



## How to Go Vegetarian / Vegan Successfully & Healthfully

I became a vegetarian in 2008 after taking a meditation course ([www.innerengineering.com](http://www.innerengineering.com)) where I learned the health benefits of vegetarian and vegan diets. Taking this program was a wonderful investment in myself as I had a lot of health, overwork, and personal issues at the time that had caused me to become very unhealthy and be in a lot of pain, and I was not even yet 30 years old at that time! I have since become vegan over the past few years. This was a slower transition as I did not know much about how to cook vegetarian, much less vegan food. Initially I did still eat a lot of cheese and milk for protein, though I have since learned other alternatives that I enjoy! But that transition did take some more time, so I would recommend that you just start where you are comfortable and proceed from there when you are ready.

**So, what is a vegetarian diet?** In my understanding, this is one that does not eat any meat or fish.

**And, what is a vegan diet?** In my understanding, this is one that does not eat any meat or fish, nor any eggs, dairy, honey, or other animal products (sometimes this includes yeast even!).

With increasing awareness of the health benefits of a vegetarian or vegan diet, as well as increased awareness of inhumane farm animal treatment, there is a lot of support and resources for those who want to make this transition. ([www.onegreenplanet.org/animalsandnature/5-caring-celebrities-that-support-animal-protection-initiatives](http://www.onegreenplanet.org/animalsandnature/5-caring-celebrities-that-support-animal-protection-initiatives))

Hopefully sharing my experiences here can also help you with this journey for yourself!

One of the main questions that folks ask me is how to successfully manage to stay healthy and energized on a vegetarian / vegan diet. I had that same concern before as well and learned a lot through trial and error, as well as research and through other vegetarians, how to eat the right kinds of foods to get enough protein, carbs, fats, and fruits and veggies. Some common things I have heard and my responses to these :) -

- *"I don't like / eat vegetables"* - personally, I am a huge fan of fruit, and though I do like vegetables, I love fruit! So I eat a lot more fruits than veggies, and just try to eat something green every day (pears, avocados being included in that, though they are fruits!). I also eat a lot of beans, potatoes, rice, oatmeal, nuts; there are many other veg options besides vegetables!



- *"I am a meat and potatoes kinda guy / a meatatarian"* - Coming from a former "chicken wings and beer kinda girl", I understand this statement completely! :) I now however, also eat alot of potatoes, they are one of my staple foods, so easy to make in the crockpot overnight for brunch the next day! I just wash them off well, put them in the crockpot, fill to cover with filtered water, turn on high, and 4-6 hours later they are done! I often cook some dried organic beans / lentils / peas with them at the same time also for the extra protein. But for the diehard meat eater, you can simply add some fresh fruits and veggies, rice and beans, nuts and oatmeal, etc. to the diet and still get alot of benefit.

- *"I love milk, cheese, eggs, etc. too much to become vegetarian / vegan."*  
It took me over 4 years to transition from vegetarian to vegan, and cheese was the hardest thing for me to give up. I wouldn't recommend you actively try to give up your favorite foods, though, as that just creates more resistance. Rather, find things you like as much or more, and add those into your daily routine. Tofu, unheated, with some organic olive / sesame / coconut oil and sea salt, tastes amazingly like feta or fresh mozzarella cheese! Cooked rice or oatmeal, blended and cooled, mixed with soy / coconut / almond milk and some maple syrup makes a great alternative to yogurt, milk, and other creamy desserts. And frozen bananas in the blender with some organic soy / coconut / almond milk makes an awesome ice cream!

The most important thing about transitioning to vegetarianism is to get enough protein (from cooked and sprouted beans, raw nuts and seeds, and some whole grains) as well as enough complex carbs from whole grains, potatoes, yams, winter squashes, etc. That way, your system will feel satisfied and you will get the long-term sustained energy you need from the food. I use my crockpot twice a day and make some type of beans / lentils / split peas combined with some type of carb (rice, potatoes, winter squash, yams, or sweet potatoes, etc.). I eat a couple good sized bowls of that for each meal (I eat twice a day - brunch and dinner), mixed with some sea salt, organic olive / coconut / sesame oil added in at the end for flavor and sometimes simple spices like cumin seed, turmeric, brown mustard seed, etc. I then also eat several pieces of fruits and/or veggies like carrots, apples, bananas, oranges, pears, broccoli, spinach, etc. until I feel full and satisfied. Sometimes I also eat oatmeal with nuts and fruit with my brunch (my favorite! :) ).

This way, I get a good full meal that keeps me going all day before I feel the need to eat again, ~8-10 hours later. I eat alot at my meal though, it takes time to train the body to do that if you are used to snacking or eating light meals! This gives the digestive tract time to rest in between meals. If I am really hungry or have been doing alot of physical activity



some days, I will have a snack in the afternoon, some fresh or dried fruits, nuts and/or baby carrots, etc.

I hope this information is helpful to you in your desire to explore a vegetarian / vegan diet. I have found a tremendous source of energy and healing from changing my diet and am very much enjoying all the new foods I am getting to try out! I hope you have a fun adventure as well in learning some new ways to enjoy food!

I would be happy to meet with you sometime or talk by phone or continue the conversation through email, whichever is most convenient for you. I especially love to take people for an organic grocery shopping on a budget field trip, often at Ellwood Thompson's Local Market in Carytown ([www.ellwoodthompsons.com](http://www.ellwoodthompsons.com)), as it is a small store and easier to stay focused). With the bulk sections there you can scoop your own dried goods (rice, beans, nuts, etc.), so you can try new things in small quantities and save a lot of money by not buying the pre-packaged goods. In any case, let me know how I can help you further, happy to chat and look forward to helping you with your healthy eating goals!

Best,

**Christina Borland**, Owner  
Go Veggie Girl, LLC