

NUTRITION TO GO

The Power of Plant Protein



When many people think of protein foods, they think about animal proteins, such as meat, poultry and fish. While animal products are great sources of protein, eating meals with plant protein at least once a week can be helpful for our health, our wallet and the planet. Read on to learn more about the power of plant protein!

What foods are plant proteins?

Here are some of the most popular plant proteins:

- **Beans and lentils** can be prepared many ways, from cooking in soups or stews, to roasting in the oven.
- **Hummus** is a great dip for vegetables, or as a spread in a sandwich.
- **Peanut butter** is an easy way to add some plant protein into your oatmeal.
- **Quinoa** cooks more like a grain and is a great base for salads.
- **Nuts and seeds** are an easy protein snack on the go.
- **Tofu** can be prepared many ways, from scrambling on the stovetop like eggs, or baking in the oven.
- **Other soy products**, like edamame (whole soybeans) and tempeh (soy product that has a nutty taste and chewy texture), are popular in some Asian cultures.

What are the benefits of plant protein?

Benefits for our health:

Plant proteins contain little to no unhealthy fats. Eating less unhealthy fats helps keep your heart healthy. Plant proteins are higher in fiber, which helps keep you fuller for longer. Plant proteins are also full of vitamins and minerals.

Benefits for our wallet:

Meat is often much more expensive than plant proteins. Eating without meat once a week is a great way to cut your weekly budget.

Benefits for our planet:

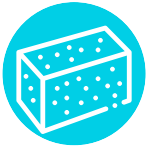
Meat production gives off nearly one-fifth of the carbon dioxide in the air. Carbon dioxide is a gas that traps heat from the sun. Too much trapped heat will warm the Earth and cause global warming over time.



How to Cook Good Dried Beans

While dried beans will take longer to prepare than canned beans, dried beans are also less expensive and can have more flavor.

1. To speed up the cooking process, you can soak your beans overnight in a pot covered with a few inches of water. If you forget to soak, bring beans covered in water to a boil, then turn off heat, cover and let soak for 30 minutes.
2. Bring the pot of beans and water to a simmer and add some salt.
3. Add vegetables (such as onions, garlic, carrots, chilis) and herbs (dried or fresh, such as rosemary, bay leaves, thyme) to flavor the beans. Continue to simmer until beans are tender (around 1 to 2 hours).
4. Remove from heat once the beans are tender.
5. If not eating right away, store beans in cooking liquid. Beans will last for 3 to 5 days in the refrigerator. Beans also freeze well if stored with cooking liquid.



How to Cook Crispy Tofu

Tofu can be enjoyed many ways and is easily flavored. It is often sold by the firmness (soft, medium, firm, or extra-firm). If you do not like the softer texture of tofu, try cooking extra-firm tofu for a more crispy texture.

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Drain the liquid from the tofu package.
3. Cut the tofu into cubes, then place cubes on a plate covered in a paper towel. Place another paper towel over the tofu cubes and place another plate on top. This is called pressing the tofu. This helps take out the extra water in the tofu, and will let it become crispy in the oven. You can place heavier items (cook books or a few canned goods) on the top plate to help get more of the water out.
4. Take the top plate off the tofu. Place tofu cubes in a bowl and mix with some olive oil, and salt and pepper.
5. Place on baking sheet with aluminum foil and bake for 15 minutes. Flip tofu, then bake for another 15 minutes.
6. Add baked tofu to stir fry or fried rice recipes, or eat with your favorite vegetable and grain for a healthy meal.