO, and kosher. Available at Sprouts Farmers Market, Whole Foods, and others. Read more at goodplanetfoods.com
Hannah Kaminsky/Senior Editor



Sweet Nothings Spoonable Smoothies

If you like your smoothies extra thick, you're not alone. Ditch the straw and grab a spoon, which is conveniently included in every package of Sweet Nothings' Spoonable Smoothies. Blending together only whole fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds, these aren't desserts masquerading as "guilt-free" indulgences, but genuinely healthy snacks. Blueberry, dark chocolate, mango, peanut butter, strawberry, and tropical greens all taste as fresh as anything you would make at home, and are far less sweet than a typical smoothie bowl. Let the cups thaw out at room temperature for a few minutes before digging in, since they do freeze hard without any added sugar or stabilizers. Certified organic, kosher, and gluten-free. Available at Andronico's, Natural Grocers, and Thrive Market, and many local boutique stores. Find more information at sweetnothings.com
Hannah Kaminsky/Senior Editor



Good Foods Chip Dips

Never settle for a naked chip again. Thanks to Good Foods chip dips, you have a duo of savory flavors to dress up your favorite dippers—Dill Pickle and Nacho Cheeze. Cauliflower, everyone's favorite vegetable chameleon, transforms into a creamy, neutral base, bolstered by puréed pumpkin seeds for depth and body. Thin enough to drizzle over salads for some extra oomph, rich enough to spread inside sandwiches and wraps, these chilled condiments are as versatile as they are flavorful. Each dip brings its own unique twist to the table. The Dill Pickle offers a zesty, tangy punch with an herbaceous bite, reminiscent of an old-school deli side. Meanwhile, the Nacho Cheeze delivers a comforting, gooey cheddar-esque experience with a hint of spice that's begging to be invited to your next big fiesta. Certified free of all top nine allergens and no added sugar. Select flavors available at Target stores and goodfoods.com
Hannah Kaminsky/Senior Editor



Support VRG Outreach

My Time As a Vegan Journalist Intern

By Chelsea Chilewa, VRG Intern

Creating a Vegan World



I served as an intern for the Eleanor Miltimore Wolff Internship with The Vegetarian Resource Group during my junior year at Howard University. I spent my time working for VRG learning on and off the field about the many aspects of plant-based living.

I became vegan in summer 2022, and initially, the journey was rough. That summer, all I ate was a variation of rice, spinach, and beans, plus the occasional spaghetti night. I didn't know any vegans other than my brother, and when we cooked together, it was a disaster. Finding VRG was a stroke of luck that was clearly the universe throwing me into a new era.

Through VRG, I was able to meet other people on their plant-based journey, delving into deep conversations with them about the social dilemmas and overall wellness of humans. At Baltimore Vegan SoulFest, I met many elders that had 20+ years of living consciously. It was truly inspiring.

I also got the chance to film a vegan nutritional video for undergraduates, filled with informative content and personal anecdotes from VRG volunteers, which became an instruction aid for classes of nutrition students to talk about how they would respond to you as a not-yet vegan. Based on what I said, the students developed a plan to guide someone like me in becoming vegan.

I attended Natural Products Expo East, which was enlightening and heartwarming. The vendors eagerly shared their favorite vegan products, from delicious plant-based desserts to creative mushroom-based recipes. Their enthusiasm was infectious. One memorable young woman with a radiant smile spoke animatedly about her vegan pancake and cornbread mix, and how it was indistinguishable from the dairy version.

My time as a vegan journalist intern was an enriching experience that deepened my understanding of the environmental challenges we face and the solutions available. It was a reminder that we all have a role to play in preserving our planet. By sharing stories and information, I became a voice for change, and I realized that even small actions, like creating a vegan nutritional video, can contribute to a brighter, greener future.

As I reflect on my journey, I am filled with gratitude for the opportunity to blend my passion for writing with my commitment to a sustainable and vegan lifestyle. My time as a vegan journalist intern has not only shaped my career, but has also strengthened my dedication to making a positive impact on the world, one word and one video at a time.

For information about VRG internships, see vrg.org/student/index.php

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Vegan Cooking Tips

Cooking with Creamed Corn

by Chef Nancy Berkoff, EdD, RD



Canned creamed corn can be a good source of fiber and a small amount of calcium, potassium, and protein. When purchasing creamed corn, check the label for added sugar and sodium levels. As a note, the “cream” in “creamed corn” refers to the smashing or “creaming” of the corn, rather than the addition of dairy products.

If you would like to make your own creamed corn, you will need canned or fresh corn kernels cut off the cob (frozen corn can be a bit too tough), soft silken tofu (should be a 2:1 ratio of corn to tofu), salt, and sugar to taste. Blend half the mixture and then stir well to combine. If you want to thicken it, use a slurry of cornstarch and water (1 Tablespoon cornstarch per 2 cups liquid). Place cornstarch in a small bowl and slowly add water, whisking until smooth. If you have a bit more time, sauté chopped onions in vegan butter along with the corn, blend half, return it to the pan, and add a splash of coconut milk or cashew milk. Simmer until thick.

To serve creamed corn as a side dish, you can liven it up with crushed garlic; chopped fresh parsley, cilantro, or basil; ground black or white pepper; or your favorite hot sauce or chopped fresh chilies.

Creamed corn, plain or seasoned, can be used as a sauce for steamed or grilled asparagus, Brussels sprouts, or green beans. Creamed corn is an excellent addition to cornbread batter, polenta, or soups. Even desserts like carrot cake, zucchini bread, or muffins can benefit from the added sweetness and texture. It’s great for breakfast treats, too, used in pancake or waffle batter. Purée with cooked potatoes and mushrooms to make a “cream” of mushroom soup.

No-Recipe Recipes for Creamed Corn:

- To create fast corn chowder, use creamed corn as a base. Add a splash of coconut or cashew milk, chopped onions, minced fresh garlic, diced celery, chopped fresh tomatoes, and cooked, diced potatoes.
- For a baked corn casserole, combine a cup or so of frozen corn (don’t need to thaw), drained canned corn, or fresh cut-from-the-cob corn with a cup or so of creamed corn; 1 cup of vegan sour cream, vegan cheese, soft, silken tofu, or canned, 100% pumpkin purée; a cup of cornmeal; and about ¼ cup melted vegan butter. Mix together, pour into an oiled baking dish and bake at 325 degrees until firm, about 45-60 minutes. Let cool before serving.
- Create corn fritters or croquettes by adding chopped vegetables and vegan cheese to creamed corn. Then fold in plain mashed potatoes and enough flour to bind. Shape into balls or patties and pan fry or bake at 350 degrees for 15-20 minutes, until golden brown.
- Blend creamed corn and cooked chickpeas for an instant corn hummus. Top with additional corn kernels for more texture, if desired.
- Use creamed corn as either a filling or sauce for vegetable enchiladas. Leave it more chunky for a filling, and blend smoother for a sauce.

Photos by Hannah Kaminsky; Summer Corn Queso Recipe in *Real Food, Really Fast* by Hannah Kaminsky

Larry Rumbough

Vegan Activism in Florida

by Amy Burger



Larry Rumbough co-founded the nonprofit organization Vegetarians of Central Florida (VegCF), which hosts an Earth Day celebration each spring and a VegFest each fall in Orlando, FL, where Rumbough is from. Over the past 20 years, Larry Rumbough estimates that close to a million people have attended the events he has coordinated.

VegCF started in 2003, when, to Rumbough's knowledge, no vegetarian or vegan organization existed in Central Florida. He initially launched VegCF as a Meetup group to socialize with other vegans and vegetarians in the area, but says "within a couple of years," the group started hosting events. While Rumbough says, "We didn't know what we were doing" at first, he's been at it long enough that groups in Tampa Bay and Jacksonville, Florida, have reached out to him for help planning their own events.

His most recent Earth Day event was VegCF's 19th and was held at Lake Eola, Orlando's biggest

park. Each April, Central Florida Earth Day hosts about 200 vendors, representing "a wide array of eco-friendly businesses and groups." VegFest, also in its 19th year, is mostly food-oriented and hosts about 150 vendors each year, featuring local restaurants, artists, and animal rescue organizations. That event is held at Orlando's Festival Park and takes place in October.

It is between the end of the Earth Day event and the start of planning VegFest that Rumbough has a little extra downtime. He fills it with hobbies like mud runs, triathlons, and trivia competitions, and he likes to travel, though he's done less of it since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rumbough especially enjoys concerts, "mostly '70s and '80s rock and roll," though he says it "has to be a really good concert" to warrant a trip. He's traveled to cities including Washington, DC; New York; Boston; and Philadelphia, but says he's lucky to live in Orlando because it has "one of the best" vegan and vegetarian restaurant scenes.

VegCF's website describes Rumbough as having been "vegan for 45 years and active in animal rights causes for 35 years." The organization recently celebrated its 20th anniversary. You can learn more at vegcf.org and visit cfearthday.org and cfvegfest.org for more information on each annual event.

Amy Burger is a former VRG intern who writes for *Vegan Journal* as a volunteer. Amy lives in Georgia, where she works as a college librarian and part-time teacher. Her hobbies include cooking and traveling.





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See: vrg.org/blog/2024/07/15/eating-to-help-our-planet-can-also-benefit-human-health



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See: vrg.org/blog/2024/08/05/thinking-about-selenium

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Vegan Meats: Looking Beyond the Headlines

See: vrg.org/blog/2024/08/01/vegan-meats-looking-beyond-the-headlines

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The Internal Revenue Service states that individual retirement arrangement (IRA) owners age 70½ or over can transfer up to \$100,000 to charity (such as The Vegetarian Resource Group) tax-free each year. These transfers, known as qualified charitable distributions or QCDs, offer eligible older Americans a way to give to charity. For those who are at least 73 years old, QCDs count toward the IRA owner's required minimum distribution (RMD) for the year.

Your IRA trustee must send the money to the charity directly, and not to you first. You do not need to itemize your taxes for this benefit. For more information, see irs.gov/newsroom/qualified-charitable-distributions-allow-eligible-ira-owners-up-to-100000-in-tax-free-gifts-to-charity

This is not legal or tax advice, for which you should speak to your financial and legal advisors. To make direct donations to VRG and support vegan education and research, donate at vrg.org/donate

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