



FITMOMMA

30-DAY

VEGAN

TRANSFORMATION

WHAT DOES IT MEAN

TO BE VEGAN?

The straightforward definition is a person who doesn't eat, wear, or use animal products. The next 30 days we will focus our learning on the eating portion of this definition. Some people choose to jump all in immediately cutting off animal products cold turkey and others ease into this lifestyle one meal at a time. At some point along the way, all vegans, or part-time vegans, realized the foods we eat affect our bodies, the animals, the environment, and even the health of the human population. In consuming only plants we are drastically limiting our contribution to animal suffering, environmental devastation, and world hunger, and in addition we are fueling our bodies to thrive. Lucky for us, there has never been a better time to be vegan. There are now more options than ever for vegans on restaurant menus and grocery store shelves (plus you can pretty much order anything online these days!). I am excited to be a part of your vegan journey.

*xo,
Melina*



WEEK 3

VEGAN IN YOUR

KITCHEN

Week Three

FITMOMMA 30 DAY VEGAN TRANSFORMATION

Vegan in Your Kitchen

Cooking and eating on a vegan diet is essentially the same as it is for everyone else; you'll just be using slightly different components. Vegan cooking is diverse, delicious and has limitless possibilities. Having a plan can simplify the process if you are new to vegan eating, and it can also inject some new ideas for those well established within the lifestyle.



Establishing a Food Rhythm

Establish a Sense of Rhythm

The magic of rhythms is in the process, not the particulars.

Establishing a food rhythm will take the stress out of menu planning. To do this give each day of the week a theme: Monday rice bowl, Tuesday taco night, Wednesday pasta night, Thursday soup night and so on. By increasing the sense of rhythm and regularity, you begin to feel less overwhelmed and life becomes more predictable. It will also make the question of “What’s for dinner?” an obsolete question in your house. “What’s for dinner?” That’s easy: “What day of the week is it?” There can be variation within each night’s staple; a twist on taco night (beyond meat crumbles, taco bowl, jackfruit tacos, etc) but you are not staging a new Broadway production from concept to performance each night.

For the cooks, the benefits of regular meals extends back from the meal to the preparation, to the grocery store, and to the shopping list. The description of the meals may seem routine, but the experience of them is usually not. Establishing a rhythm in our house made dinner easier for me, the cook, and significantly reduced pickiness from my kids. They know what’s for dinner weeks ahead of time. Consistency teaches that some things do not change, even if we wish they may. Not everything bends to our personal preferences. Plus each person usually has their own favorite night of the week so while taco night might not be someone’s favorite they know their favorite night is right around the corner. As a bonus, rhythms make stepping out of them a real treat. “I know it’s pasta night, but we’re going out for dinner!” Children react to such unexpected pleasures with genuine appreciation. Finally the greatest benefit of adopting a food rhythm is that regular meals on regular nights help make family dinner actually happen!

SIMPLIFY TASTES

Food is meant to nourish, not entertain or excite. The entertainment comes from the company you are enjoying your meal with. For us, weekly meal planning became a lot easier once we established a weekly rhythm and simplified meals. Simplifying food is done through limiting choices and complexity. Simplify the number of food options available, and simplify the tastes and ingredients of those options by backing away from highly processed foods and sweetened foods. Simpler foods tend to be the ones that last. And when you simplify, you allow for the development of lifelong healthy eating habits. Another benefit is as you simplify, kids become less and less picky about food. It's about eating real food close to its natural state and learning to genuinely enjoy natural flavor. It takes about a month to clear your palate from highly processed foods.

ACTION STEP:

Sit down and write out your weekly food rhythm and share with the group what Monday dinners will be in your house.



Planning Your Weekly Menu + Writing your Grocery List

The key to success with menu planning is to keep it simple and predictable!

Having a meal plan helps people be more successful with making healthy food choices.

Planning out your weekly meals will also help you avoid impulse buys and ensure that you are buying things that will actually get eaten. Yesterday we established our food rhythm, now we are going to build our menu. I personally write our weekly dinner menu on a whiteboard that sits on our kitchen counter. It helps keep me and my husband accountable to sticking to the plan.

HOW TO MAKE SURE YOUR VEGAN MENU IS WELL ROUNDED

Let's start where we left off last week and place our focus on eating the rainbow. You should eat all the colors throughout the course of a day. The other key to building a healthy vegan menu is to make sure you will be consuming enough calories throughout the day. Focus on consuming a few calorie dense foods every day such as avocados, bananas, sweet potatoes, grains, nuts & seeds.

In addition to eating enough calories, it is important to incorporate vegan superfoods into your daily diet; foods such as nutritional yeast, hemp seeds, chia seeds, and flaxseed. Finally, it is essential to consume sufficient greens every day. Dark leafy greens are packed with key nutrients and are alkalizing for your body. Greens can be consumed via smoothies and or greens with dinner such as a kale salad. I will provide you with a vegan food pyramid that you can also use as a guide when menu planning.

LET'S RECAP:

- Eat the Rainbow
- Sufficient Calories
- Superfoods
- Greens Every Day

WEEKLY GROCERY LIST

Grocery shopping becomes easier and faster when week after week you are building menus around the same staples. For me, writing my weekly menu first helps tremendously with building my grocery list. It's sort of like a circle. I check the fridge and see a head of broccoli and 3 carrots. I work them into the beginning of the week menu. Then build my remaining menu according to the theme of the day. Then I check the pantry, spice cabinet and other weekly food staples for stock levels. Any items we need I add to the grocery list along with any additional fresh produce. Since implementing this process of menu planning and weekly planned grocery shopping, our food bill has decreased significantly and the stress around dinner is really almost non-existent. It really makes life so much easier.

No more scrambling on a regular basis or impulsive delivery orders. Plus you can also be confident that you are fulfilling your nutritional needs on a daily basis.

For us we keep things simple: Rice bowls with 2-3 vegetable toppings or a meaty alternative with a simple sauce. We do limited seasoning, and I like meals that can be prepped, cooked and served in 20-30 mins. Weekly food prep helps make that possible!

ACTION STEP:

Complete the included menu planner and write out your coordinating grocery list.



Food Prep Sunday

To make the week of meals go a bit more smoothly, I strongly encourage picking one day out of the week and dedicating an hour or two to food prepping. Pulling together meals on busy days and evenings is much simpler when you have staples at your fingertips. Below are the list of the common things I prep or batch cook.

WHAT TO PREP?

Washing and Storing Produce - Wash fresh produce in batches after grocery shopping with the exception of the items that are very perishable when washed/rinsed, like greens. Spending about 15 minutes post grocery run to remove stickers, giving your produce a quick wash, letting it dry and then storing it will save time during the busy week. You won't have to spend time washing one thing at a time when you are preparing a meal. Sometimes I also pre-cut and prepare veggies and fruit and store in containers for easy access such as watermelon or peppers.

Soaking and Cooking Dry Beans - Soaking beans before cooking them improves digestion. Cooking dried beans requires some time so it's best to do this in batches. Beans freeze well which makes them ideal for batch cooking. Lentils are especially easy to prepare because they do not require any soaking time. Soak beans overnight (or 8 hours). Drain, rinse, and proceed with cooking. To cook beans, combine 4 parts water to 1 part beans in a large pot. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer partially covered, until tender. Don't add salt while cooking; season after the beans have been cooked. Below is a soaking and cooking chart for the beans/legumes I prepare most often.

I tend to buy canned chickpeas, kidney beans, and white beans. When buying beans look for BPA-free cans.

Bean/Legume	Soaking time	Cooking time
Black Beans	Overnight (or 8 hours)	90 mins
Black-eyed Peas	Overnight (or 8 hours)	60 mins
Pinto Beans	Overnight (or 8 hours)	90 mins
Lentils (brown/green)	None	40 mins
Lentils (red)	None	20 mins

Soaking Nuts - There are digestive benefits to the soaking process, which also benefits texture. Soaking nuts increases enzyme action, enhances nutrient bioavailability, and eases digestion. In addition, soaking nuts make them softer, which produces a creamier puree for sauces, dressing and desserts. I prefer to soak nuts in batches, then nuts are ready to use from the fridge or freezer. Soaked nuts store in the fridge for a couple of days or in the freezer for a few months.

To soak nuts, place raw, unsalted nuts in a bowl and cover with water. Let soak for several hours or longer depending on how hard the nut is. Nuts become softer and also larger after soaking, as they swell from absorbing some of the water. After soaking be sure to drain and discard the soaking water, and rinse/drain nuts before using. Below is a soaking chart for the nuts I soak most often.

Nut	Soaking Time
Cashews	2-4 hours
Almonds	Overnight (or 8 hours)
Pecans	Overnight (or 8 hours)
Walnuts	Overnight (or 8 hours)

Baking Sweet Potatoes - We bake about 4-5 sweet potatoes every weekend and then store them in the refrigerator (they keep for 5-6 days).

How to bake sweet potatoes:

1. Wash your potatoes
2. Place on baking sheet lined with parchment paper
3. Bake at 450F for 1 hour
4. Add to salads, tacos, quesadillas, pancakes, smoothies, wraps and rice bowls. They are also a staple food for us to just eat alone. I tend to pack baked sweet potato pieces in my son's school lunch quite often.

Preparing your Protein of choice - Baking tofu or making a loaf of seitan ahead of time will save time during the week. These items are easy additions to weekday wraps or dinner bowls.

HOW TO MAKE SEITAN:

Ingredients

Seitan Loaf:

- 2 cups vital wheat gluten
- 1/2 cup nutritional yeast
- 2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 1/2 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- 2 Tbs. Bragg Liquid Aminos



To Cook Loaf:

- 3 1/2 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- 1 cup water (or amount necessary to cover loaf)
- 1/2 small white onion, diced
- 1 clove garlic, crushed

Instructions

1. Whisk all dry ingredients together. Then add broth and liquid aminos until dough forms. (add more broth if needed)
2. Knead dough in bowl until elastic. Shape into two loaves.
3. Place loaves in large saucepan, and add 3 1/2 cups broth, onion, garlic, and enough water to cover the seitan loaves
4. Cover, and bring to a boil over medium heat. Reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer 30 to 45 minutes, or until seitan is firm. Remove from heat, and cool in broth

Preparing your Protein of choice - Baking tofu or making a loaf of seitan ahead of time will save time during the week. These items are easy additions to weekday wraps or dinner bowls.

HOW TO BAKE TOFU:

Ingredients

- 1 block of firm tofu (pressed)
- Bragg Liquid Aminos

Instructions

1. Press tofu to squeeze out excess water. You can squeeze with your hands, use a tofu press, or place tofu block between paper towels, place a baking sheet on top and then pile on heavy books
2. Preheat oven to 400 degrees and spray a baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray or line with parchment paper
3. Cut tofu in desired size pieces (cubes or strips) and dip each piece of tofu in Bragg Liquid Aminos then lay flat on the baking sheet.
4. Bake for 30 minutes, flipping each piece of tofu midway through.

Mincing Garlic - Mincing garlic in batches saves time during the week. Peel several heads of garlic, place in mini food prep processor and chop. Store minced garlic in a container in the fridge (or you can buy the frozen minced garlic cubes from Trader Joe's, love them!).

Freezing Bananas (or other fruit) - `Batching up bananas for freezing is easy and prepares you for yummy smoothies and "nice" cream throughout the week. Buy extra bananas and wait for them to overripe (lots of speckled brown spots). Peel the overripe bananas, break into chunks and then transfer to containers or freezer bags to freeze.

ACTION STEP:

Pick a day to food prep and write out your list of items you want to prep for the week.

Vegan on a Budget

Some think that choosing a vegan diet is a luxury not everyone can afford. On the contrary, transitioning to a plant-based lifestyle can cost less than eating an animal product diet. You can get two pounds of organic broccoli, two pounds of organic fruits, five pounds of organic carrots, and five pounds of organic potatoes for \$10-\$15/day. Not to mention how many pounds of organic rice, quinoa or oats you could get. Eating organic whole food plant-based nutrition is not as expensive as some tend to think. The cherry on top: you will also save money on fewer doctor visits, on top of the cost of medicines. Below are some strategies for keeping food expenses low.

PLAN BEFORE YOU PURCHASE

Going into a store with a list will set you up for success. Sticking to the list will save you from making impulse purchases which add up quickly on your grocery bill. In addition, building a list around your planned weekly menu will ensure you aren't purchasing food items that will spoil before you use them. Planning is especially important if you are responsible for feeding others as well as yourself. Most importantly, never shop hungry.

BUY SEASONALLY

If you buy your plants when they are in season, the prices will be very low. Farmers' markets have affordable prices of local, organic produce. In the store, look for specials and buy a lot when you find them. If you purchase more produce than you can consume before it spoils, freeze it! Freezing your own fruit will significantly save money when buying organic frozen fruit if you purchase organic fruit in season.

ORGANIC VS. CONVENTIONAL

Many fruits and vegetables are laden with pesticides, while others are relatively toxin free, even if you buy the conventional option and not the organic. A good rule of thumb is it's better to buy organic if you will be eating the skin (apples, berries, pears, etc); items that you peel (bananas, oranges, etc) have lower levels of pesticides, even in their conventionally grown forms. Additionally, I tend not to worry if processed foods are organic because organic or not, it's still processed.

WHAT TO BUY ORGANIC

Visit www.ewg.org or more information

DAY 4

Dirty Dozen

- Strawberries
- Spinach
- Nectarines
- Apples
- Peaches
- Pears
- Cherries
- Grapes
- Celery
- Tomatoes
- Sweet bell peppers
- Potatoes

Clean Fifteen

- Sweet Corn
- Avocados
- Pineapples
- Cabbage
- Onions
- Sweet Peas
- Papayas
- Asparagus
- Mangoes
- Eggplant
- Honeydew
- Kiwi
- Cantaloupe
- Cauliflower
- Grapefruit

BULK SECTION/ WHOLESALE MARKETS

Shop the bulk section for many of your food staples and restocking pantry items. Think grains, nuts, seeds, oats, pasta, spices, legumes and beans. Purchasing these items in package-free form cuts down on costs and saves the environment (plus it gives you an excuse to buy cute clear food storage containers). Buy products with a long shelf life, such as legumes, grains, potatoes, apples and carrots in large amounts when available at wholesale stores. It really can save money if you join a co-op, a warehouse store or [Thrive Market](#) online.

DRY BEANS

Bags of dry beans are significantly cheaper than canned beans. Adding the process of soaking and cooking dry beans to your food prep day will save you significantly from purchasing can after can of beans.

STAY AWAY FROM PROCESSED FOODS

Vegan processed products tend to be expensive. The solution is to focus your vegan lifestyle around whole foods. Not every meal needs to have a meat replacement at the center of the plate. Protein, calcium and iron can all be obtained with whole plant foods!

ACTION STEP:

Acquire containers and plan your food storage of bulk section foods.

Vegan Baking

The two big keys to delicious vegan baked goods are successful dairy and egg swap-ins. Once you've got a plan for those, the possibilities are nearly endless when it comes to the delicious vegan treats you can whip up. Here are important tips and tricks to keep in mind for vegan baked goods.

VEGAN EGG REPLACEMENTS

When baking, eggs don't really provide much in terms of flavor. Instead, recipes for baked goods like cakes and cookies usually call for eggs for 3 reasons:

- Eggs Provide Structure: Because eggs harden as they are heated, they hold the ingredients together.
- Eggs Act as a Leavening Ingredient: This means they help baked goods rise.
- Eggs Provide Moisture and Richness: This is because eggs are a liquid and full of fat.

There are a handful of vegan ingredients out there that can replace eggs in baked goods, from ground flax seeds mixed with water to a mashed-up banana. However, it's hard to find a replacement that does all 3, so take a little time to experiment with each one to find a replacement that gives you the results you're looking for in what you're baking. The most recent addition to the egg replacement game is [aquafaba](#), the liquid in a can of chickpeas. Using it in your baked goods can provide the baking results you want and is a great way to avoid waste in the kitchen. Below is a chart of common vegan egg replacements.

You can also use egg replacement products such as [Ener-G Egg Replacer](#) that do a pretty great job of replicating all 3 properties of eggs.



VEGAN EGG REPLACEMENTS

	1 Egg	When to use it	When it won't work
Flax-Egg (Fleggs)	Mix 1 Tbsp flax meal with 3 Tbsp of hot water.	Flax-eggs will form hydrocolloid – a gel which will bind ingredients together. Only use fleggs in recipes which call for vinegar, baking soda and/or baking powder to make the food rise and get fluffy.	Fleggs will not trap air like eggs do, so they won't work well in recipes likes angel food cake or crepes.
Chia-Egg	Mix 1-2 Tbsp of chia seeds with hot water and let it sit a bit before mixing it in with the rest of the ingredients.	Works the same at fleggs. Chia eggs will bind ingredients together. Chia Eggs and Fleggs double as great vegan sources of Omega-3.	
Baking Soda & Vinegar	Mix 1 tsp of baking soda with 1 tsp of white vinegar.	This is a perfect way to add some fluffy airiness to your baked goods without relying on eggs.	
Applesauce or Mashed Banana	¼ cup applesauce or mashed banana	Use applesauce or banana in recipes where there is already a leavening agent since the eggs are just there for moisture. These fruit-based egg alternatives add a great flavor to your food.	
Silken Tofu	¼ cup silken tofu. Puree the silken tofu before you use it or you will get chunks in the finished product.	The tofu adds moisture, and it adds protein to the food too. If the recipe is dense (like brownies as opposed to cake) AND the recipe already calls for baking soda and baking powder, then tofu will probably work.	

DAIRY REPLACEMENT

Butter

Margarine has been the traditional substitute for butter, but many brands are made with hydrogenated oils that can be damaging to your health. If you're going to use margarine, seek out one that's free of those oils, like [Earth Balance](#). Or try using coconut oil, which can be substituted one-to-one, or olive oil (use 1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons olive oil for every cup of butter) instead.

Milk

Cow's milk can easily be substituted with a number of non-dairy milks. However, many non-dairy milks can be sweetened or flavored. Opt for the original, unsweetened varieties to give you more control in your baking. Also, keep in mind the consistency of the non-dairy milk you're using — soy milk is closer in consistency to cow's milk than almond, which is often quite thin, while canned coconut milk is especially thick.

Resources with Great Vegan Baking Recipes:

- [Minimalist Baker](#)
- [Chocolate Covered Katie](#)



ACTION STEP:

Pick a baking recipe and give it a go! Share a picture of the result with the group.