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Vegetarian Meals: Preparation Tips

These suggestions may give you some new ideas for making vegetarian meals.

Beans

Try substituting beans for animal protein in all of your favorite dishes. For example, make black bean burgers instead of hamburgers, and bean enchiladas instead of traditional enchiladas. Even try mixing cannellini beans into your pasta or using kidney beans in place of meat in your favorite sloppy joe recipe.

Meat substitutes

Many meat substitutes are available at most major grocery stores. It is more than just veggie burgers anymore. Try meatless ribs, sausage, chicken wings, franks, and bacon or soy crumbles to replace ground beef.

Hearty vegetables

Try using heartier vegetables, such as portobello mushrooms and eggplant, to create filling, healthy meals. Use these vegetables to replace meat in your favorite dishes, such as lasagna.

Tofu

Tofu picks up the flavor of any other ingredient that it is mixed with. If you mix it into a stir-fry, it will pick up the flavor of the soy sauce, and if you mix it into a fruit smoothie, it will pick up the flavor of the fruit. This versatile ingredient adds protein to any dish. You can even use soft tofu to create a vegetable dip for a fast and easy snack.

Grilled vegetables

Grill vegetables and top with cheese to make a fast and easy sandwich. It is especially tasty to brush the vegetables with a little olive oil and balsamic vinegar before grilling. As an alternative, make marinated shish kebabs for a quick meal.

Soups

Enjoy split pea soup, lentil soup, or meatless chili, paired with whole-grain bread for a satisfying meal.

Ethnic foods

Experiment with different ethnic food dishes. For example, many traditional Middle Eastern, Asian, South Indian, and Mexican dishes are vegetarian.

Flavorings

Try a variety of flavored oils, vinegars, cooking wines, fruit and vegetable juices, herbs, and spices to liven up vegetable-based dishes.

Calcium

If you are trying to avoid cow's milk, consume calcium-fortified soy milk, orange juice, breakfast cereals, bread, or other products to make up for the loss of calcium in your diet. In addition, include the following calcium-rich foods (1 cup of cooked or 2 cups of raw):

- Bok choy
- Broccoli
- Collards
- Chinese cabbage
- Kale
- Mustard greens
- Okra

Nut butters

Use peanut, almond, and cashew butters to add a touch of sweetness, "staying power," and nutrition to oatmeal, stir-fries, smoothies, etc.

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