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The latest foodie fad just might be the ideal diet. It's healthy, cheap and yummy—and you don't have to give up a thing. Read on for seven reasons to eat like a part-time vegetarian, plus dozens of delicious ideas.

1

## IT'S THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Either you eat meat or you don't, right? Well, no. Just ask *New York Times* columnist and chef Mark Bittman, who swears by eating vegan before dinner, or the many Americans who celebrate Meatless Monday. The key to being a part-time vegetarian is fitting in more produce at every meal and thinking of meat as an accompaniment, not the main event, when you eat it. "Turn one or two servings of protein into a meal for your family when you make a stir-fry, pasta or stew," says Sharon Palmer, R.D., the author of *Plant-Powered for Life*.

2

## IT'S BETTER FOR THE PLANET

"The industrial production of animals for meat comes with terrible by-products: greenhouse gas emissions, land degradation and polluted water supplies," Bittman says. University of Chicago researchers calculated that if Americans reduced their meat consumption by just 20 percent, it would be as if the entire country switched from a standard sedan to a fuel-efficient Prius. Even eating one less burger a week is like taking your car off the road for 320 miles.

### Fresh Ideas



Grate carrots or squash into hamburger patties.

Wrap your taco in sturdy lettuce, like Bibb or romaine; radicchio; or Swiss chard.

Add tomato slices to grilled cheese.

Zap a yummy sauce for steamed veggies: Combine olive oil and crushed garlic in a small bowl, cover and microwave for 30 seconds.

3

## VEGGIES DON'T HAVE TO TASTE BLAH

Boiled-to-death brussels sprouts? No, thanks. Takeout-inspired fried rice with broccoli, edamame and sprouts? Yes, please! (See recipe, below.) Three more ways to cook veggies right:

**On the stove top** Heat is your friend. "Err on the side of getting the pan almost too hot, so when you add the vegetables, you hear a loud sizzle," suggests Mollie Katzen, the author of *The Heart of the Plate*. "That's the sound of flavor being imparted." Don't crowd the pan or you risk steaming the veggies; contact with the hot surface should be maximized.

**In the oven** Roasting bite-size pieces at 400° until tender brings out sweetness. Not just a dinner side dish, roasted vegetables are wonderful when added to baked potatoes and pasta, or even plain as snacks, Katzen says.

**On the grill** Marinate mushrooms, onions and peppers in olive oil, lemon and herbs, then grill on skewers.

### EDAMAME FRIED RICE

This version of the classic is packed with flavor and veggies.

**SERVES: 4**

**Hands-on time:** 20 minutes

**Total time:** 25 minutes

- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 small head broccoli, chopped
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 cups frozen edamame
- 1 large carrot, grated
- 1 cup bean sprouts
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon ginger, minced
- 3 cups cooked brown rice
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ cup chopped scallions
- ¼ cup chopped cilantro

**1.** Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large skillet over high heat. Add onion, broccoli and ¼ teaspoon salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables soften and begin to brown, 3 to 5 minutes. Lower heat if mixture threatens to scorch. Transfer vegetables to a large bowl with a slotted spoon.

**2.** Add 1 tablespoon oil to skillet. When it's hot, add edamame, carrot, bean sprouts, ¼ cup water and remaining ¼ teaspoon salt. Cook, shaking skillet until water evaporates, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer to bowl with vegetables.



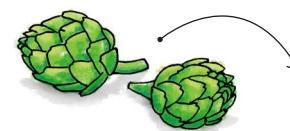
**3.** Add remaining tablespoon oil to skillet; when it's hot, add garlic and ginger. About 15 seconds later, begin to scatter rice in pan a bit at a time, breaking up clumps with your fingers. Let cook without stirring until you hear it sizzle and smell it toasting (but not burning).

**4.** Return vegetable mixture to pan and stir quickly to integrate. Add water, 2 tablespoons at a time, to help release any browned bits from bottom of pan, and cook, stirring, for about 1 minute. Add soy sauce, sesame oil and black pepper. Turn off heat; stir in scallions. Garnish with cilantro.

**Nutrition facts per serving:** 394 calories, 12 g protein, 49 g carbohydrate, 18 g fat (2 g saturated), 8 g fiber, 587 mg sodium

FOOD STYLIST: JAMIE KIMM; ILLUSTRATIONS: DRUE WAGNER

## Find Your New Fave



If you like artichokes, try sunchokes.

Stir-fry with shallots, carrots and cashews.



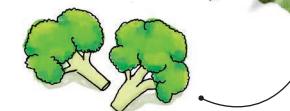
If you like cucumber, try chayote.

Peel and grate into coleslaw.



If you like water chestnuts, try jicama.

Peel, slice and eat raw sprinkled with lime juice and chili powder.

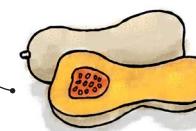


If you like broccoli, try kohlrabi.

Roast bulb with turnips and carrots.



If you like spinach, try Swiss chard. Sauté with olive oil until wilted.



If you like butternut squash, try spaghetti squash.

Pierce and microwave on high for 12 minutes. Halve, remove seeds and scrape squash with a fork to form strands. Top with tomato sauce.



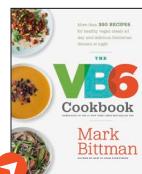
If you like cabbage, try brussels sprouts.

Shave into a salad with apples and almonds.

4

## YOU CAN USE PRODUCE BEFORE IT PERISHES—REALLY

Don't let asparagus die a slow, droopy death. Set your fridge temperature to 35° to 38°, and know which vegetables belong in the crisper (cauliflower, radishes, carrots and beets) and which should live on the counter (avocados until ripe, tomatoes and garlic). "Check your produce daily and use the most perishable items—tomatoes, lettuce, zucchini and cucumbers—first," Palmer suggests. Store veggies unwashed in original packaging in the fridge until you're ready to prep them; if they start to go limp, wash greens and roll them in a towel and submerge crunchy produce (carrots and celery) in water. If you have more produce than you can eat fresh, stock your freezer with soup (like the Tuscan stew, at right) or smoothie fixings (peel avocado and cucumber, chop roughly and freeze on a cookie sheet before transferring to a ziplock bag).



Recipes are from *The VB6 Cookbook: More Than 350 Recipes for Healthy Vegan Meals All Day and Delicious Flexitarian Dinners at Night* by Mark Bittman. Copyright 2014. Used by permission of Clarkson Potter/Publishers.

## RIBOLLITA

Freeze a batch of this hearty Tuscan stew. Simply defrost, heat and toast the bread, and dinner is ready!

**SERVES: 4**

**Hands-on time:** 25 minutes

**Total time:** 40 minutes

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 carrot, chopped
- 1 celery stalk, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 cups no-salt-added cannellini beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 15-ounce can no-salt-added whole peeled tomatoes
- 4 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
- 1 fresh rosemary sprig
- 1 fresh thyme sprig
- 1 pound kale, chopped
- 4 slices whole-grain bread, toasted

**1.** Heat oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add onion, carrot, celery and garlic; sprinkle with salt and pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are soft, 5 to 10 minutes.

**2.** Add beans, tomatoes, stock, rosemary and thyme. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat so soup bubbles steadily; cover and cook, stirring once or twice to break up tomatoes, until flavors meld, 15 to 20 minutes.

**3.** Increase heat to medium high, add kale, and cook, stirring occasionally, until kale is tender and soup is hot again, 3 to 5 minutes. Remove herb sprigs if you like. Put 1 slice bread in bottom of each bowl; ladle soup on top.

**Nutrition facts per serving:**

391 calories, 16 g protein, 54 g carbohydrate, 14 g fat (1.5 g saturated), 15 g fiber, 835 mg sodium



Spike store-bought salsa with corn and diced peppers.



5

## A LITTLE PREP GOES A LONG WAY

Devote an hour on the weekend to washing and cutting several vegetables. Keep diced onions, chopped peppers, trimmed asparagus and clean lettuce in baggies at eye level in the fridge. Although chopping in advance causes some nutrient loss, precut carrots trump processed foods by a long shot, says Lisa Young, Ph.D., R.D., a FITNESS advisory board member and an adjunct professor of nutrition at New York University. Or take a supermarket shortcut; grocery stores offer everything from diced butternut squash to prewashed greens. Blanching can be a busy gal's best friend; simply place any veggie in simmering water for two to five minutes, cool in ice water, drain thoroughly and store partially cooked in the fridge or freezer. "Blanched vegetables have double the shelf life and take up half as much space," Katzen says. Sauté in olive oil with garlic, salt and pepper to serve.

Rethink your sandwich: Top whole-wheat toast with hummus and sliced cucumber, tomato and avocado.

6

## VEGGIES WON'T BREAK THE BANK

"Making vegetarian meals at home costs less than making meat-based ones or dining out," says Dawn Jackson Blatner, R.D., a FITNESS advisory board member and the author of *The Flexitarian Diet*. A USDA study found that about a third of fresh veggies—including carrots, cabbage and cauliflower—are less than 50 cents per one-cup serving. Cut costs by planning your meal around what's in season; check out the cheat sheet at [eatwellguide.org/seasonal](http://eatwellguide.org/seasonal). Frozen and canned vegetables, which are often picked at their peak, count too. Use frozen peas in this yummy potpie, at right, or toss mixed frozen vegetables into soup.



## YOU'LL LIVE LONGER

"Vegetables are the best way to prevent heart disease, hypertension, diabetes and certain cancers," Young says. Plus, new research reveals some lesser-known perks, such as complexion perfection (vitamin C protects against wrinkles) and a sunny disposition (higher veggie intake has been linked to optimism and happiness). Get your fix of good-for-you antioxidants with this quinoa salad, at right.



Bring leftover veggies back to life with a squeeze of lemon and a pinch of salt.

## VEGETABLE POTPIE

This delish dinner is \$3.19 a serving.

**SERVES: 4**

**Hands-on time:** 15 minutes

**Total time:** 45 minutes

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 carrots, chopped
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 15-ounce can diced tomatoes, drained
- ½ pound green beans, chopped
- 1 pound frozen chopped spinach
- 1½ cup frozen peas
- 1 tablespoon fresh oregano, chopped
- 2 sheets whole-wheat phyllo dough, thawed

**1.** Heat the oven to 375°. Grease four 2-cup baking dishes with 1 tablespoon oil. Heat another tablespoon oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add onion, carrots and bell pepper; cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, 3 to 5 minutes.

**2.** Add garlic, salt and pepper, and cook, stirring until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add tomatoes, bring to a boil. Stir in beans and half of spinach. Cook and stir long



enough for spinach to soften and release its liquid, 1 to 2 minutes, then add remaining spinach. When it's wilted, stir in peas and oregano; transfer to prepared dishes.

**3.** Brush a sheet of phyllo with 1 teaspoon oil; top with second sheet and brush with 1 teaspoon oil. Fold sheets like a book and cut in quarters. Drape over vegetables, tucking in edges. Score the top; brush with remaining oil and put potpies on a baking sheet.

**4.** Cook until crust is golden and the filling bubbles, 20 to 30 minutes.

**Nutrition facts per serving:**

272 calories, 10 g protein, 37 g carbohydrate, 11 g fat (2 g saturated), 10 g fiber, 815 mg sodium

## CORN-AND-TOMATO QUINOA SALAD



Fill up on vegetables that contain healthy compounds called carotenoids.

**SERVES: 4**

**Hands-on time:** 10 minutes

**Total time:** 10 minutes

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 large shallot, chopped
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 3 cups cooked quinoa
- 1 large red bell pepper, chopped
- 2 cups corn kernels, preferably fresh
- 1 pint grape tomatoes, halved
- 1 cup basil, chopped

**1.** Whisk together oil, vinegar, mustard, salt and pepper and 2 tablespoons water in a large bowl. Add shallot and garlic and whisk again.

**2.** Add remaining ingredients to bowl; toss. **Nutrition facts per serving:** 340 calories, 10 g protein, 54 g carbohydrate, 10 g fat (1.4 g saturated), 8 g fiber, 401 mg sodium

Think outside the pizza box: Arugula or sliced avocado is great on a slice.