



April 2013 - Vegan Diet - Health Benefits

This Easter. I embarked on only eaten vegan for a month and it was an eye opener. It was really like doing a detox as I cut out all sugar, coffee and alcohol as well as meat and any animal produce. As you can imagine I felt rather tired and heady to start with but that soon cleared in the first week and as my waistline got trimmer, my energy increased, as did my sleeping improve. It wasn't as hard as I thought even though I was also cooking for my husband who loves meat. I ate as much as I fancied within those boundary lines and still lost weight. People commented on my skin and said I looked well and that further encouraged me on. I even ate out but stuck to vegetables and rice and when at friends for dinner I just missed out the meat. I felt quite sad when the month had finished but decided not to make it a lifetime policy but to increase my vegetable and plant intake. All menopausal symptoms seemed to fade away and I believe in this stage of life, as a woman, eating more plant food and cutting down on animal produce, sugar, alcohol and caffeine is key to good health.



Mushroom and pumpkin couscous (serves 4)

Ingredients

15g Shiitake Mushrooms
4tbsp Extra Virgin Olive Oil



FOOD SCIENCE

Vegan Diet - Health Benefits

Meats and cheese are high in saturated fat which can elevate levels of LDL cholesterol (the bad cholesterol) within the blood. These LDLs cause narrowing of the arteries, putting you at a higher risk of heart attacks and strokes.

Typically, a vegan will eat more lentils, beans and legumes. These are good for the heart because they contain soluble fibre which reduces cholesterol.

Lower rates of blood pressure as well as blood cholesterol levels.

Due to less animal fats, there is less fat in the diet and therefore easier to lose weight.

300g Japanese pumpkin or butternut squash, diced
3 cloves garlic, crushed
8-10 leaves sage, finely chopped
250g couscous
1 sachet Miso Bouillon Paste
1 lemon juice and zest
Fried sage leaves, optional
Sea Salt

Method

- Place the mushrooms in a bowl and cover with 250ml of warm water. Allow to soak for 5-10 minutes until softened.
- Strain the mushrooms, reserving the soaking liquid. Remove the tough stalks from the shiitake and discard. Then, slice the mushrooms into strips.
- Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a saucepan. Add the pumpkin, garlic, sage and fry on a medium heat for 5 minutes, add the couscous and continue to cook for a further 5 minutes.
- Mix the miso bouillon paste into the mushroom soaking liquid until dissolved, then pour it into the couscous mix along with the lemon juice and zest. Stir briefly, add a little sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, then turn off the stove, place a lid on the pan and allow to stand for 10 minutes.
- Stir the couscous to break up any large chunks and drizzle over the remaining olive oil. Serve garnished with fried sage leaves, if desired.

Pasta with Pesto, Broccoli & Pine Nuts (serves 2)

Ingredients

8oz (225g) pasta
2 tbsp vegan pesto
1/2 small broccoli
2 handfuls pine nuts
1 sliced tomato
Vegan Parmezano

Method

- Add pasta to boiling water and boil for 8 minutes.
- Steam broccoli for last 4 minutes and add to pasta

More vitamins consumed generally, as more fruit, vegetables, nuts and seeds are eaten.

A vegan's diet is higher in dietary fibre, magnesium, folic acid, vitamins C and E, iron and they tend to be lower in calories, saturated fat and cholesterol.

Lower risk of cardiovascular disease, obesity, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers.

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- together with the pesto and pine nuts.
- Mix and serve onto plates. Add garnish of thinly sliced tomato.
 - Sprinkle with Parmezano.



Spinach Quiche (serves 4)

Ingredients

Pastry

- 8 oz (225g) wholemeal flour
- Good pinch of salt
- 4 oz (115g) very cold vegan margarine
- Approx. 2 tablespoon cold water

Filling

- 1 lb (450g) fresh spinach, washed and shredded
- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 4 oz (115g) mushrooms, sliced
- 12 oz (340g) tofu, pressed to remove excess water
- 1/2 tbsp dried dill, or to taste
- Fresh parsley
- Season to taste
- 2 tbsp sunflower seeds

Method

- Start with the pastry: sift together flour and salt. Use finger tips to rub in the margarine until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs. Add just enough cold water to bind it to dough, then wrap in cling film and leave in the fridge for 30 minutes.
- Meanwhile, cook the spinach gently in a saucepan in a minimum of water, or preferably steam it, until just soft.
- Heat the oil and fry the onion until it begins to soften, then add the mushrooms and cook for a few minutes more.
- Either mash the tofu, or blend it to make a thick

puree. Add dill, plenty of finely chopped parsley and seasoning. Stir in the mushroom mixture and spinach.

- On a floured board roll out the pastry, then use it to line a medium-sized flan dish. Pour in the tofu, spinach and mushroom mixture, smooth the top and sprinkle with seeds.
- Bake at 190C/375F/gas mark 5 for about half an hour, or until the pastry is crisp. Serve hot.



Millet and Vegetable Risotto (serves 4)

Ingredients

4 generous handfuls of seasonal vegetables
3 tbsp vegetable oil
2 medium onions, finely chopped
14 oz (400g) millet
1 1/2 pints (850mls) water or vegetable stock
2 heaped tbsp vegan pesto
2 heaped tbsp tomato puree
Juice of 1 lemon
Salt and pepper
Large handful of nuts to garnish

Method

- Prepare the vegetables.
- Over medium heat sauté the onion in the oil until transparent. Add the millet grains and ensure that each one gets coated with the oil.
- Add the water or stock. Bring to the boil and simmer for 10 minutes.
- Add the vegetables and continue to simmer until all the excess liquid has evaporated and the vegetables are tender. Add extra water if required but keep it to a minimum.
- Add the pesto, tomato puree and half the lemon

juice. Adjust seasoning and add extra lemon juice if necessary. Serve and garnish with the nuts of your choice.



Vegan tomato & mushroom pancakes (serves 2)

Ingredients

140g white self-raising flour
1 tsp soya flour
400ml soya milk
Vegetable oil, for frying
For the topping
2 tbsp vegetable oil
250g button mushrooms
250g cherry tomatoes (halved)
2tbsp soya cream/milk
Large handful pine nuts
Snipped chives

Method

- Sift the flours and a pinch of salt into a blender. Add the soya milk and blend to make a smooth batter.
- Heat a little oil in a medium non-stick frying pan until very hot. Pour 3 tbsp of the batter into the pan and cook over a medium heat until bubbles appear on the surface of the pancake. Flip the pancake over and cook the other side until golden brown. You will make about 8.
- For the topping, heat the oil in a frying pan. Cook the mushrooms until tender, add the tomatoes and cook for a couple of mins.
- Pour in the soya cream or milk and pine nuts, then gently cook until combined. Divide the pancakes between 2 plates, then spoon over the tomatoes and mushrooms. Scatter with chives.



Soba Noodle & Edamame Salad With Grilled Tofu (serves 4)

Ingredients

140g soba noodles
300g fresh/frozen edamame (soy) beans
4 shredded spring onions
300g bag beansprouts
1 cucumber (deseeded, peeled & sliced)
1 tsp sesame
250g block tofu, patted dry & thickly sliced
1tsp vegetable oil
Coriander leaves

For the dressing

2tsp mirin
2tsp tamari
2tbsp orange juice
1 finely chopped red chili

Method

- Heat dressing ingredients in your smallest saucepan, simmer for 30 secs, then set aside.
- Boil noodles following the pack instructions, adding the edamame beans for the final 2 mins cooking time. Rinse under very cold water, drain thoroughly and tip into a large bowl with the spring onions, beansprouts, cucumber, sesame oil and warm dressing. Season if you like.
- Brush tofu with the vegetable oil, season and griddle or grill for 2-3 mins each side - the tofu is very delicate so turn carefully. Top the salad with the tofu, scatter with coriander and serve.



Falafel Burgers (serves 4)

Ingredients

400g can chickpeas, rinsed and drained
Garlic clove, chopped
Handful of parsley
1 tsp ground coriander
½ tsp chili powder
2tbsp sunflower oil
Toasted pita bread
200g tub tomato salsa
Green salad
Red onion – roughly chopped

Method

- Pat the chickpeas dry with kitchen paper. Tip into a food processor along with the onion, garlic, parsley, spices, flour and a little salt. Blend until fairly smooth, then shape into four patties with your hands.
- Heat the oil in a non-stick frying pan, add the burgers, and then quickly fry for 3 mins on each side until lightly golden.
- Serve with toasted pitas, tomato salsa and a green salad.

Vegan, No Bake Peanut Butter Chocolate Crispies with Peanut Butter ‘Fudge’

No Bake Peanut Butter Chocolate Crispies

Ingredients

1/2 cup all natural peanut butter (chunky or smooth)
1/2 cup brown rice syrup

2 tsp pure vanilla extract
1/4 cup unsweetened almond milk
1/2 cup sifted cocoa powder
1/4-1/2 tsp salt, to taste
3 cups crisp rice cereal
1/4 cup chopped unsalted peanuts
1/2 cup non-dairy chocolate chips

Dark Chocolate Coconut Peanut Butter 'Fudge'

Ingredients

1 cup all-natural peanut butter
1/2 cup dark chocolate chips
1 tsp coconut oil
salt, to taste
1/3 cup unsweetened coconut + coconut for sprinkling (optional)

Method

- Line an 8 inch square pan with 2 pieces of parchment paper going each way.
- In a medium sized saucepan, stir together the peanut butter, brown rice syrup, vanilla, and almond milk together over low-medium heat. Once combined, slowly add in the sifted cocoa powder and the salt. Stir over low heat being careful not to burn.
- Mix in the 3 cups of rice crispies and remove from heat. Now add in the 1/2 cup of chocolate chips and stir well. Spread this mixture into the square pan lined with parchment paper. Press down firmly and evenly. Place in the freezer for at least 10 minutes to firm up.
- Meanwhile, make the Dark Chocolate Coconut Peanut Butter by melting the 1/2 cup chocolate chips and coconut oil in a small bowl in the microwave for 30-60 seconds. Be careful not to burn. Now stir in the 1 cup peanut butter, 1/3 cup coconut (optional), and kosher salt to taste. Mix until completely combined.
- Remove the pan from the freezer when firm to touch and spread on as much of the Dark Chocolate PB 'fudge' as you prefer. Sprinkle with coconut if desired.
- Place in the freezer for 45-50 minutes until firm.

Store in the freezer or fridge.

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