

# THE POWER OF PLANT-BASED MEALS



There are plenty of reasons to eat more plant-based meals. They tend to be less expensive, lower in calories and saturated fat, and better for the environment! In fact, studies show that following a plant-based diet is associated with lower prevalence of obesity and a decreased risk of cancer and cardiovascular diseases? There are many forms of plant-based diets, which are detailed in the following chart.

| NAME                            | EATS   | DOESN'T EAT   |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| Vegan                           | Fruits, vegetables, grains, legumes, nuts, beans, seeds  | Any products from animals, including dairy and eggs |
| Lacto-ovo vegetarians           | Fruits, vegetables, grains, legumes, nuts, beans, seeds, dairy, eggs                             | Meat, fish, poultry, pork, seafood                  |
| Pesco-vegetarian or pescatarian | Fruits, vegetables, grains, legumes, nuts, beans, seeds, dairy, eggs, fish, seafood              | Meat, poultry, pork                                 |
| Semi-vegetarian or flexitarian  | Primarily plant-based meals, but also occasionally includes some meat, pork, poultry and seafood | ---   |

## PLANT-BASED PROTEINS

Protein is an essential nutrient that acts as a building block for healthy bodies. Protein helps build and preserve muscle, bone, skin and nails, and keeps you full and satisfied! If you're looking to start making the switch to more plant-based meals, it's important to make sure you are still eating protein. Plant-based proteins tend to be higher in fiber than animal-based proteins, with less saturated fat and higher levels of unsaturated fats, making them a heart-smart choice. Nuts, beans, legumes, seeds and whole grains are all sources of plant protein that can be the star of your next meat-free meal.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Just one ounce of almonds (about 23) packs 6 grams of hunger-fighting protein and 4 grams of filling dietary fiber, giving you long-lasting energy you need to power through the day.

## GOOD NEWS ABOUT GOOD FATS

Here is the skinny on plant-based fats. The U.S. Dietary Guidelines recommend that the majority of your fat intake be unsaturated. Studies show that by increasing these good fats<sup>2</sup> in our diets, we can reduce our risk of heart disease. The good news is if you are switching to more plant-based meals, you are likely already swapping saturated fats for unsaturated ones! Choose olive oil or vegetable oil instead of solid fats when cooking or baking, or substitute tofu, nuts or legumes as the source of protein for your entrée.

It's important not to replace saturated fat with refined carbohydrates, as this may actually raise triglycerides and insulin levels<sup>3</sup> Instead, focus on choosing high-fiber sources that are low in added sugars like whole grains, vegetables, and fruits and including foods with a source of heart-smart unsaturated fats like nuts, nut butters, avocados and olive oil.

# GREENER PLATE, GREENER PLANET

The benefits of plant-based diets go well beyond the plate. Science is converging about what to eat from a public health and environmental standpoint, with many academic and health institutions recommending a dietary pattern that focuses on plants and produce and minimizes food waste.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to providing wholesome nutrition and a source of plant-based protein, California's community of more than 6,500 almond growers are committed to using sustainable<sup>6</sup> agricultural practices that respect the environment, including water conservation and

waste management. You might be surprised to learn that almond trees, and the water used to grow them, actually produce three separate products. In addition to the nut itself, there's the hull, which is used to feed livestock, and the shell, which is used as livestock bedding and alternative energy. All parts of the harvest are used and there is minimal waste, making them a great addition to a more sustainable plate.

## BRINGING PLANT-BASED MEALS TO LIFE

Eating a more plant-based diet doesn't have to be complicated. With a "must-have" pantry and refrigerator checklist, delicious and nutritious plant-based meals come together in a flash.

- **Olive oil** • **Canned beans and tomatoes**
- **Frozen vegetables** • **Old-fashioned oats**
- **Almonds (whole or slivered)** • **Nut butters**
- **Whole grains (quinoa, brown rice or whole-wheat pasta)**

### DID YOU KNOW?

Almond growers today use 33 percent less water per pound of almonds than they did 20 years ago<sup>5</sup>. For more information about growers' commitments to sustainable growing practices, visit [Almonds.com/blog](http://Almonds.com/blog).



## ALMOND NOODLE BOWL WITH SPICY ALMOND SAUCE

Developed by Ellie Krieger, author of *Weeknight Wonders*

- 1/4 cup sliced almonds
- 3/4 pound whole-wheat spaghetti
- 1/2 head broccoli (about 3/4 pound), tops cut into florets, sliced thinly
- 2 cups (about 4 ounces) of snow peas, trimmed
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1/2 cup of unsalted almond butter
- 1/4 cup of reduced sodium soy sauce
- 3 tablespoons of fresh lime juice
- 2 tablespoons of brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon of chili-garlic sauce, such as Sriracha
- 1 scallion, green part only (about 3 tablespoons)

Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Toast the almonds in a dry skillet over a medium-high heat, stirring frequently, until they are golden, about 3 minutes. Cook the pasta according to the directions on the package. Three minutes before the pasta is ready, add the broccoli to the pasta pot. One minute before it is ready, add the snow peas and red peppers to the pot. While the pasta is cooking, make the sauce. Place the almond butter, soy sauce, lime juice, brown sugar, chili-garlic sauce and three tablespoons of boiling water (from the pasta pot) into a large bowl and whisk until smooth. Drain the noodles and vegetables, return them to the pasta pot, add the sauce and toss to coat. Serve garnished with the toasted almonds and scallion greens.

Find more plant-powered recipes in our recipe center at [Almonds.com](http://Almonds.com).

1. Tuso et al. Nutritional Update for Physicians: Plant-Based Diets. *Perm J*. 2013 Spring; 17(2): 61-66. doi: 10.7812/TPP/12-085.
2. Orlich MJ et al. Vegetarian dietary patterns and mortality in Adventist Health Study 2. *JAMA Intern Med*. 2013 Jul 8;173(13):1230-8. doi: 10.1001/jamainternmed.2013.6473.
3. Siri-Taino PW, Sun Q, Hu FB, Krauss RM. Saturated fatty acids and risk of coronary heart disease: Modulation by replacement nutrients. *Curr Atheroscler Rep*. Nov 2010; 12(6): 384-390. doi: 10.1007/s11883-010-0131-6.
4. The Culinary Institute of America and President and Fellows of Harvard College. 2014 Menus of Change Annual Report.
5. UC Drought Management - Historical Almond ET, see [http://ucmanagedrought.ucdavis.edu/Agriculture/Irrigation\\_Scheduling/Evapotranspiration\\_Scheduling\\_ET/Historical\\_ET/Almonds\\_960/](http://ucmanagedrought.ucdavis.edu/Agriculture/Irrigation_Scheduling/Evapotranspiration_Scheduling_ET/Historical_ET/Almonds_960/) and Goldhamer, David. 2012. Almond in Group Yield Response to Water. FAO irrigation and Drainage Paper No. 65, P. Steduto, T.C. Hsiao, E. Fereres, and D. Raes, eds. Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, Rome, Italy, pp. 246-296. California Dept. of Water Resources (DWR) - *Water Plan Update, 2013 - Volume 3, Chapter 2: Agricultural Water Use Efficiency* (p. 2-2).
6. California Almond Sustainability Program definition: Sustainable almond farming utilizes production practices that are economically viable and are based upon scientific research, common sense and a respect for the environment, neighbors and employees. The result is a plentiful, nutritious, safe food product.

U.S. Dietary Guidelines recommend that the majority of your fat intake be unsaturated. Scientific evidence suggests, but does not prove, that eating 1.5 ounces of most nuts, such as almonds, as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease. One serving of almonds (28g) has 13 grams unsaturated fat and only 1 gram of saturated fat.

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