

Menu for week three

Some of this week's recipes are a little more time consuming. If you're constantly busy, you can just use last week's recipes again – or mix them up with some of your favourite recipes from the first week of the Veggie Challenge.

This week all the days have the same set up of breakfast, lunch and dinner. If you liked how we had a couple of non-working days in the last menu plan for enjoying a lazy brunch, please refer back to last week for those recipes.

For menu items written in *italics* we have included recipes. Other items are very simple and don't require a recipe. For recipes indicated as *from week 2*, see the previous menu plan.

– Nimisha Raja

Monday

Breakfast: *Green Smoothie* [from week 2]. Whole grain toast with nut butter or tahini (for optimal digestion eat the toast at least 20 mins after eating the fruit smoothie).

Optional snack: Fruit.

Lunch: Leftovers from previous night: *Falafel Sandwich* [from week 2] or buy a fresh one. Salad.

Optional snack: Fresh cut veggies with hummus (store bought).

Dinner: *Vegan Mac & Cheeze*. *Green Salad with Red Pepper Dressing* (make extra for lunch the next day).

Vegan “Mac & Cheeze”

Serves 4, <20 minutes

Pasta

- 1 (375 gm) package of whole grain pasta
- Water as needed

Cook pasta according to package directions. While pasta is cooking, make sauce:

Sauce

- 3 cups water
- 1/3 cup quick-cooking rolled oats (not instant)
- ½ cup nutritional yeast
- 4 Tbsp tahini
- 2 Tbsp arrowroot or cornstarch
- 2 Tbsp lemon juice
- 1/2 onion, diced (or 1 tsp onion granules)
- 1 tsp salt (or more to taste)
- 1 tsp dried basil, oregano, or thyme (optional)
- ½ tsp garlic granules (garlic powder)
- ½ roasted red pepper (jars available in the condiment aisle)

Place all ingredients in a medium pot, and bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Reduce heat to medium-low and continue to cook for

Time saving tips

Too busy to cook a fancy meal? Here are some time-saving tips:

Be prepared – Bring out all the necessary ingredients for your recipe before you start. This saves time and steps. Also try to plan ahead when shopping.

Use up what you have – Check your refrigerator and cupboards for left over fresh vegetables to make into a quick soup or stew.

Make extra! – Leftovers can be stored in the fridge or frozen in individual servings for quick future meals. Cook a large pot of brown rice at the beginning of the week and reheat portions as needed by steaming, microwaving, or stir-frying.

Be simple – There is no need to always use a dozen different ingredients. Some of the best meals are combinations of one or two veggies, a grain or rice, and a little seasoning.

Don't over chop – There is a tendency for enthusiastic beginner cooks to chop everything into tiny pieces. For most recipes it is preferable to have larger bite-sized pieces.

Use a garlic press – Inexpensive hand held garlic presses will instantly convert a clove of garlic to a pulp.

Steaming – **Any vegetable that you would normally boil**, including potatoes and corn-on-the-cob, can be steamed. It is much faster because you don't have to wait long for a pot of water to come to a boil. Steaming also saves energy.

Fast grains and pasta – Use grains and pasta that cook fast such as couscous (three minutes) and thin noodles (8 minutes), and bulgur and kasha which take about 10–15 minutes. Quinoa take 20 minutes.

Convenience foods – Keep on hand some instant food items such as veggie burgers, cans of baked beans, chili and vegetarian soups. These can be used as a basis for a larger meal. Just add extra vegetables or grains. See www.veg.ca/ tips for more ideas.

a few more minutes, stirring constantly until thick. Turn off heat and blend until smooth, using a hand immersion blender. Serve hot over pasta.

This recipe was inspired by Joanne Stepaniak's “The Uncheese Cookbook” – I couldn't have transitioned to vegan without it.

Green Salad with Red Pepper Dressing

Serves 4-6, <20 minutes.

This healthy salad contains no oil. A food processor or powerful blender is needed.

- 1 head of lettuce (Red leaf, Boston or other tender greens)
- 1 large red (or orange or yellow) pepper, seeded and cut
- ¼ of a small red onion
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 lime, juiced
- ¼ tsp salt (or more to taste)
- ¼ tsp black pepper

Clean, rinse and chop lettuce. Blend rest of ingredients until smooth. Will keep in the fridge for 3 to 4 days.

Tuesday

Breakfast: *Scrambled No-Eggs (tofu)* [week 2], Whole grain toast.

Lunch: Leftovers from last night: *Vegan Mac & Cheeze* with salad.

Optional snack: Fruit.

Dinner: *Cuban Black Bean Soup, Tomato/Avocado Salad*

Cuban Black Bean Soup

Serves 6 – 8, <40 minutes

This is a very filling and satisfying soup – rich in iron, protein and fibre. All it needs is some whole grain crusty bread or corn tortillas and it's a complete meal. A side salad is a nice addition.

- 1 medium red or yellow onion, diced
- 2 stalks/ribs celery, diced
- 2 carrots, sliced or diced
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 4 cups cooked black beans –OR– 2 (19-oz/541 ml) cans, rinsed and drained
- 2-1/2 cups water
- 1 cup orange juice (optional)
- 1 medium tomato, diced
- 2 cloves fresh crushed garlic
- Juice of one lime
- Salt to taste (about 1 tsp)
- Hot chili pepper flakes to taste (optional)
- 2 Tbsp fresh cilantro, chopped

Heat a bit of water in a large pot – once near boiling, add onions and sauté for about 2 mins. • Add celery, carrots and cumin and saute for about 5 mins.

Add the beans and stir well to combine, stirring occasionally. • Add the water. Let cook for another 10 mins. • Add orange juice, tomatoes, garlic, lime juice, salt and chili pepper flakes if using, and let simmer for at least another 10 mins.

At this point, I stick my immersion hand blender in the pot, and partially puree the soup, leaving some beans whole for a chunky texture. You can omit this step altogether, or puree to a smooth consistency. Either way, this is so tasty! Garnish with fresh cilantro and serve.

Tomato/Avocado Salad

Serves 4, <10 minutes

- 2 ripe avocados, peeled and diced
- 2 ripe tomatoes, diced
- 3 Tbsp red onion, finely diced
- 1 lime, juiced
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 Tbsp fresh cilantro

Toss all ingredients together in a bowl. Quick, easy and goes great with the Cuban Black Bean Soup!

Wednesday

Breakfast: *Quinoa Porridge With Berries & Maple Syrup* [from week 2]

Optional snack: Trail mix (nuts/seeds/dried fruit).

Lunch: Leftovers from last night: *Cuban Black Bean Soup*

Optional snack: Air popped popcorn with seasoning of choice.

Dinner: Moroccan Stew, *Fatoush Salad* [from week 2]

Moroccan Bean Stew

Serves 6 – 8, <40 minutes

Don't let the long list of ingredients intimidate you – this is fairly quick and easy once the veggies are prepped. Tastes even better the next day! And leftovers freeze well.

- 1 Tbsp oil
- 1 large red onion, large dice
- 1 cup sweet potatoes (yams), peeled and cubed
- 1 cup white potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 1 cup sliced carrots (or baby carrots)
- 1 cup raisins
- 1 Tbsp ground cumin
- 1 Tbsp ground coriander
- ½ tsp turmeric
- ¼ tsp ground cinnamon
- 2-1/2 cups water or vegetable broth
- 2 cans navy beans (or any other white bean), rinsed and drained
- 1 cup green beans, trimmed and cut into 1" pieces
- 1 cup light coconut milk
- 1-1/2 cups crushed tomatoes (14 oz can)
- 2-3 cloves crushed garlic
- Salt & Pepper to taste, plus optional hot chili flakes

Heat oil over medium heat in a large pot. And onions and sauté until they start to soften. • Add sweet potatoes, white potatoes, carrots, raisins, cumin, coriander, turmeric and cinnamon. Stir until veggies are evenly coated with spices. • Add water or vegetable broth, cover and cook for about 8 – 10 minutes until potatoes are tender (check with a fork).

Add navy beans, green beans, coconut milk, crushed tomatoes, garlic and cook for another 5 – 7 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste, and hot chili flakes if using. Serve with whole wheat pita and salad.

Variation: Try currants or diced dried apricots instead of raisins; substitute other beans such as chick peas or white kidney beans for navy beans.

Thursday

Breakfast: *Green Smoothie* [from week 2], Whole grain toast with nut butter or tahini

Optional snack: Berries or grapes

Lunch: Leftovers from previous night: Moroccan Stew

Optional snack: Fruit

Dinner: *Spicy Thai Coconut Curry* over brown rice, *Fresh Cabbage Salad* [from week 2]

Brown Rice

Makes 6 cups of cooked rice.

2 cups brown rice

4 cups water

Rinse then place rice in a pot with a tight fitting lid. Bring to a boil, then simmer for 45 minutes. Remove the pot from the heat and let the grain stand, covered, for 10 minutes. Leave the pot covered the entire time and do not stir while cooking.

Note: soaking brown rice in water for 2 to 4 hours or even overnight will cut cooking time by 15 minutes. If you do this, discard soaking water, rinse, then cook with fresh water.

Spicy Thai Coconut Curry

Serves 4 - 6 <30 minutes

This curry goes great over brown rice or another grain or noodles. While the grain is cooking, prep ingredients.

1 Tbsp oil

1 large onion, sliced

2-3 stalks celery, sliced

1 pkg extra firm tofu, cubed (optional)

1 (15oz/425g) can baby corn

1 large red pepper, chopped

1 green pepper, chopped

2 cups snap peas or snow peas (or frozen peas)

3 Tbsp natural 100% peanut butter (optional if allergic)

½ can light coconut milk

1 Tbsp green or red curry paste (Thai Kitchen or other shrimp-free brand. Spicy – use more or less to taste)

2 cloves crushed garlic (optional)

1 tsp fresh grated ginger (or more to taste)

3 Tbsp lime juice (1 1/2 limes)

2 Tbsp soy sauce (or to taste)

2 Tbsp fresh Thai basil or cilantro for garnish

In a large pot, heat oil over medium heat. Add onions, celery, tofu and sauté for a minute or two. Add peppers and cook for another 2 to 3 minutes. Add peanut butter and stir through until veggies are evenly coated. Add coconut milk, curry paste and stir to combine. Add baby corn, peas, garlic, ginger, lime juice, soy sauce and cook for about 5 minutes until peas are tender. Garnish with Thai basil or cilantro.

Variations: You can vary the vegetables to what you have on hand: carrots, bean sprouts, bok choy, etc. can be added or substituted for any of the other veggies.

Note: I specifically recommend Thai Kitchen brand because it's one of the very few commercially prepared curry pastes available that is vegetarian – most other brands contain shrimp paste.

Friday

Breakfast: Favourite high-fibre cereal with non-dairy milk, apple or other fruit.

Optional snack: Trail mix (nuts/seeds/dried fruit).

Lunch: Leftovers from previous night: *Thai Red Curry*

Optional snack: Fresh cut veggies.

Dinner: *Creamy Carrot Dill Soup*, *Wild Rice Salad With Cranberries & Nuts*

Creamy Carrot Dill Soup

Serves 4, <30 minutes

1 Tbsp oil

1 large onion, diced

5 carrots, peeled and sliced

1 sweet potato (or regular potato), diced

4 cups water or vegetable broth

1 cup milk (unflavoured soy, almond, rice milk, etc)

2 Tbsp fresh dill, chopped (or 2 tsp dried)

Salt to taste (omit if using salted vegetable broth)

In a large pot, heat oil over medium heat and add onion. Sauté for 3 to 5 minutes until onions are translucent. Add carrot, sweet potato, and water or broth, and cook until vegetables are soft (test with fork).

Add milk. Puree with immersion hand blender until smooth, unless you prefer a chunkier soup. Garnish with dill and serve.

Wild Rice Salad with Cranberries & Nuts

Serves 4 – 6, <60 minutes

- 2 cups water
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 cup brown rice and wild rice blend
- 1/2 cup chopped nuts (walnut, almond, pecan)
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 tsp minced orange zest
- 2 tsp Dijon mustard
- 4 Tbsp orange juice
- 1/4 cup sherry (or apple cider or white wine vinegar)
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1/4 cup dried cranberries
- 1/2 cup cherry tomatoes or 1/2 red pepper, thinly sliced
- 3 green onions, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup snow peas, sliced 1/4 inch on the diagonal

In medium pot, bring water and salt to boil. Add rice, stir well, cover and reduce heat to simmer. Cook for 40 to 45 minutes or until rice is tender and all water has been absorbed. Remove from heat. Let stand 10 minutes.

While rice is cooking, toast nuts in dry skillet over medium heat for 1 to 2 minutes or until lightly browned. Careful – they burn very easily. Also while rice is cooking prep vegetables.

In small bowl, combine garlic, orange zest and mustard; blend well. Whisk in orange juice and vinegar. Slowly whisk in oil.

Transfer cooked rice to large bowl. Add half the orange dressing and toss gently to coat well. Cool to room temperature. Add nuts, cranberries, tomatoes or red pepper, green onions and snow peas just before serving. Toss. Add remaining dressing to lightly coat vegetables. Toss again and serve.

Saturday

Breakfast: Soy yogurt with fruit and 1/4 cup high-fibre cereal (try fresh or frozen berries, peaches, or other in-season fruit).

Optional snack: Fresh cut pineapple or other fruit.

Lunch: Veggie burger (store bought), mixed greens salad.

Optional snack: Fruit.

Dinner: *Tofu Nut Burgers with Gravy*, mixed greens salad.

Tofu Nut Burgers

Serves 10 (freezes well), <40 minutes

Don't use extra firm tofu – it'll be a fight getting it to mash up. You can make the mix several hours ahead, then cook the patties just before you eat. Serve with Onion Gravy. See recipe below.

- 2 blocks firm tofu (450 g/16 oz)
- 1/4 cup nut butter of choice (peanut, almond, cashew, etc.)

- 1 Tbsp oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 Tbsp chopped fresh basil (optional)
- 1 cup chopped mushrooms
- 1 cup grated carrot
- 1/2 cup ground raw sunflower seeds
- 1-1/2 cups whole wheat bread crumbs
- 3 Tbsp soy sauce or tamari
- Pinch freshly ground black pepper

Preheat oven to 350° F (180° C)

Puree tofu in food processor or blender; add nut butter and continue processing until smooth.

Heat oil in skillet over medium heat; cook onion with basil for 7 minutes or until lightly browned. Add mushrooms and carrot and cook for 5 minutes more. Stir in tofu mixture. Mix in sunflower seeds, 1 cup of the bread crumbs, soy sauce and pepper.

Form patties, using a 1/4 cup of the mixture per patty. Coat patties with remaining bread crumbs.

Bake on parchment paper-lined baking sheet in pre-heated oven for 15 minutes, turning once until browned and heated through.

Variation: If you're in a hurry, or just don't feel like messing with the mixture to form patties, I've made a loaf out of this by putting the full cup and a half of bread crumbs into the mixture, turning it into a parchment paper-lined loaf pan and baking at 350° F for about 1/2 hour. The results are just as yummy, and less work!

This recipe comes from Nettie's Vegetarian Kitchen, by Nettie Cronish – absolutely delicious!

Onion Gravy Sauce

Makes one cup, <20 minutes

No oil is needed for this healthy topping

- 2 medium yellow onions, diced
- 1-1/2 cups water
- 1 Tbsp soy sauce
- 1 Tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 1 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp dried sage
- 1/2 tsp dried rosemary
- 2 Tbsp corn starch (dissolved in 4 Tbsp cold water)

Heat water in a medium saucepan. Add onions and cook until soft (about 10 minutes). Add soy sauce, vinegar, lemon juice, salt, sage and rosemary and stir to combine. Add the corn starch solution and mix through quickly. Heat until the mixture thickens (about 3 – 5 minutes). Use a hand immersion blender to puree if you want a smooth gravy.

This is great over the nut burgers above, but also on baked potatoes or roasted veggies.

Sunday

Breakfast: Oatmeal with dried apricots, sunflower seeds and maple syrup, fruit

Optional snack: Trail mix (nuts/seeds/dried fruit)

Lunch: Leftovers from previous night: *Tofu Nut Burgers* and mixed greens salad

Optional snack: Small piece or two of dark chocolate

Dinner: *Red Lentil Ratatouille* with a mixed greens salad and crusty whole grain bread.

Red Lentil Ratatouille

Serves 6 – 8 (freezes well), < 40 minutes

This recipe ups the nutritional ante on traditional ratatouille with the addition of quick cooking red lentils. Makes for a one-pot easy meal that's warming and satisfying. Just serve with some whole grain bread or over a cooked grain such as quinoa. You'll get lots of fibre from the lentils and all the veggies – your heart and arteries will appreciate it!

- 1-1/2 cups dry red lentils
- 2 cups water + additional water for soaking lentils
- 1 large onion, coarsely chopped
- 2 Japanese eggplants or 1 regular eggplant, coarsely chopped
- 2 zucchinis, coarsely chopped
- 1 red pepper, coarsely chopped
- 1 green pepper, coarsely chopped
- 1-1/2 cups white mushrooms, cleaned and cut into quarters
- 1 tsp dried basil
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1/2 tsp dried rosemary
- 3 large tomatoes, diced (or substitute a 28-oz can of diced tomatoes, including juice)
- 2-3 cloves fresh garlic, crushed
- 1 tsp fresh ground black pepper
- 1 tsp hot chili pepper flakes (optional or to taste)
- Salt to taste (omit if using canned tomatoes)

Sort through lentils for any tiny stones, then rinse and add enough water in the bowl to cover and let soak while you're preparing the veggies. (This step can be omitted; but they will take a bit longer to cook.)

In a large pot, heat a half cup of the water and add onion. Sauté for 2 to 3 minutes until onions are translucent. Add eggplant, zucchini, mushrooms and peppers; stir and cook covered for 2 to 3 minutes.

Drain the lentils (if soaked) and add to the pot with remaining water. Add the herbs. Cook covered for 5 to 7 minutes until lentils soften (they'll turn a lighter peach colour when they're soft). Add the tomatoes, fresh garlic, pepper and chili pepper flakes if using. Stir and cook for another minute or two. Taste, and add salt if necessary.