



TIPS & TRICKS FOR FAVORING PLANT-BASED FOOD

No matter your lifestyle or budget, you can easily incorporate more plant-based meals into your week. We have tips for eating more plant-based food without spending much time, without spending much money, while eating out, when shopping at the grocery store, while cooking at home, when feeding kids, and if you're a college student.

The easiest way to change how you eat is to start with small changes. Here are our tips for easing into plant-based eating:

- ✂ Try Meatless Mondays. Start by skipping meat one day a week and trying plant-based recipes instead. Once you make a habit of going meatless once a week, it'll be easier to add more meatless meals to your week.
- ✂ Shift the proportions on your plate. Instead of giving plant-based foods a supporting role on your plate, make them the star. Mix rice, beans, and veggies in a bowl and add a few pieces of chicken, saving the rest for another meal or sharing it with someone else.
- ✂ Start with easy swaps. Swap cow's milk for soy, almond, oat or coconut in your smoothies, cereal, and baked goods. If you like eating burgers three times a week, swap in a veggie burger one of those times.
- ✂ Try plant-based versions of your favorite go-to meals. Never miss a Taco Tuesday? Replace the ground beef with flavorful beans, lentils, chopped mushrooms, crumbled tempeh, or plant-based ground beef.
- ✂ Eat enough food. Feeling hungry all the time won't make you want to stick with plant-based eating. Plant-based foods are lower in calories, so make sure that you eat enough of them. Eat more frequently or in bigger portions, and incorporate enough calorie-dense foods. The easiest way to get enough calories, protein, good fats, and other nutrients is to eat from a wide variety of plant-based sources, i.e. veggies, fruits, whole grains, beans, legumes, nuts, and seeds.
- ✂ Find a community, in person or online, to give you company and advice as you shift your diet. Food is a conduit for community and connection, and you may find that your relationships with like-minded eaters blossom into more than just dietary support. Changing your diet might become a way to learn more about your own culture(s) or those of your new friends, or to participate in

community food projects or community supported farms. While you don't have to make this a social or cultural practice, opportunities exist and may make changing your eating habits more enjoyable. Facebook groups are a good place to start as you find your community. Some groups, like [Forks over Knives Official Plant-Based Group](#), offer broad support, while others, like [Coalition for Vegans of Color](#), [Sistah Vegan Project](#), [Vegans United](#), and [What Vegan Children Eat!](#) represent different communities and different motivations. You can also search [Meetup](#) for local groups that host potlucks, activism events, documentary screenings, and more.

If you're really ready to take the plunge, you could try the [7 Day Vegan](#) challenge.

Eating more plant-based foods on a budget

Eating less meat in favor of more plant-based foods doesn't have to be expensive. Here are our tips for favoring plant-based foods without spending a lot of money:

- ✂ Make meals at home. It's much more budget-friendly than going out to eat or ordering in. Check out websites with advice on [eating vegan on the cheap](#).
- ✂ Make meals with ingredients you already have. Before you go shopping or reach for that take-out menu, try using up what you have. Need a little inspiration? Websites like [SuperCook](#) and [MyFridgeFood](#) give you recipe suggestions based on what's already in your fridge or pantry.
- ✂ Stock up on staple foods. Some of the most affordable foods in the grocery store are rice, beans, peas, lentils, oats, pasta, potatoes, and frozen fruits and vegetables. These foods can be cooked and combined in many different ways for a wide variety of plant-based meals.
- ✂ Buy in bulk, if you can afford to. It's more cost-effective to buy foods that have a long shelf-life in bulk.
- ✂ Buy in-season and frozen produce. Fresh fruits and vegetables tend to be cheaper when they're in season. In the off season, head to the freezer aisle. Frozen produce is just as nutritious as fresh, and you don't have to worry about spoilage.
- ✂ Skip expensive convenience foods. Relying on fake meat products, frozen meals, and other pre-packaged convenience foods can add up. Start by skipping convenience foods that you can cheaply and quickly make yourself — like salad dressings. Then, try some different veggie burger recipes and make a big batch of your favorite patties to freeze for later.
- ✂ Shop around.
- ✂ Try to plan ahead. Even a little bit of meal planning goes a long way in terms of saving you time and money in the kitchen. It can be as simple as looking through your fridge and pantry once a week and making a plan to use up what's about to expire, or preparing some chopped vegetables or cooked beans and rice to use throughout the week.



Eating more plant-based foods without spending a lot of time



New habits can require more of your time in the beginning, but with these tips, plant-based eating doesn't have to consume your day.

✂ Make one-pot meals. Spend less time cooking and washing up by throwing all of your ingredients in one pot. There is no shortage of recipe ideas for one-pot soups and stews, casseroles, and pasta, curry, and stir-fry dishes. [Instant Pots](#) and [slow-cookers](#) can help cooking be both one-pot and mostly hands off — a bonus when you've got other things to do.

- ✂ Make extra grains and beans. Some grains and beans take a good amount of time to cook, so cooking them in big batches saves you a lot of time later. Using canned beans is another way to save time.
- ✂ Batch prep your veggies. Carve out some extra time when you get home from the grocery store to wash, peel, chop and lightly prep veggies and herbs that store reasonably well. Doing this will make it faster to throw together a meal at a busier time. (Bonus: It also advances Strategy #2, wasting less food)
- ✂ Have convenience foods on hand. When you're really short on time, opt for [quick-cooking grains](#), canned beans, canned tomatoes, vegetable broth, frozen fruits and vegetables, and pre-made foods like frozen veggie burgers, hummus, nut butters, salsa, and guacamole.
- ✂ Try meat substitutes. Plant-based burgers, sausages, bacon, nuggets, and other alternatives to meats don't require much effort. They're flavorful, satisfying, and have similar protein content to meat products. However, they're expensive, so not the best option if you're looking to save money.

Cooking plant-based meals at home

Not everyone likes to cook, and eating at home isn't always practical. But cooking for yourself and others is one of the easiest ways to eat plant-based on a budget, and it doesn't have to be difficult or time-consuming. Here are some tips to save you time and money in the kitchen.

- ✂ Use the "[grain, bean, and a green](#)" formula. From soups and stews to stir fry, tacos, and pasta, so many inexpensive yet substantial meals can be made using this formula. You may already be eating these types of meals, so it's just about reducing (or removing) the meat and upping the plant-based ingredients. Grain, bean, and a green meals come together quickly and it's easy to make extra for leftovers, lunches, or completely different meals.
- ✂ Don't focus on cutting out meat, but rather shifting the proportions. Cook with less meat by making plant-based foods the emphasis of your plate. For example, instead of chicken breast with a side of



vegetables, make a rice, bean, and vegetable bowl and top it with a few pieces of chicken, saving the rest for another meal or sharing it with someone else.

- ✂ Use lots of flavor. Add umami flavor to your meals with mushrooms, tomatoes, grilled/roasted/sauteed vegetables, toasted nuts and seeds, vegetable broth, and soy sauce. Get inspired by the varied spices and flavors of different cuisines.
- ✂ Prepare plant-based versions of your family's traditional cuisines and favorite dishes. For example, [Thai cuisine](#) and [Peruvian cuisine](#). Even though plant-based diets are sometimes seen as part of white wellness culture, it should go without saying that plant-based diets aren't just for white people and are common across a range of cultures.



- ✂ Try cooking with [tofu](#), [tempeh](#) and other meat substitutes. Many people don't like the idea of tofu, and that's okay! It's possible to eat a more plant-based diet without tofu. But there are lots of reasons to try tofu, tempeh, seitan, and other minimally processed meat substitutes. They are typically less expensive than animal-based products and also less expensive than veggie burgers and other alternatives. They are full of protein and other nutrients. In certain preparations, they can also mimic the taste and texture of meat. Tofu and tempeh are pretty bland on their own, so it's important to flavor them with spices, marinades, or sauces. That makes them adaptable to many dishes.

Feeding kids plant-based foods

Worried about spending time and money on foods your kids won't eat? Try these tips for getting your kids to eat more plant-based foods.

- ✂ Make plant-based versions of family favorite recipes, e.g., burgers, spaghetti bolognese, chili, or tacos.
- ✂ Invest in a good cookbook for vegan meals for the [whole family](#).
- ✂ Start with plant-based foods your kids like and make more meals that include those foods.
- ✂ Keep snacks simple. Try apples with peanut butter, or veggies with hummus.
- ✂ Packing nutritious school lunches is always a challenge, but some parents have [cracked the code on plant-based lunches](#). An easy lunch is always packing up leftovers from your plant-based dinner the night before. You could try presenting leftovers in a slightly new way, for example put leftover rice and veggies in a wrap.



Shopping at the grocery store

Shopping for a more plant-based diet might take a little extra time and money in the beginning. You might need to navigate your grocery store a little differently and stock your fridge and pantry a little differently. Here are some tips to make your trip to the grocery store easy and budget friendly.

- ✂ Make a list. Base it on meals you actually plan to make. This helps you not waste food and money. If you don't have or forgot a list, try to come up with some ideas based around the "grain, bean and a green" formula.
- ✂ Prioritize whole foods over processed. Skipping the fancy sauces and condiments will save you money, but it's a good idea to buy some time-saving staples, like peanut butter and hummus, for snacking.



✂ If you can afford to, stock up on staples like beans, lentils, whole grains, oats, etc. You'll have to invest a little extra money initially to build up some pantry staples. Buying in bulk helps, and dried beans are cheaper.

✂ Buy in-season and frozen fruits and vegetables. [In-season produce](#) is often cheaper. Frozen produce can be just as nutritious as fresh, and you don't have to worry as much about spoilage and food waste.

✂ Buy the store brand. When you buy pricier name brands, you may just be paying for their extra marketing costs, not better quality.

✂ Shop around at international markets, budget grocery stores, and wholesale warehouses. You can find plant-based foods at almost any store, but if you have the time, it's worthwhile to shop around at different stores for new foods, good deals, and seasonal and local foods that might be cheaper.

Favoring plant-based foods when eating out

Dining out can be a challenge when you're trying to make more plant-based choices. Here are some tips to make it easier.

✂ Do a little research. Download an app (like [HappyCow](#)) that helps you find restaurants in your area with vegan or vegan-friendly options. This [info sheet](#) lists plant-based options at popular restaurants and fast food chains.

✂ Look for cuisines that are vegetarian-friendly or that have a lot of flavor without using much meat, for example Ethiopian or Indian food.



✂ Be creative. Assemble a meal out of side dishes, such as rice, veggies, or potatoes.

✂ Ask if dishes can be modified to contain less meat or no meat at all.

Eating more plant-based foods as a college student



College is a great time to try new habits, but favoring plant-based foods can be challenging when you have limited time, money, and kitchen space. Here are some tips for making plant-based choices on campus.

✂ When eating at your campus dining hall or cafeteria, fill up your plate with plant-based options before heading to the meat station. Make the most out of the salad bar by loading up your salad with filling and protein-rich plant-based toppings (think chickpeas, black beans, quinoa, avocado, and walnuts).

✂ Reach out to Food/Dining Services. If plant-based options are lacking on your campus, speak up! Most school websites have a page for Food/Dining Services with contact information.

✂ Keep snacks on hand. It's 9 PM and you just got out of your last class. You haven't eaten since breakfast and you're starving. Nothing sounds better than a cheeseburger at your dining hall's late night hours. Between classes, part-time jobs, volunteering, clubs, and other activities, it can be difficult to keep to a regular meal schedule. Try keeping some quick and satisfying snack foods on hand, like fruit (fresh or dried), nuts, peanut butter, hummus, and instant oatmeal.

✂ Find a community. Look for vegetarian/vegan clubs and events. They're a great way to connect with other people who are (or may be) interested in plant-based eating. Plus, many clubs and events provide free food! Facebook groups are also a good place to find an online community. Some groups, like [Forks over Knives Official Plant-Based Group](#), offer broad support, while others, like [Coalition for Vegans of Color](#), [Sistah Vegan Project](#), [Vegans United](#) represent different communities and different motivations.

Now that you're feeling confident about Strategy #1, ready to take on Strategy #2? Continue reading about [food waste](#) and check out our [tips](#) for reducing your food waste.



<https://bioethics.jhu.edu/choose-food>