

# Understanding Plant-based Eating



# füducation<sup>TM</sup>



*noun* [ *füdu - kÁ - shun* ]

an education on how to eat real food

Hello Friends,

Balanced Habits<sup>TM</sup> is devoted to “supporting people to living a higher quality of life.” That’s why we created this info-packet.

Our aim is to provide unbiased education and to offer more clarity around plant-based eating. We know that eating more plants is linked to decreased risk for obesity and chronic disease and it's our goal is to share the many benefits associated with this way of nourishing your body. Additionally, plant foods also provide a powerful nutrition boost *too great to ignore*.

Fortunately, there is more than one way to incorporate more plants into our daily diet. With recipes included, we designed this info-packet to help you have the tools to slowly eliminate animal-based proteins and introduce plant-based options at your own pace and with enthusiasm and confidence.

It’s important to acknowledge that any change you make should be considered an improvement and will positively impact your health in countless ways!

Happy learning & eating!

## What about all the versions of eating plant-based?

**Flexitarian Diet:** Some people are more flexible. They try to simply cut down on their meat intake and eat a diet that's primarily filled with plants but with some animal products here and there.



### **Pescatarian Diet:**

Similar to a Vegetarian diet except people who follow this way of eating also include seafood.



### **Vegetarian**

**Diet:** Individuals who are vegetarian may eat cheese, eggs, and milk, but they do not eat meat, such as fish, chicken, pork, and beef. Instead of meat, they lean on plant-based protein.

**Vegan Diet:** These people choose to forgo animal products altogether (including milk, cheese, and honey) and eat exclusively plants as part of a vegan lifestyle.

**Raw Vegan Diet:** Others may follow the aforementioned rules and eat only raw, plant-based foods.

## **Benefits for your HEALTH from eating a mostly or exclusively plant-based diet include:**

### **A Plant-Based Diet May Lower Your Blood Pressure**

High blood pressure, or hypertension, can increase the risk for health issues, including heart disease, stroke, and Type 2 diabetes. Several studies have shown that sticking with a plant-based diet can reduce blood pressure, thereby reducing your risk for those conditions.



## A Plant-Based Diet May Keep Your Heart Healthy

Meat contains saturated fat, which can contribute to heart issues when eaten in excess. So by cutting back on meat and loading up on plant-based foods, you're doing your ticker a favor.

## A Plant-Based Diet May Help Prevent Type 2 Diabetes

It's well known that there's a link between diet and Type 2 Diabetes. Weight is a major risk factor since more fatty tissue makes the cells more resistant to insulin, according to the Mayo Clinic and M. Regina Castro, M.D. "Eating a plant-based diet may help those at risk or who have pre diabetes manage their weight and prevent or treat insulin resistance," says Castro.

## Following a Plant-Based Diet Long Term May Help You Live Longer

All of the other potential benefits listed here roll into one major one: living longer. The *Journal of the American Heart Association* study found that a plant-based diet lowers the risk of all causes of mortality by 25%.

## A Plant-Based Diet May Decrease Your Risk of Cancer

As we've seen, following a plant-based diet has many health benefits — but can it help prevent cancer? Research suggests that the answer *could be* yes. The American Institute for Cancer Research says the best way to source cancer-protective nutrients, including fiber, vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals, is to eat a diet rich in vegetables, fruit, grains, beans, nuts, seeds, and some animal foods.



MILLET



CHICKPEAS



PEA SEEDS



BARLEY



OATS



WHEAT



CORN



BUCKWHEAT



RICE

## A Plant-Based Diet May Improve Your Cholesterol

High cholesterol can lead to fatty deposits in the blood, which can restrict blood flow and potentially lead to heart attack, stroke, or heart disease. With a healthy diet, you can help keep cholesterol levels in check.

## Ramping Up Your Plant Intake May Keep Your Brain Strong

There's strong and compelling research examining plant-based diets and their role in slowing the progression of Alzheimer's disease.

## **Steps to get started on a plant based diet**

Begin by cutting out one animal product at a time.

Next, begin replacing milk and dairy products with nut milk options, including coconut milk, cashew milk, and even hemp milk alternatives. You can also begin experimenting with non-dairy yogurts or Kefir.

A great next step is to begin replacing chicken, turkey, beef, pork, veal, lamb and fish with plant proteins. Stock your kitchen with legumes, beans, nuts, seeds and vegan meat alternatives like tofu, veggie burger patties, seitan, tempeh and nutritional yeast. Although there are a few *ground beef-like* products on the market today, these are highly processed and not as “healthy” as we’d suggest you regularly include into your diet.

When choosing plant-based proteins, look for whole food ingredients and lower sodium content. If you do include the highly processed beef-like products, add it as an occasional treat as opposed to a frequent choice.

Be sure that for your meals, you’re doing your best to consume all three macronutrients (plant-based protein, nutritious carbohydrates, and healthy fats). **This is the area where you need to be educated the most.** At some point the need to focus more on calories vs. macronutrient values will likely come into play as you move toward a more plant-based menu, ensuring you’re giving your body what it needs. Yet another reason knowing exactly what your body specifically needs per meal/per day is so vital to your health and goals.

Remember, you don’t have to radically change your diet overnight. Dip one toe in the water at a time until you decide you are ready to eliminate animal-protein altogether. *This could take months or years or always be a work in progress.*

## **You Can Get Plenty Of Protein Without Having To Supplement**

When it comes to protein, there are some misconceptions and it can be a bit confusing. If you read the nutrition label on almost anything, almost all foods contain protein. Protein is made up of amino acids, however you need all of the essential amino acids to get an adequate protein source.



**A complete protein**—which contains all of the amino acids—is only found in animal sources. Plant-based sources have some amino acids in certain percentages, but not all of them in their full adequate amounts.

While it's easier to get complete protein with animal sources of protein, you can get adequate sources on a plant-based diet, you just have to make sure you're eating and combining your foods properly.

And if the health benefits aren't enough to convince you how valuable a plant-based diet can be, we can also positively impact the earth by making a conscious decision to decrease or eliminate our reliance on animal-protein sources.



### **Benefits for the EARTH from eating a mostly or exclusively plant-based diet include:**

**Eating a plant-based diet** is not just good for our health; it is good for **Earth's** health. These reductions would reduce the direct and indirect threats to **Earth's** health and habitability for us, and for all wildlife, flora, and fauna.

If each and every person gave up meat and dairy products on one or more days of the week; ideally, all days of the week, we would save the environment from thousands of tons of carbon emissions. In fact, in one year, animal husbandry creates as much carbon emissions as the entire transportation sector.

Similarly, by reducing our animal-based foods consumption, we would reduce our water use at least by half as animal husbandry utilizes more than 50% of fresh water.

These reductions would reduce the direct and indirect threats to Earth's health and habitability for us, and for all wildlife, flora, and fauna.

As for nutritional concerns: Pound-for-pound, gallon-for-gallon, animal-sourced foods use vastly more water and carbon to produce than plant-based foods. However, ounce-for-ounce, the amount of protein you get from plant-sources, such as legumes, seeds, and grains, is closely on par, plus full of other healthful nutrients including fiber, phytonutrients, sterols, stanols, and vitamins and minerals.

According to UCLA Sustainability and this studies lead, Dana Hunnes PhD, MPH, RD, the positive impacts on the eco-system of plant-based food consumption are too great to ignore.

## To put this into context:

- 1 pound of beef requires anywhere between 2,000 and 8,000 gallons of water to produce. Much of this water is used in creating the feed for the cows, whether it is grass or grain.
- 1 gallon of cow's milk requires 1,950 gallons of water.
- 1 pound of Tofu requires 302 gallons of water to produce, and 290 gallons of water is required to produce 1 pound of unprocessed oats.
  - From a water perspective, using simple mathematics, it is much more efficient and cost-effective to eat plant foods than animal foods. From a greenhouse gas emissions perspective, it is without doubt; significantly better for the environment to eat plant-based foods.
  - If we all eliminated meat and milk from our diets and went to plant sources of these foods, we would be saving at least 50% of our water use. We would be saving untouched habitats (Rainforests, marshes) from being destroyed to produce more livestock feed, and we would be creating less pollution in our waterways, streams, and oceans that indirectly threaten human, animal, and plant lives.

**Even more reason that going mostly or exclusively plant-based will positively impact our two greatest resources: our body/health and the world we live in/on.**

## Simple Combinations that Offer Complete Protein Sources



The major plant-based sources of proteins are beans and legumes.

Some examples include: chickpeas, kidney beans and black beans. Soybeans are almost a complete protein, making it one of the best sources of protein if you're on a plant-based diet. Nuts and seeds are also a good source of protein when combined, along with grains.

Grains aren't really a major source of protein, although they have a decent count of amino acids that complement the amino acids in beans and legumes. Rice and beans are a complete protein when combined, but beans on their own wouldn't necessarily be (meaning the carb count is usually way off in effort to capture a complete protein). **You don't have to be diligent in balancing each meal as long as you get a variety of foods that contain amino acids throughout the day.**

## **Consider Supplementing B12 and Iron**

You can only get B12 through animal sources, not through plants. If you're plant-based, a B12 supplement is necessary, as is consuming B12-fortified foods like plant milks, soy products and nutritional yeast. You can get iron through plant-based sources—including tofu, nuts, seeds, legumes, kale, raisins and quinoa—but it's more difficult and not necessary as absorbable, so we recommend also taking iron supplements.



## **Healthy Fats And Calcium Are Important**

A certain amount of fat in your diet is important to protect your heart and blood, and a plant-based diet is packed with all sorts of healthy fats. Plant-based sources of fat include nuts, avocado, peanut butter, olive oil, sesame oil and avocado oil. Unlike animal fats, plant-based fats don't contain cholesterol. With an average recommended daily intake of 1000 mg, calcium intake is also important. Consuming a vitamin C source with foods that contain iron can enhance absorption. Some people benefit from taking iron supplements and calcium-fortified foods like milk alternatives and some cereals.

*For reference*, some common foods that contain iron include: kale and other dark-leafy greens, chia seeds, almond butter, figs, beans, and broccoli.

## **The most common plant-based protein source is tofu.**



### **TOFU**

Tofu is made from curdled soymilk that is drained, pressed and cut into blocks. Ingredient lists should list calcium sulfate as a coagulant. To be certain you are getting GMO-free tofu, look for labels that state they are GMO Free or are organic.

**Why is tofu a plant-based eaters go-to?** One of the main reasons is because tofu is high in protein and calcium. Also, soy protein is cholesterol-free, highly digestible and a high quality of protein that's low in saturated fat, making it a heart-healthy choice. Despite concerns about soy's isoflavones (compounds similar to estrogen) they may actually have a protective effect; as studies have shown isoflavones may have a role in reducing the risk of breast and prostate cancers.

**Understanding the different kinds of tofu** and when to use each one so you can take on a plant-based diet with ease and confidence.

**Silken Tofu** (softest type)

Uses: Great for blending into smoothies, use as a fat substitute in baking. Use to make dips and spreads. Blend into cream-based soups to replace high fat cream.

**Firm Tofu** (Medium or Firm)

Uses: Great to replace eggs for “scrambled eggs-like.” Cut into chunks and add to soups. Consider crumbling this type of tofu to beef or turkey burgers or meat loaf (thus decreasing animal-protein by incorporating a plant-based protein). Crumble and use to make Vegan egg salad or taco filling.



**Extra-Firm Tofu** (Hard)

Uses: Cut into blocks and add to stir-fry. Cut into strips or triangles, marinate, coat and bake or fry or even marinate and grill.

**Tofu Prep Tips**

Understanding how to prepare tofu is important to get the best results. One trick to making it behave the way you want it to is to remove as much excess moisture as you can before cooking. Doing this allows the tofu to absorb more flavor and gives it a firmer, more satisfying texture.



**Step 1:** Place drained tofu on a plate or tray covered with a clean dishtowel or several paper towels.



**Step 2:** To press tofu, after placing the block onto the dishtowel or paper towels, place a second layer of a dishtowel or paper towels on top then add a weighted object, such as a baking sheet, a cutting board with a can of tomatoes or beans *on top of that*, to lightly press down. Allow the

tofu to stand like this for 30 – 60 minutes. Replace dishtowel or paper towels periodically to remove as much moisture as possible.

**Step 3:** When the tofu has completed Step 2, it's time to cut it. Stand tofu block lengthwise, use a chef's knife (not a serrated knife) and cut into 4 equal rectangle pieces. Use a pressing motion and not a sawing motion to prevent crumbling.

**Step 4:** Next stack the four rectangles onto one another and cut them into thinner strips to eventually make cubes or triangles or just leave them as strips. *This next cut is usually determined by how you will be using the tofu going forward.*



## TEMPEH

**Tempeh** is a plant-based protein source that originated in Indonesia. It's made from fermented soybeans that have been formed into a block,



though store bought **tempeh** often includes additional beans and grains. Though it's known for its high protein content, it offers a host of different health benefits.

## SEITAN

Seitan is the base for many commercially available vegetarian products such as Tofurky deli slices, meatless frankfurters, fakin' bacon, and others. You can generally find it in a variety of styles, such as ground, in

slices, or in strips. Seitan can be prepared by hand using either whole wheat flour (which is a very labor-intensive process) or vital wheat gluten (which is a much simpler process). It is made by rinsing away the starch in the wheat dough, leaving just the high-protein gluten behind. Mimics the texture of meat the most convincingly.



Here are a few recipes to help make transitioning to a plant-based diet more fulfilling and less difficult ☺.

These recipes offer an option to incorporate more plant-based options in place of the traditional animal-based proteins. Add them in as you would animal-based proteins.

### **Aquafaba**

This incredible vegan ingredient is simply the liquid from a can of Garbanzo or Chickpeas. It has two main uses: baking as an egg white substitute to make light, fluffy meringues and as a whole egg substitute in various baked goods, ranging from brownies to waffles, muffins and even some cakes.

### **Here are the RATIOS for replacing eggs with aquafaba:**

- 1 Tbsp. aquafaba – 1 egg yolk
- 2 Tbsp. aquafaba = 1 egg white
- 3 Tbsp. aquafaba = 1 whole egg



### **Tofu Mayonnaise**

#### **Ingredients:**

- 1 cup Silken Tofu
- 3 Tbsp. Olive or Avocado Oil
- 2 Tbsp. Cider Vinegar
- 2 tsp. Dijon Mustard
- 2 finger pinch Kosher Salt

#### **Directions:**

**Step 1:** Add all ingredients to a blender or food processor. Process until smooth, scraping down sides as needed. You may need to add 1-2 Tbsp. cool water during the process to make the mayo the type of creaminess you prefer. This process can take several minutes to properly combine.

**Step 2:** Taste and adjust as desired with vinegar or salt. Transfer to an airtight jar or container for up to 1 week, refrigerated.

### **Farmers Market Tofu Eggless Scramble**

#### **Ingredients:**

- 14 oz. Organic Firm Tofu
- 8.5 oz. package Seeds of Change® Quinoa & Brown Rice with Garlic
- 2 Tbsp. Light Olive Oil or Avocado Oil, divided
- 1 Small Yellow Onion, thinly sliced
- 1 tsp. Garlic, minced
- 1 Jalapeño Pepper, thinly sliced (wipe hands with lemon juice after & wash)
- 4 oz. Brown Mushrooms, sliced
- 4 cups Baby Spinach Leaves

Two 2 finger pinches each Kosher Salt & Ground Black Pepper, divided  
1 tsp. Turmeric  
1/2 cup canned Fire Roasted Diced Tomatoes

Optional: Any preferred Hot Sauce

**Directions:** Slice and press and let block of tofu drain for 10 – 15 min. before starting step 1.

**Step 1:** Crumble tofu and set aside in a bowl. Follow directions on quinoa-rice blend packet. When grains are cooked, ass to a bowl and fluff with a fork.

**Step 2:** Meanwhile, heat 1 Tbsp. oil in a large skillet over med.-high. Add sliced onion, garlic, jalapeño, and mushrooms. Cook until slightly softened; 3 – 5 min. Add spinach leaves, salt and pepper. Cook until spinach is wilted; 1 – 2 min. Add tomatoes and gently incorporate into mixture. Remove all to a waiting bowl.

**Step 3:** Using the same skillet, add remaining 1 Tbsp. oil and heat over med.-high. When hot, add crumbled tofu, turmeric and remaining pinches salt and pepper. Cook until tofu is lightly browned, 5 – 7 min. Divide everything among bowls based on your unit suggestions.

## **1 COMPLETE Unit Cooked**

### **Portion**

**(add to bowl in this order):**

1/4 cup grain blend  
+ 1/3 cup veggie mixture  
+ 1/3 cup crumbled tofu

## **Tofu**



## **Coconut-Cashew Crispy Tofu**

### **Cubes**

#### **Ingredients:**

14 oz. Organic Extra Firm Tofu  
2 Tbsp. Unsweetened Shredded Coconut  
2 Tbsp. Cashews, finely chopped  
2 Tbsp. Cornstarch  
2 Tbsp. Avocado Oil, divided  
3 finger pinch Kosher Salt

**Directions:** Drain tofu, pat dry and cut into 1" cubes. Let sit on a dish towel or paper towels to slightly decrease excess moisture.

**Step 1:** Add tofu cubes and cornstarch to a large bowl; gently toss. Let sit.

**Step 2:** Meanwhile, add coconut and chopped cashews to a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Toast until fragrant and golden; about 2 min. Transfer to a small dish.

**Step 3:** Wipe skillet clean from first use. Add 1 Tbsp. oil and heat over med.-high. When oil is hot, add half the tofu cubes, shaking off any excess cornstarch when transferring into skillet. Cook for 1 min. then reduce heat to medium and cook until tofu cubes are golden brown and crispy on most sides; about 6 min. Remove to a different bowl and repeat entire process with reserved 1 Tbsp. oil and reserved second half of tofu cubes.

When all tofu is cooked, sprinkle with pinch of salt then toasted coconut and cashews.

### **Smoky Tempeh**

#### **Ingredients:**

2 Tbsp. Light Olive or Avocado Oil  
8 oz. Tempeh  
2 tsp. Agave or Raw Honey  
1 tsp. Liquid Smoke Hickory or Mesquite  
2 finger pinch of Kosher Salt & Ground Black Pepper



**Directions:** Slice tempeh into 1/4" thick strips.

**Step 1:** Heat oil in a large skillet over med.-high. Add tempeh strips in a single layer. If you need to, divide oil and tempeh into two batches.

**Step 2:** Cook until crispy; about 5 – 7 min. per side.

**Step 3:** Add agave, liquid smoke, pinch of salt and pepper. Cook until tempeh is caramelized from the agave; another 1 - 2 min.

### **1 Unit Portion of PROTEIN:**

**1.5 oz. cooked tempeh pieces**

### **1 Unit Cooked Portion Protein & Fat:**

**2 oz. cooked crispy tofu cubes**

### **Barbecue Seitan**

#### **Ingredients:**

8 oz. Seitan  
1 Tbsp. Light Olive or Avocado Oil, divided  
1/4 cup lowest sugar possible BBQ Sauce (there are Sugar-free options available)

**Directions:** Slice seitan into bite-sized pieces.

**Step 1:** Heat oil in a large skillet over med.-high. Add seitan pieces and cook until crispy; 5 – 7 min. Add BBQ sauce and cook until sauce thickens; 1 – 3 min.

### **1 Unit Portion of PROTEIN:**

**1 oz. cooked seitan pieces**



## Vegan Black Bean Patty

### Ingredients:

14.5 oz. can Black Beans drained, rinsed  
1/4 cup Yellow Onion, finely diced  
1/4 cup Fresh Cilantro, diced  
1 Tbsp. Garlic, minced  
2 tsp. Braggs Liquid Aminos or \*Coconut Aminos (\*Coconut is vegan)  
2 finger pinches of Kosher Salt & Ground Black Pepper  
1/4 cup Cooked Basmati Brown Rice  
1 Tbsp. Flaxseed Meal + 3 Tbsp. Water; whisk, let sit 5 min.  
Avocado Oil Cooking Spray  
2 Tbsp. Tofu Mayonnaise  
1 1/2 Tbsp. Silken Tofu  
1 tsp. Dijon Mustard  
Optional: Sriracha Hot Sauce and Fresh Lime Juice

**Directions:** Pre heat oven to 425° F. Make rice according to directions on package

**Step 1:** Mash beans in a large bowl. Mix in remaining 8 ingredients (thru egg) with your hands. With wet hands, shape into 5 patties. If they are not too firm, you can refrigerate them for up to a day ahead.

**Step 2:** Arrange patties on a baking sheet coated with oil spray. Bake in pre heated oven for a total of 8 min., flipping at the 6 minute mark.

**Step 3:** Meanwhile, combine mayo, tofu, Dijon, optional Sriracha, and lime juice for a spicy aioli sauce to give your black bean patty a kick of flavor!



### 1 COMPLETE Unit Portion:

1/2 black bean patty

+ 1 1/2 tsp. aioli

## **Vegan Chickpea Patty**

### **Ingredients:**

1 Tbsp. Coconut or Avocado Oil  
1 Small Yellow Onion, finely diced  
1 Tbsp. Carrot, peeled and cut into chunks  
2 cloves Garlic, peeled  
1/2 cup Fresh Parsley, stems removed  
1 1/2 cup canned Chickpeas (Garbanzo) drained, rinsed  
1 slice Sprouted Wheat Bread, pulsed to make crumbs in a blender  
1 Tbsp. Flaxseed Meal + 3 Tbsp. Water; whisk, let sit 5 min.  
2 finger pinch Kosher Salt  
1/4 tsp. Ground Coriander  
1/4 tsp. Ground Cumin  
2 Tbsp. Nutritional Yeast  
Coconut or Avocado Oil Cooking Spray

**Directions:** Pre heat oven to 400° F.

**Step 1:** Heat oil in a small saucepan over medium heat. Add diced onion; sauté, stirring occasionally, 5 min., until soft and translucent. Remove from heat and add to a large bowl.

**Step 2:** In a food processor or blender, make breadcrumbs with the slice of bread. Remove. Next, blend carrot, garlic, parsley, and chickpeas until smooth. Add chickpea mixture to the bowl with the onions and mix with hands to combine. Add breadcrumbs, flaxseed mixture, salt, coriander, cumin, and nutritional yeast to the chickpea mixture and mix until fully combined.

**Step 3:** Spray a baking sheet with oil. Form chickpea mixture into

patties about 1/2 inch thick. Place patties on a baking sheet; spray patties with cooking spray. Bake 15 - 20 minutes, or until they begin to turn golden brown.



**1 Unit Portion Protein & Carbs:**

**1/2 chickpea patty**

**This is a great start!!!**

**We hope to have a hand  
in supporting you to  
adopt a mostly or  
exclusively  
plant-based diet 😊**