

-affordable  
food for the  
environment  
and you-

Cost-Effective Recipes for Cost-Effective Living

## Affordable Habits to Help the Environment and You

Our food choices are one of the most significant things in how sustainably we live. When you eat in an environmentally friendly way, you're usually eating in a way that benefits your body and mind as well. It may take a little adjusting, but you get to decide how quickly you want to make changes to your eating habits and which ones you want to make - and many of them can save you money, too. The following is an explanation of some of the factors we took into account to create the cheapest, healthiest, and most environmentally friendly recipes and eating tips we could.

### Buy in Bulk

Buying in bulk helps to save money and reduce waste. Plus, the healthiest, most sustainable foods tend to come in bulk, like legumes and grains. To be more environmentally friendly, take reusable containers to the store with you so you can save on packaging. Both Sprouts and La Montanita Co-op will weigh your container so they can subtract its weight off of the price for your products. But if you can't do that, buying in bulk is still better for the environment and your wallet. Some of the staple ingredients used in this book that you can buy in bulk are lentils, beans, peas, whole grains, nuts and seeds. You can also get bulk cereals and trail mixes. To use bulk dried beans, soak them in water overnight and then cook for a few hours when you're going to be home, until they've reached the level of softness you desire. [Here](#) are some instructions for more specifics on how to cook beans.

### Buy Frozen

Frozen fruits and veggies are excellent ways to save money while increasing your intake of these Earth-friendly and exceedingly healthy products. Vegetables and fruits are the most nutrient-dense foods on the planet, and they retain those nutrients through the process of freezing. They tend to be much cheaper than their fresh counterparts as well. Frozen fruit is excellent in oatmeal and smoothies, while frozen vegetables are great for stir-fries, soups and roasting - or throwing in the microwave with some seasonings.

### Avoid Food Waste

When you only use part of the food you buy, you're losing out on nutrition, getting your money's worth, and being environmentally friendly. This especially applies to produce. When you buy broccoli, kale, collards, or swiss chard, don't throw out the stems - they're full of wonderful nutrition. Chop them up and use them in stir fries, soups or salads, or make a nutritious veggie stock with them (instructions in the recipe section). If you prefer to peel potatoes, put those in a veggie stock, too. If you buy beets with their greens, use those greens the way you would spinach or Swiss chard. When you have food that's about to go bad but you don't want to eat it yet, stick it in the freezer. One thing that can become a pretty quick and easy ritual is cleaning out your fridge every week. Put on a podcast or some music and spend some time with the food your money has bought!

### Reduce Consumption of Animal Products

Reducing your consumption of animal products - including meat, poultry, fish, seafood, dairy, and eggs - is the single best way to reduce your impact on the environment. The only things that could outweigh the environmental benefit of cutting out animal products are having a child or

taking a trans-Atlantic flight. In fact, even if you buy your food entirely from local sources, it still won't reduce your footprint as much as if you were to cut all animal products out and not buy anything from local sources! It's also great for saving money if you buy whole food ingredients and stay away from processed "replacements," such as non-dairy cheese or mock meats. You don't have to live off of vegetables, either - there are plenty of plant foods that aren't just salad.

One of the best things about this tip is that you're probably already eating many foods that are plant-based or can be easily made plant-based. Instant oatmeal prepared with water and topped with some fruit and/or nuts makes a tasty, filling, nutritious and plant-based meal! Toast with butter can easily become toast with Earth Balance (our favorite brand of non-dairy butter), and cereal with milk can easily become cereal with non-dairy milk. The cheesy flavor we all know and love can be easily created with nutritional yeast, a flaky and powdery substance that can be eaten raw or cooked for protein, iron, vitamin B12, and, of course, a cheesy flavor. You can buy nutritional yeast in bulk for much cheaper than cheese.

Something many people are concerned about when reducing animal products is where they'll get certain nutrients we associate with animal foods. Protein, iron, calcium, vitamin D, omega-3 fatty acids and vitamin B12 are the big ones many people worry about. These nutrients are abundant in non-animal sources, and the human body absorbs most of them better from plants than from animal products.

Best plant-based sources of different nutrients:

- Protein: lentils, beans, peas, nuts, seeds, whole grains, nutritional yeast
- Iron: lentils, beans, peas, nutritional yeast, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds
- Calcium: collards, kale, fortified plant-based milks, white beans, seeds, edamame, tofu prepared with calcium sulfate or nigari
- Vitamin D: mushrooms, fortified cereals and non-dairy milks (the sun is also great for this!)
- Omega 3 fatty acids: chia seeds, flax seeds, hemp seeds, flax oil, Veganaise (plant-based mayonnaise alternative), Earth Balance (plant-based butter alternative), pea milk or flax milk (all three of these non-dairy replacements are available at Sprouts, La Montanita Co-op and Vitamin Cottage)

A note on calcium

Spinach, swiss chard and beet greens all have high amounts of calcium and iron. However, these greens are also high in oxalates, a compound which binds to calcium and iron and keeps the human body from absorbing these essential minerals. These leafy greens are all great for you in many other ways, so feel free to eat them as much as you like, but don't rely on them for calcium or iron. If you want to maximize the calcium and iron you get from them, cook them - cooking eliminates some of the oxalates.

A note on Vitamin B12

Many people have been led to believe that the only place to get vitamin B12 is from animal products. Interestingly enough, though, people don't absorb B12 from animal products very well, meaning that animal products are not a very useful source for the nutrient. Vegans who regularly consume fortified plant-based milks and other dairy alternatives are much less likely to have a B12 deficiency than the average meat eater. Research has found that [about 40% of people in the US](#) may be deficient in B12, a much greater number than that of [vegans and vegetarians](#). Most milks made from soy, almond, coconut and many other plant sources contain about 50% of your daily value of B12 per 1-cup serving, and some vegan cheeses do as well.

But taking a vitamin that provides at least 100% of your DV is the best way to ensure you're getting enough, whether you consume animal products or not. These are sold in most grocery stores and many aren't expensive.

*There are virtually no nutrients in animal-based foods that are not better provided by plants.*

*- "The China Study," widely considered the most comprehensive study of nutrition ever conducted.*

Unless you have a particular health condition you and/or your doctor are concerned about, you don't need to keep track of everything you eat and count it all up every day to make sure you're getting adequate nutrition if you move away from animal products. As long as you're eating a balanced, whole-food, plant-based diet, you will get adequate nutrition, and possibly better nutrition than you're getting now. Of course, taking a multivitamin is always helpful, whether you avoid animal products or not.

## Buying Organic

Pesticides, insecticides and herbicides are a significant contributor to loss of vital members of natural ecosystems, including bees, as well as other wildlife. Very little research has been done on the harm these substances may cause to human health, but research shows that they pose major health risks to rats, which means there's a good chance that they harm human health, too. Organic food does tend to be a little pricier, so only buy certified organic food if you can afford it. But, if you can't, a group of produce known as the "clean fifteen" are essentially organic in growing methods even if they aren't certified organic. So you can almost always buy these foods without the "certified organic" label and still be buying organic food. On the other end of the spectrum is the "dirty dozen," the most pesticide-heavy produce. If you can afford to buy anything organic, choose the products from the dirty dozen.

### The Clean Fifteen

1. Avocados
2. Sweet Corn
3. Pineapple
4. Frozen Sweet Peas
5. Onions
6. Papayas
7. Eggplants
8. Asparagus
9. Kiwis
10. Cabbage
11. Cauliflower
12. Cantaloupe
13. Broccoli
14. Mushrooms
15. Honeydew Melons

### The Dirty Dozen

1. Strawberries
2. Spinach
3. Kale
4. Nectarines
5. Apples
6. Grapes
7. Peaches
8. Cherries
9. Pears
10. Tomatoes
11. Celery
12. Potatoes

Even if you can't afford organic food, many local farmers use organic methods despite not being certified organic. Farmers' markets are great for finding fresh, probably organic produce that also helps support the local economy!

# The Recipes

These were created with the above guidelines in mind. They range from the simplest, easiest things you can make to more complex recipes for those who enjoy cooking and have the time and resources to put more effort into it. Any recipe that calls for a bunch of fresh vegetables can easily be made using frozen vegetables or whatever veggies you have on hand. Either way, they'll optimize sustainable goals and be filling and delicious!

## Breakfast

### Oatmeal with Blueberries and Hemp Seeds

*Makes 1 serving*

Oats are one of the most environmentally friendly foods around. They're full of wonderful complex carbs and B vitamins, while blueberries are one of the most nutrient-dense foods on the planet. Hemp seeds are very high in protein and omega-3 fatty acids. You can use any kind of fruit or seeds you want, and this will still be a great meal. You can also use only milk or only water, depending on your preference. For an even more sustainable meal, use amaranth grain or quinoa instead of oats.

#### Ingredients

- ½ cup quick-cooking rolled oats
- ½ cup non-dairy milk
- ½ cup water
- ½-1 cup fresh or frozen blueberries, or other fruit
- 3 tablespoons hemp seeds (can also use whatever nut or seed you want)
- Cinnamon to taste (optional)

#### Directions

1. Place oats, milk, and water in a small saucepan, stir to combine, and turn stovetop heat to medium. Wait until it starts to bubble, stir well, then turn heat to medium-low. If using frozen berries, add them in at this point.
2. Cover pan and let simmer until it reaches desired thickness, stirring every 1-2 minutes. Remove from heat and spoon oatmeal into a bowl. If using fresh berries, add them on top. Sprinkle seeds and cinnamon, if desired, and enjoy!

### 3-Ingredient Pancakes

*Makes 1 serving*

These are a quick, easy and simple meal, which you can top with whatever you like. They will also keep in the fridge for a few days, or the freezer for much longer, so you can keep them on hand to have a quick, minimal-effort breakfast (or whatever meal you'd like these for!). You can also add fruit or nuts to the batter to make it even faster to eat or take on the go. You can replace the oats with flour, as well.

### Ingredients

- ¾ cup oats
- ½ banana
- ½ cup non-dairy milk

### Directions

1. In a food processor or blender, combine all three ingredients until they become a smooth batter. Heat a small, even layer of oil on a skillet with medium-low heat. (Don't use extra virgin olive oil for this! Light olive oil is okay though.)
2. Add pancake batter in pancakes of the size you desire. Let sit for 3-4 minutes, then use a spatula to check their browning on the underside. Once they are half-way browned, flip and cook for another 3-4 minutes. Check the underside again, and if they have reached the desired brownness, remove from pan and eat!

## Fruit Smoothie

### *Makes 1 serving*

Smoothies are a favorite of many, and they're very easy to make cheaper and more sustainable by using whole ingredients bought in bulk and leaving out animal products. This recipe calls for frozen produce because it's cheaper and makes the smoothie a lovely frozen drink, but you can use fresh too. You can also add or leave out whatever ingredients you like - there's no science to making a smoothie.

### Ingredients

- ½ frozen banana
- 1 cup frozen fruit
- 2 cups fruit juice or non-dairy milk
- 1 serving plant-based protein powder - Vega is a great brand (optional)
- 1-2 tablespoons peanut butter or other nut butter (optional)
- 2 tablespoons chia seeds, hemp seeds or flax seeds, or a mix (optional)

### Directions

Blend all ingredients in a blender or food processor until smooth, adding more liquid if necessary. Enjoy!

## Tofu Scramble

### *Makes 2-4 servings*

This is a classic dish used as a more environmentally friendly alternative to scrambled eggs. You can use whatever veggies you have on hand, including frozen veggies - just throw them all in and cook with the tofu until it's all heated through and the tofu has firmed a little. The tofu can be swapped out for tempeh for a higher-protein and higher-carb meal. This can be served with salsa and avocado or non-dairy cheese. If using kale or collard greens, remove the stems and either thinly slice them and add them to the scramble or freeze them to use in a soup or stock later.

### Ingredients

- 1-2 tablespoons oil for cooking
- 1 cup shredded carrot
- 1 medium onion, diced

- 1-2 cloves minced garlic (or 1 teaspoon garlic powder if you prefer - add at the end of cooking)
- 10 white button mushrooms, thinly sliced (use the stems!)
- 3 bell peppers, diced
- 1 medium zucchini or 2 small ones, sliced widthwise
- 3-4 cups hardy greens - kale, collards, spinach, or whatever you have on hand - stems removed (remember to save them for future use!) and leaves cut into bite-size pieces
- 1 package firm tofu, drained and crumbled or cut into bite-size pieces
- 1-2 teaspoons turmeric
- 1-2 teaspoons cumin
- Salt and pepper to taste
- ¼ cup nutritional yeast

### Directions

1. Heat oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add carrots and cook for about 5 minutes, until they're fragrant and beginning to soften. If they begin to stick to the pan, add about two tablespoons of water. Add onion, garlic and mushrooms and saute for 1-2 minutes, until they're fragrant as well.
  2. Turn the heat to slightly below medium. Add the rest of the ingredients except for the nutritional yeast, stir to mix well, and cover. Cook until it's all cooked through, stirring frequently and adding more water if things begin to stick. When it's done, turn off the heat and stir in the nutritional yeast. Serve on toast and/or with whatever condiments you like.
- If you want this to be more along the lines of a Chinese dish, add soy sauce and whatever other Chinese ingredients you like!
  - This also works great as lunch or dinner.

## Lunch & Dinner

### Rice & Beans with Salsa

As the name suggests, this recipe is exceedingly simple - there are just a couple things in here to make it a little more exciting than just the three things mentioned in the title. Of course, feel free to just eat rice, beans and salsa as well - it's a good, quick, sustainable meal!

### Ingredients

- 1 cup brown rice
- Water for cooking
- 1 15 oz. can diced or crushed tomatoes
- 2 jars salsa of your choosing (El Pinto is a great local brand and the top rated salsa in Albuquerque)
- 4 cups cooked or canned beans, drained and rinsed (black beans, kidney beans or pinto beans will work for this)
- 1 cup frozen corn kernels
- 1 onion, diced (optional)
- 1-2 cloves garlic, diced (optional)
- Cilantro (optional)

### Directions

1. Cook brown rice according to package instructions, if from a package. Otherwise, put it in a large pot with 1 & ½ cups water, the can of tomatoes, the salsa, and the onion and garlic. Bring to a boil, reduce to medium-low heat and simmer for about 40 minutes, until the water is mostly evaporated but a little is left. Stir in the corn and remove from heat. Mix in the beans and add some chopped cilantro if you want.
2. In a frying pan, saute the onion and garlic for about 5-10 minutes, until fragrant and beginning to brown. Add to the rice and beans. Serve alone or with guacamole, with some nutritional yeast on top. Some fresh greens go great with this too. If you want queso, Trader Joe's makes a fantastic cashew-based queso!

## “Egg” Salad

*Makes 1 serving*

### Ingredients

- 4 oz. firm tofu
- 1 tablespoon Vegemise
- 2 teaspoons mustard
- ¼ teaspoon turmeric
- 2 tablespoons nutritional yeast
- 2 chopped green onions
- Sprinkle of garlic powder

### Directions

1. Mash tofu into an egg-like texture, then mix all the ingredients together. Eat on its own or on a sandwich with some greens.

## Aloo Gobi

*Makes 3-5 servings*

Aloo Gobi is a super tasty Indian dish - it literally means “potato cauliflower.” If you don't like cauliflower, you can use any other vegetable. But you may find that the gobi part doesn't bother you in this highly-flavorful dish. To make it more of a complete meal on its own, we've added some chickpeas and green peas, as well as a few other kinds of veggies. You can also make this basic recipe with other legumes and vegetables. Lentils and sweet potatoes go great with this!

### Ingredients

- 1 head cauliflower, cut into large florets
- 3 russet potatoes or 4 golden potatoes, peeled and cut into 2-inch pieces (remember to save the peels!)
- 2-3 tablespoons curry powder, if you want to keep it simple, or:
  - 1 teaspoon coriander
  - ¼ teaspoon cloves
  - 1 teaspoon cardamom
  - 1 tablespoon turmeric
  - ¼ teaspoon black pepper



- 2 teaspoons cumin
- 1 & ½ teaspoons garlic powder\*
- 1 & ½ teaspoons ground ginger\*
- 2 cans diced or crushed tomatoes
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger (you can get jarred, pureed ginger in the Asian section of most grocery stores - it's much easier to handle)
- 1 bunch collard greens or kale
- 2 carrots, thinly sliced widthwise
- 1 15 oz. can chickpeas, rinsed and drained, or 2 cups cooked chickpeas
- 1 cup frozen or fresh peas

#### Directions

1. Put the spices in a large pot or frying pan, dry if you're comfortable dry-toasting spices or with oil if you're not. Heat on low-medium heat for about 2 minutes, moving around with a wooden or plastic spoon every 30 seconds or so.
2. After two minutes, add the oil if you haven't yet. Throw in the onion, garlic and carrots, and saute for about five minutes, until they've become fragrant and begun to soften. Add the can of tomatoes (liquid and all), collards, cauliflower and potato. There should be about a quarter inch of water on the bottom. If there isn't, add a little more. Cover and cook for about 20-30 minutes, until the potatoes and cauliflower are thoroughly cooked. Add the peas and continue to cook for about 2 minutes, then serve.

*\*if you want to use fresh ginger and garlic, use 1 tablespoon (about 3 cloves) of minced garlic and about a tablespoon of ginger (you can get little jars of pureed ginger and minced garlic in the Asian section of most grocery stores).*

**For a super easy curry**, you can cook potatoes in the microwave while you cook frozen or fresh veggies, canned beans, curry powder and garlic powder in a frying pan. Add the potatoes, cut into bite-size pieces, at the end, and eat. Super quick, healthy, and environmentally friendly.

## Chili

*Makes 4-8 servings*

#### Ingredients

- 1 medium onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 bell peppers, diced
- 1 medium or 2 small zucchini, sliced widthwise
- 2 15 oz. cans diced tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 & ½ cups frozen broccoli florets
- 1 small bag frozen green beans
- ½ bag frozen corn kernels

#### Directions

1. Saute onion, garlic, peppers and zucchini in a large pot for about 5-10 minutes, until they've begun to soften. Add the rest of the ingredients and enough water or veggie broth to make the chili the consistency you prefer. Cook for about 10-15 minutes, until the veggies are cooked through. Serve with nutritional yeast, chopped avocado or non-dairy cheese.

## Basic Veggie Stock

Vegetable stock isn't necessary for cooking, but it makes things like soups and stews tastier and more nutritious, plus making use of your vegetable scraps. One of the best ways to get vegetables for this is to save the peels and trimmings from various vegetables you use and freeze them until you're ready to make your broth. All it is after that is adding them and lots of water to a pot and boiling for 1-4 hours, however long you like. Just make sure the vegetable scraps stay completely covered by the water or there will be too little water. Some veggie scraps you can use:

- Onion trimmings (the tops and bottoms)
- Garlic peels + trimmings
- Carrot peels + trimmings
- Celery trimmings
- Kale, collard, and Swiss chard stems
- Mushroom stems (if you don't want to use them)
- Leftover tomato bits
- Potato and sweet potato peels
- Parsley stems

# Additional Resources

- If you want to challenge yourself to start eating more sustainably and get lots of recipes, tips and social support while doing it, try signing up for [No Meat May!](#)
- For help in reducing animal products, try Vegan Outreach's [10-Weeks to Vegan program!](#) They'll email you tips and recipes every week to help you in the process of moving away from animal products, even if you don't want to eliminate them entirely.
- Some apps to use to help you eat more sustainably on a daily basis:
  - o [Happy Cow](#): tells you what restaurants near you have plant-based options - costs \$3.99 on Android, plus tax
  - o [How Good](#): rates different products on how sustainable they are using information from hundreds of organizations. They base their ratings on growing guidelines, processing practices, and company conduct - free on Android
  - o [Good Guide](#): rates foods based on their ethics towards the company's community, the health of the product and the environmental impact - free on Android

- [The Cheap Lazy Vegan on YouTube](#) - quick, easy and inexpensive vegan food. If you can find organic versions of the foods she uses, even better! Also look on [her blog](#) for written recipes.
- [Here's a list of the top 50 foods](#) considered the most sustainable and predicted to be essential in the coming years - if you can choose them, awesome!