meatless proteins

Delicious and nutritious

When you hear the word protein, you might automatically think of meat. Thankfully, the two no longer need be associated.

Today there are more nonmeat protein options than ever before, and that’s good news for those of us who don’t find a thick cut of marbled mammal particularly appealing.

AM I GETTING ENOUGH?
Many of us assume that a vegetarian diet will not provide adequate amounts of protein. Yet it’s easy to get too much protein in your diet, whether you eat meat or not.

To calculate your daily protein requirement, simply multiply your weight in kilograms by 0.80. An adult woman weighing 50 kg, or 110 lb, would need to consume 40 g of protein a day.

RENEWING YOUR SUPPLY
Our bodies are constantly using protein to fight illness and disease, to produce hormones, to create new cells, to build and repair body tissues, and for energy.

Although most of the amino acids we ingest are reused, we need to replace the ones our bodies absorb with food. If you want to avoid the hormone-laden, high-fat, meat protein sources, nonmeat alternatives can provide just as many, if not better quality sources to maintain great health.

Try these delicious and nutritious meatless recipes from cookbook author Tosca Reno.

PROTEINS EXPLAINED
Proteins can be broken down into complete and incomplete groups, depending on the types of amino acids they provide. Complete proteins contain more than adequate amounts of all the essential amino acids. Incomplete proteins, on the other hand, provide only some of the essential amino acids your body needs.

So, if you choose to leave meat or other meat-related foods out of your diet, how can you ensure that you’re getting complete proteins? The easy answer is by combining them.

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Combine these for complete proteins

Grains + legumes
Examples: bean burritos, black beans with rice

Seed or nuts + legumes
Examples: hummus, lentil soup with almonds

Grains + milk or eggs
Examples: French toast with multigrain bread, scrambled eggs in whole wheat wrap

Vegetables + milk or eggs
Examples: vegetable cream soups, veggie omelette
TOFU CABBAGE ROLLS

From The Eat-Clean Diet Cookbook by Tosca Reno (Robert Kennedy Publishing, 2007).

1/2 red onion, chopped fine
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 cup (240 mL) carrot, grated
1 rib celery, chopped fine
1 Tbsp (15 mL) extra-virgin olive oil
1 block tofu, medium firm
1/4 cup (60 mL) fresh basil, chopped
1/4 cup (60 mL) fresh parsley, chopped
3 Tbsp (45 mL) low-sodium soy sauce or gluten-free tamari
4 quarts (3.8 L) water
6 large green or Savoy cabbage leaves (Keep a few extra leaves handy in case any get damaged while cooking.)

In large nonstick skillet, sauté onion, garlic, carrot, and celery in olive oil. Crumble tofu into skillet. Add herbs. Cook a few minutes more until heated through. Add soy sauce or tamari and mix well. Remove from heat and set aside.

In medium saucepan bring 4 quarts (3.8 L) water to boil. Place cabbage leaves in boiling water. Reduce heat and let cabbage cook briefly just until it changes colour. Remove from water immediately and run under cold water. Set on paper towel to drain.

Divide tofu mixture among 6 cabbage leaves. Roll cabbage carefully so tofu mixture doesn’t fall out and leaves don’t split. Place cabbage rolls in steamer basket and steam for 10 minutes. If you don’t have a steamer you can use a grill pan to grill the rolls, or bake them in the oven at 350 F (180 C) for 20 minutes.

Serve hot.
Serves 6.

EACH SERVING CONTAINS:
158 calories; 13 g protein;
9 g fat (1 g sat. fat, 0 g trans fat);
9 g carbohydrates; 3 g fibre; 488 mg sodium

“It’s easy to get too much protein in your diet, whether you eat meat or not.”
BLACK BEAN PATTIES

From Tosca Reno’s Eat Clean Cookbook by Tosca Reno (Robert Kennedy Publishing, 2009).

2 cups (480 mL) black beans, canned or cooked, rinsed and drained
1 small onion, peeled and coarsely chopped
2 cloves fresh garlic, left whole
1 carrot, chopped fine or grated
1/2 cup (120 mL) oats
1/4 cup (60 mL) natural nut butter, almond, cashew, or peanut
1/4 cup (60 mL) unsalted, raw sunflower seeds
3 Tbsp (45 mL) flaxseeds
Dash Worcestershire sauce
2 Tbsp (30 mL) extra-virgin olive oil
2 egg whites
Pinch red pepper flakes
1/2 cup (120 mL) chopped celery leaves
1 tsp (5 mL) paprika
1 tsp (5 mL) curry powder
1 tsp (5 mL) sea salt
1 Tbsp (15 mL) fresh thyme

Preheat oven to 375 F (190 C). Line large cookie sheet with parchment paper. Place all ingredients in bowl of food processor. Process mixture until it becomes uniform. If you have only a small food processor you will need to do this in batches.

Divide bean mixture into patties of equal size, about 4 in (10 cm) in diameter. Place on prepared cookie sheet. When tray is full, place cookie sheet in hot oven and bake patties for about 20 minutes or until golden brown on top.

Serve cooked patties on whole grain buns. Garnish with sliced tomato, crisp lettuce, and pickles. Add any of your favorite condiments to the meal, and serve with a fresh salad.

Serves 4.

NUTRITIONAL VALUE FOR ONE PATTY:
178 calories; 7g protein; 9 g total fat (2 g sat. fat, 0 g trans fat); 20 g carbohydrates; 7 g fibre; 367 mg sodium

SHEPHERD’S PIE
WITHOUT THE SHEEP

From The Eat-Clean Diet Cookbook by Tosca Reno (Robert Kennedy Publishing, 2007).

1 tsp (5 mL) extra-virgin olive oil
1 medium onion, diced
2 ribs celery, trimmed and chopped
4 cloves garlic, minced
3/4 cup (180 mL) bulgur or wheat berries
1 tsp (5 mL) dried oregano
1 tsp (5 mL) dried basil
1 tsp (5 mL) dried parsley
Pinch red pepper flakes
1 1/2 cups (360 mL) low-sodium vegetable stock
1 cup (240 mL) canned stewed tomatoes
2 sweet potatoes, scrubbed
1 cup (240 mL) chickpeas, drained and rinsed
1 cup (240 mL) frozen edamame
Sea salt and black pepper

Preheat oven to 400 F (200 C). In large skillet, heat olive oil. Add onion, celery, garlic, grain of choice, oregano, basil, parsley, and red pepper flakes. Cook until onion and celery become soft, about 5 minutes.

Add stock and tomatoes. Allow mixture to come to boil. Reduce heat and cover. Cook until bulgur (or grain) is tender.

Scrub sweet potatoes and cook. You can cook in the microwave (depending on size, about 4 minutes) or bake them in the oven (about 45 minutes at 450 F/230 C). Let cool when done.

Add chickpeas, edamame, and salt and pepper to tomato and grain mixture. Stir well. Place all these ingredients in a prepared 6 quart (6 L) casserole dish. Slice cooked potato on top. Season with salt and pepper.

Bake in oven for about 15 minutes.

Serves 4.

EACH SERVING CONTAINS:
381 calories; 16 g protein; 6 g fat (10 g sat. fat, 0 g trans fat); 63 g carbohydrates; 13 g fibre; 217 mg sodium
VEGETARIAN PROTEIN SUPERFOODS

Quinoa
This tiny treat leads the way in highest protein per serving, with a whopping 18 g per cooked cup. Even though quinoa is considered a grain, it is actually a seed and one of the few complete proteins that is a nonmeat source, providing all essential amino acids. It’s a quick-cooking grain that can be easily added to salads or used as a rice substitute, and it even tastes great on its own.

Beans, lentils, and legumes
These popular goodies come in a close second to quinoa in protein power. It doesn’t matter if you choose black, kidney, or navy beans; split peas; or chickpeas: all give great nutritional value at an affordable price. One cup of kidney beans contains about 13 g of protein. Since beans, lentils, and legumes are considered incomplete proteins, remember to combine them (see sidebar Proteins explained) to reach your daily protein requirement.

Nuts
Tasty nuts make great protein-rich snacks but can be high in calories, so measure out a 1/4 cup (60 mL) serving size to make sure you don’t go overboard. Nut butters, such as almond or cashew, make a great alternative to a handful of nuts and when combined with whole grain bread, add up to a complete protein. Two tablespoons (30 mL) of peanut butter contain about 8 g of protein.

Seitan
You’re missing out on a power-protein food if seitan isn’t part of your diet. This wheat-based cheat-meat has the look and texture of meat without the animal protein. Just 100 g of seitan provides a whopping 21 g of protein.

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