

Vegetarian Proteins

Plant based diets can contain just as much protein as animal diets. In addition, plant based diets have been associated with multiple health benefits. The benefits include healthier weight, lower blood pressure, reduced risk of heart disease, cancers, type 2 diabetes, Alzheimer's, and other chronic diseases.

Health benefits like these come from the high amounts of nutrients packed into plant proteins. These include fiber, folate, antioxidants, magnesium, potassium, healthy fats, and vitamins A,C, and E. Plant proteins are low in things like saturated fat, dietary cholesterol, sodium and toxins found in many meats such as nitrate, all of which negatively impact your health.

A Few Sources Of Plant Proteins:

- **Legumes:** These include black beans, kidney beans, lentils, pinto beans, white beans, and many, many more.
- **Tofu:** This is the most popular of the soy products because it is a versatile food packed with vitamins, minerals, and protein. One-half cup of tofu contains 88 calories, 10 grams protein, 2 grams carbohydrate, and 5 grams of fat.
- **Tempeh:** As a fermented soy product, tempeh has a very unique chewy texture along with 160 calories, 15 grams protein, 8 grams carbohydrate, and 9 grams of fat per half cup serving.
- **Seitan:** It is made from wheat, but it mimics the look & texture of meat when it is cooked. A 4 oz serving contains 160 calories, 26 grams protein, 10 grams carbohydrate, and 2 grams of fat.

Vegetable Pie Serves 5

Adapted from [Cook with Tofu](#) By: Christina Clarke

2 cups broccoli florets	½ cup water
½ cup finely chopped onion	½ cup whole wheat flour
½ cup finely chopped green bell pepper	½ tsp baking powder
1 ½ cups reduced fat, shredded cheddar cheese	¼ tsp garlic powder
½ of a 14 oz package firm tofu	Pinch of salt and ¼ tsp pepper

Directions: Preheat the oven to 400°F. Grease a 10x1½-inch pie plate. Partially cook the broccoli in a steamer or in boiling salted water for 2 to 3 minutes. Drain. Mix together the broccoli in the pie plate with the chopped onions, pepper, and 1 cup shredded cheese. In a blender or food processor, combine the tofu, water, flour, and remaining ½ cup cheese and seasonings. Pour this mixture over the cheese and vegetables in the pie plate. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes or until golden brown and knife inserted comes out clean. If you wish, brush melted butter on the top during the last 5 minutes of baking for an even golden color.

Nutrition Facts per serving: Calories 200, Fat 10 gm, Sat Fat 4 gm, Sodium 400 mg, Carbs 15 gm, Fiber 3 gm, Protein 15 gm

Tempeh Fajitas Serves 4

Adapted from www.allrecipes.com

2 Tbsp canola or corn oil	1 Tbsp fresh or 1 tsp dried cilantro
8 oz package of Tempeh	1 Tbsp lime juice
1 Tbsp low sodium soy sauce	1 ½ cups chopped green bell pepper
½ cup chopped frozen spinach	1 (4.5 oz) can of sliced mushrooms
1 Tbsp chopped chile peppers	1 Tbsp dried minced onion

Directions: Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Sauté tempeh with soy sauce and lime juice until tempeh browns. Stir in bell peppers, mushrooms, spinach, chile peppers, cilantro and onion. Increase heat to medium-high and cook until fluids have reduced, stirring occasionally. Fold inside a tortilla and serve with beans and rice.

Nutrition Facts per serving: Calories 210, Fat 13 gm, Sat Fat 2 gm, Sodium 350 mg, Carbs 13 gm, Fiber 2 gm, Protein 12 gm

TURN OVER FOR MORE!

More Vegetarian Protein Sources:

- **Quinoa:** This is a gluten free, grain like seed that is extremely versatile, and a 1 cup serving has 8 grams of protein and 39 gm of carbohydrates. Try using it to replace rice or pasta in almost any dish!
- **Greek Yogurt:** All yogurt contains a high protein content, and Greek yogurt has the highest, with 15 grams of protein per 6 oz serving. When choosing flavors, look for those lower in sugar. For those who do not like plain yogurt but want to reduce the amount of sugar per serving, try adding a teaspoon or two of jam or honey to plain yogurt.
- **Nuts and Seeds:** Many nuts and seeds are great sources of protein. They can be a great snack between meals as well, because the high fiber content keeps you feeling full longer. Due to a high calorie content try to limit to 1 oz portions (about 23 almonds, 15 walnut halves, 30 peanuts or 1/4 cup of sunflower or pumpkin seeds)
- **Nut Butters:** These include peanut butter, almond butter, soy nut butter, sunflower seed butter & many others. Since these are derived from nuts, they too contain a high protein profile, but choose carefully as often sugars and sodium are added for flavor. There are 8 grams of protein in 2 Tbsp of peanut butter.

Seitan Tetrazzini Makes 6 servings

[Adapted from www.yummly.com](http://www.yummly.com)

½ lb whole wheat spaghetti	3 Tbsp grated Parmesan cheese
1 chopped red bell pepper	½ cup shredded part skim mozzarella cheese
2 cups sliced mushrooms	1 Tbsp canola oil
15 oz low sodium vegetable broth	1 lb Seitan
¼ cup flour	4 oz low-fat cream cheese

Directions: Preheat oven to 350° F. Cook pasta until al dente. While pasta is cooking, heat oil in a pan over medium heat. Add the peppers, mushrooms, and seitan. Sauté until the vegetables soften and the seitan begins to brown, then take off the heat. In a small sauce pan, bring the vegetable stock to a boil. Turn the heat down to a simmer and slowly whisk in the flour. Once combined, add the cream cheese and stir until it is combined and the sauce is thick and creamy. Take off the heat. Grease a 9x9-inch baking dish with oil or butter. Combine the cooked pasta, vegetables, seitan, sauce and 1 Tbsp of the parmesan. Pour the mixture into the baking dish, top with mozzarella, cover with foil and bake for 25 minutes. After 25 minutes, remove from the oven, top with the rest of the parmesan and let cool for 5-10 minutes. Cut into squares to serve.

Combine with a tossed salad or side of steamed vegetables for a well-balanced meal!

Nutrition Facts: *Calories 410, Fat 12 gm, Saturated Fat 4 gm, Sodium 260 mg, Carbs 47 gm, Fiber 5 gm, Protein 32 gm*

How to Incorporate Vegetarian Proteins Into Your Diet

Now that you know some of the benefits of eating vegetarian proteins and you have some recipes, it may be helpful to learn some tips on ways to start incorporating these proteins into your diet. There is no need to give up eating meat, but by following some of these tips, you can reap the benefits of many heart-healthy vegetarian proteins.

- **Start the day with a vegetarian breakfast.** With breakfast being the most important meal, the fiber and additional benefits from vegetarian proteins will help get you full, focused, and ready for your day.
- **Join Meatless Monday.** Many restaurants and organizations are already signed up, and you can too at www.MeatlessMonday.com. Check out the free online Meatless Monday Chili Cookbook and Burger Cookbook.
- **Use meat as a seasoning.** Try to use meat to add flavor to a dish instead of making it the main meal.
- **Have a plant based pantry.** Proteins like beans and quinoa have long shelf lives, so keeping your pantry stocked with them will add convenience and ease to making meals.

For more info: The Vegetarian Resource Group www.vrg.org or www.vegetariannutrition.net and check out the documentary **Forks Over Knives**