

Vegan Success

Scrumptious, Healthy Vegan Recipes for Busy People

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Logical Expressions, Inc.
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On Being Vegan

A “vegan” is someone who eats **no** animal products of any kind. Obviously, it means steak is not for dinner, but it also means no milk, cheese, eggs, meat, poultry, or fish are on the menu either. The bottom line is that if the food had a face, or if it came from something that had a face, vegans don’t eat it.

My husband James and I have been vegan since 1994. Unlike many vegans who have political or ethical reasons for not eating animal products, we became vegan for a far more mundane reason: our health.

Back in 1994, James and I read a book called *Fit for Life* by Harvey and Marilyn Diamond. The book actually isn’t about being a vegetarian at all, let alone taking the drastic step of becoming vegan. It’s about how to eat foods in the right combinations to lose weight. Concepts like “food combining” and “natural hygiene” are not new. We heard about them, but didn’t try them because it all seemed so complicated.

After reading *Fit For Life*, we realized that the principles of food combining are actually easy if you don’t eat animal products. So we decided to try the *Fit for Life* eating methods for one week using a vegan approach. We felt so much better that we never stopped!

James and I are busy people, so being vegan had to fit into our lifestyle. We run our own company, Logical Expressions, Inc., so we work long hours. Even though our schedules can be hectic, we share cooking responsibilities. I cook three days a week, James does three days, and we trade off Wednesdays.

We both manage to create home-cooked meals without putting a strain on our nerves or resorting to processed convenience foods.

Because, we live about 20 miles from the nearest town, we can't just run to the corner store or get pizza (or any other food) delivered. If we're hungry, we have to make dinner ourselves. Like everyone else, we are faced with that eternal question, "what's for dinner?" The less you feel like cooking, the more challenging the question becomes.

Over the years, after people find out we are vegan and discover all the things we *don't* eat, these folks then wonder what we *do* eat. Because so many people have asked us this question, we decided to write a book with a number of our favorite easy recipes, many of which we make all the time. In this book, we focus on how you can create simple, unfussy, goof proof food quickly and easily.

Because neither of us are trained chefs, these recipes require no gourmet techniques or special skills beyond the most rudimentary kitchen competence. If you can chop up veggies, saute stuff in a skillet, or throw things into a pot, you can make these recipes. You'll also find that the recipes are big on flavor and satisfy the biggest hunger.

Anyone who has lived with a vegan knows that a hungry vegan can power down a lot of food. If you're eating unprocessed foods, such as vegetables and grains, you can eat a lot and not gain weight.

Of course, technically, a vegan can eat just as badly as anyone else, since French fries and some chocolates can be construed as vegan. But as a general rule, it's much easier for vegans to stay slim because even when our recipes use margarines or oils, they are generally far less fatty than similar recipes made with animal products.

If you are new to vegan cooking, or find yourself cooking for a vegan in the family, this book will make your life easier. Enjoy!

Susan Daffron & James Byrd

Vegan Glossary

Certain foods in this book may be unfamiliar to you if you haven't done much vegetarian cooking. This glossary gives you definitions for some of the more unusual ingredients you may find in this book or other vegetarian cookbooks.

Agar-Agar - Sometimes called just “agar” this gelling agent is most often sold as flakes. Unlike gelatin, it is made from a sea vegetable so it is vegan.

Arrowroot - This white powder looks a lot like cornstarch and is used in much the same way as a thickener. However, arrowroot tends to create a more “glaze-like” quality to sauces. You should dissolve it in cold water before adding to a sauce, so it doesn't form clumps.

Brewer's/Nutritional Yeast - Unlike other yeasts, this yeast is not used for baking bread. However, these powdery yellow flakes can be a great source of vitamin B-12. Red Star's Vegetarian Support Formula (T6635+) brand for example, is fortified with B vitamins. Nutritional yeast imparts a mildly “cheesy” flavor and color, so it's often used in vegan recipes. You often can find it in the bulk food area of grocery/health food stores.

Bragg's Liquid Aminos - Used like soy sauce, Bragg's is a lower salt condiment with a slightly different flavor.

Chinese Five Spice - This blend of five spices includes cinnamon, cloves, fennel seeds, star anise, and Szechwan peppercorns. Most well stocked grocery stores have it. Health food and Asian markets almost always do.

Egg Replacer - This powder is made from starches and acts as binding agent in baking. Ener-G Egg Replacer is widely available in both grocery and health food stores.

Miso - This paste is made from fermented soybeans. It imparts a salty rich taste to soups and sauces; however, you should only add it at the end of the recipe because boiling destroys the enzymes. You can buy miso in different colors that range from light to dark. The darker the miso, the saltier it is. Most misos need to be refrigerated.

Sesame Oil - This oil is made from sesame seeds and comes in two types. The light colored one is used for dressings and frying. However, the darker Asian sesame oil has a strong taste and fragrance, so you should use it sparingly for flavor.

Soy Sauce/Tamari - Most people who have been to Asian restaurants are familiar with soy sauce, which is made from fermented soybeans and sometimes wheat. Shoyu soy sauce generally contains wheat, whereas tamari soy sauce does not. Unfortunately, not all companies strictly follow the terminology, so if you need to avoid wheat products, read the label.

Tahini (Sesame Paste) - This paste is made from sesame seeds, much like peanut butter is made from peanuts. Like natural peanut butter, you need to stir tahini before using it to blend in the oils, which tend to separate in the jar.

Tempeh - In recipes, tempeh often stands in for meat because it has a chewy consistency. It is made from fermented soy protein and has been a staple food in Indonesia for literally centuries. The soybeans and grains are cooked and then inoculated with a culture called *rhizopus oligosporus*. Although virtually all tempeh has a somewhat nutty flavor, some tempeh also is mixed with grains, which can change the flavor somewhat.

Tofu - Like soymilk and tempeh, tofu is made from soybeans. However, tofu is processed with some type of coagulating agent such as nigari or calcium sulfate. You can buy two basic types of tofu. Fresh tofu is packed in water and needs to be refrigerated. Aseptic or “silken” tofu is vacuum packed, so it does not need to be refrigerated until you open it. Tofu comes in various textures that range from soft

to extra firm. Firm tofus can be cubed and added to stir-fries. Silken tofus are often blended and turned into sauces or added to soups. For even more convenience, some stores carry baked tofus that are precooked and marinated. All you have to do is cut it up and throw it in the pan.

Udon - These Japanese noodles are made from wheat flour instead of semolina. Most natural food stores carry udon noodles.

Vegan Shopping List - Naming the Names

Over the years, we've tried a lot of different vegetarian-oriented products. Just because it's "vegetarian" or "health food" doesn't mean it has to taste bland, strange or just plain bad. (Although let's face it, some soy cheeses taste like old gym socks.)

Many cookbooks won't tell you which of the many brands out there in vegan-ville actually taste good. So here are our recommendations for various vegetarian products that have passed our taste test. We also give you a few hints on what to look for (and avoid) when selecting a given type of product.

Although in the recipes we use generic terms such as soy milk or vegan margarine, the products listed below are the ones we actually use when we make the recipes ourselves. Most of them are widely available in health food stores and even some traditional grocery stores in the United States. However, if you can't find these particular brands, don't feel bad. Vegan products are getting better all the time, so you may find new brands that you like even better than these!

Bouillon Cubes - Hugli, Morga. Look for ones with no mystery additives like "natural flavors."

Canned Beans - Eden (<http://www.edenfoods.com>) or Westbrae (<http://www.westbrae.com>). Look for organically grown beans packed in water. Some also include Kombu, which is okay. (Kombu is a sea vegetable, if you're wondering.)

Canned Tomatoes and Ketchup - Muir Glen (<http://www.muirglen.com>). Look for tomato products made with organic tomatoes.

Cheese Slices - Tofutti (<http://www.tofutti.com>). Sadly, Tofutti changed their "block" cheeses, but the slices are still okay. Many cheeses are not vegan; watch out for "casein" on the label.

Coconut Milk - Thai Kitchen (<http://www.thaikitchen.com>). Look for coconut milk without any preservatives. Don't bother with "Lite" coconut milk; all you're paying for is extra water.

Cream Cheese and Sour Cream - Tofutti (<http://www.tofutti.com>). Nothing else comes close. Beware of some seriously nasty imitators.

Egg Replacer - Ener-G (<http://www.ener-g.com>). Virtually the only one we've ever seen; it works great and one box will last you a long, long time.

Extra Virgin Olive Oil - Bertolli (<http://www.bertolli.com>). Look for cold pressed extra virgin olive oil. It's worth the extra money.

"Fake Meat" Products - Yves (<http://www.yvesveggie.com>). We're especially fond of the Veggie Ground Round. Other fake hamburgers add extra spices, such as chili spices, which makes them less versatile in cooking.

Ice Cream - So Delicious (<http://www.turtlemountain.com>). After years of eating no ice cream or less-than-tasty rice-based versions, So Delicious was a revelation. Even non-vegans love this stuff.

Ice Cream Sandwiches - Tofutti Cuties (<http://www.tofutti.com>). Beware, they are totally addictive!

Long Grain and Wild Rice, Rice Pilaf, Couscous - Near East (<http://www.neareast.com>). Yes, it's more expensive than buying plain rice, but sometimes it's worth it for the convenience factor.

Mayonnaise - Vegenaize (<http://www.followyourheart.com>). You'll find it in the refrigerated section. Unfortunately, strange-tasting mayonnaises abound, but this one is great and tastes like *real* mayo.

Nutritional Yeast (Brewer's yeast) - Red Star's Vegetarian Support Formula (T6635+) is fortified with Vitamin B12.

Oils - Hain, Spectrum Organics (<http://www.spectrumorganics.com>). In general look for "first cold pressing" or cold pressed.

Salsa - Pace Picante sauce (<http://www.pacefoods.com>). We like medium, but we like spicy food, so your mileage may vary.

Soy Milk - Vitasoy Original Plain (<http://www.vitasoy-usa.com>). For cooking, look for mild-tasting soymilk.

Spices - Frontier (<http://www.frontiercoop.com>). Look for non-irradiated spices.

Tahini and Nut Butters - Maranatha Natural Foods (<http://www.nspiredfoods.com>). Opt for non-roasted varieties, which are less acidic and more versatile for cooking.

Tamari - San-J (<http://www.san-j.com>). Look for low sodium tamari soy sauce.

Tempeh - Turtle Island (<http://www.tofurky.com>). Try and find one made with organically grown soybeans. We like the five-grain Turtle Island the best (in the green package).

Tofu (Silken/Aseptic) - Mori Nu (<http://www.morinu.com>). This type of tofu is actually not refrigerated, so you may find it mixed in with pantry-type items at the store.

Tofu (Regular) - Island Spring (<http://www.islandspring.com>) or Small Planet (<http://www.smallplanettofu.com>). Look for tofu made with organically grown soybeans.

Tofu Scrambler, Hummus, Tofu Burger - Fantastic Foods (<http://www.fantasticfoods.com>).

Vegan Margarine - Earth Balance (<http://www.earthbalance.net>). Look for margarine with no trans fats.

Veggie “Chicken” and “Beef” Broth - Abco is a brand we’ve used, but we’ve only been able to get it in bulk, so it may be hard to find. Other brands exist, just check to make sure the broth is really vegan; many aren’t.

Reading Labels

Many vegans spend a lot of time reading labels. In general, we try to look for items with as few ingredients as possible. I once got into a pointless discussion with someone who didn't understand why I didn't want to ingest anything containing ingredients I didn't recognize. The person I was talking to was extolling the virtues of a lactose-free "milk" product. Instead of opting for soymilk, which contains just soybeans and water, he was drinking a product with a chemical-laden ingredients list that was five inches long. Yuck!

While you're reading labels, even in health food stores, you may run across quite a few ingredients that are not vegan. Here are a few non-vegan "vegetarian" ingredients to watch out for:

Albumin - egg whites.

Casein - milk proteins from cheese (often found in "non-dairy" products). Note that many vegetarian cheeses are *not* vegan.

Rennet/Rennin - animal product used to coagulate cheese.

Gelatin - derived from animal products.

Lactose - milk sugar (as opposed to lactic acid, which is not derived from dairy).

Lard/suet/animal shortening/cholesterol/tallow - made from rendered animal parts.

Whey - the liquid that remains when casein is removed from milk.

"Natural Flavors" - this catchall term may be fine or may be hiding some spices or flavorings that are based on animal products. You may need to ask the manufacturer.

Strict vegans may also not want to eat honey, which is an insect product that is used as a sweetener. (This book does include honey in a few recipes, but you can easily substitute another sweetener.)

Faking It

Many of us have recipes that we remember from our childhood, along with a lot of non-vegan cookbooks left over from our non-veg life. For example, Toll House cookies using the recipe on the back of Nestle's chocolate chips are one of the most marvelous things in the world (incidentally, dark chocolate often is vegan). It's easy to recreate this recipe using vegan margarine and egg replacer. The vegan version cookies really do taste just as good as the "real" ones.

If you miss recipes from days gone by, all is not lost. Given the wide array of vegan products these days, you can fake many traditional recipes using the hints below. Only a few things are really challenging to "vegan-ize," and they mostly involve egg whites. (So far, we have found nothing that can replace whipped egg whites, so our quest for a vegan soufflé remains unfulfilled.)

With that said, after a while, you can learn to read a recipe and mentally make vegan substitutions. One small vegan victory was when we made a vegan version of Susan's mom's hamburger pie recipe that was cut out of a Canadian magazine in the early 1960s. The vegan version tasted very similar. Even Mom thought so!

Ricotta cheese - mashed tofu mixed with a little vegan mayonnaise.

Milk - Soymilk.

Cream Cheese - vegan cream cheese. (Vegan cheesecakes are a reality!)

Yogurt or Sour Cream - soy yogurt and sour cream.

Ground Beef - veggie ground round, tempeh.

Ice Cream - soy ice cream.

Eggs in Baking - egg replacer.