



Beyond Meatless Mondays

BEYOND MEATLESS MONDAYS

Whether it is for health, animal welfare, or environmental reasons, more people are embracing meat-free meals. Some dedicate Mondays to be meatless while others are VB5 (vegetarian before 5pm). Whatever your style, adding more plant-based meals to your recipe box can boost health benefits.

Those who do not eat meat tend to consume less saturated fat and cholesterol while consuming more vitamins C and E, potassium, dietary fiber, magnesium, and phytochemicals. If you're looking to make more vegetarian-style meals, there are a few things to keep in mind:

Don't just opt for pasta: noodles have long been the go-to for vegetarian alternatives. Just look at any wedding meal options; it's ravioli or penne with sauce every time. There's nothing wrong with a comfort food pasta dish occasionally, but vegetarian dishes have so much more to offer.

Think about protein: it's true that meat, poultry and fish are all good sources of protein, but it's easy to meet your daily protein needs with plant-based foods too. Beans, such as pinto, cannellini, black, and kidney, provide approximately 7g of protein per half cup. A half cup also provides 20% of the daily value (DV) for Iron, 8% DV for calcium, 30% DV for fiber, and 21% for potassium.

- Milk, cheese, eggs, and yogurt are also great sources of protein and can be included in a lacto-ovo vegetarian diet. Eight ounces of milk provides 8g protein, 1 egg provides 6g protein, and 6oz of Greek yogurt provides 9g of protein. While not plant-based, these can be entrée side-kicks that boost protein.
- Nuts are another excellent source of protein that provide additional beneficial micronutrients. For example, a quarter cup of almonds provides 7.5 g of protein, 47% DV of Vitamin E, along with magnesium, zinc and copper.
- Soy-based foods are also great sources of protein. A half cup of Tofu provides 10g of protein, 11% DV of iron and 25% DV of calcium. Tofu is very versatile and can be used in a variety of recipes.

Go for whole grains: A whole grain is one that still contains the germ, endosperm, and bran. Combined, these parts of the grain provide fiber along with antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals. Here are a few to give thought to:

- Amaranth: technically not a grain because it belongs to a different species of plants, it is a great pseudo-cereal to consider. It is higher in protein than most other grains (4.6g per half cup) and it is a complete protein. It also contains more than three times the average amount of calcium compared to other grains and it is high in iron, magnesium, phosphorus and potassium. It is gluten-free.
- Farro: an ancient Italian wheat grain that has a chewy texture.
- Quinoa: also, a pseudo-cereal, it is high protein grain (4g per half cup) and gluten free.
- Barley: one of the highest fiber contents of whole cereal grains. In 2008 the FDA approved a qualified health claim for barley, linking its products to reduced risk of coronary artery disease.