

High-Protein Vegan Meals Under \$3 Per Serving

25 recipes that prove plant protein doesn't have to be
expensive

VeganPreps

How This Guide Works

"Where do you get your protein?" is the question every vegan gets. "How do you afford it?" is the question nobody asks out loud. This guide answers both. Every recipe in here costs under \$3 per serving and delivers meaningful protein from cheap, whole-food sources.

The Budget-Protein Problem

Vegan protein products are expensive. A block of tempeh costs \$3–4. A bag of vegan protein powder runs \$30–40. But a bag of dried lentils costs \$1.50 and makes 12+ servings at 18g of protein each. Canned beans run \$0.80–1.20 per can and deliver 21g of protein. Tofu at \$1.50–2.00 per block gives you 40g. The cheapest protein sources are already plant-based.

What You Get

- 25 recipes with cost per serving and protein per serving
- A protein-per-dollar comparison for common vegan sources
- 3 full recipe cards with ingredient cost breakdowns
- A grocery list with batch cooking schedule

All prices are approximate US averages based on standard supermarket pricing. Costs will vary by region and store. For the full recipe collection, visit veganpreps.com.

Nutritional estimates based on USDA FoodData Central values for standard portions. Actual values may vary by brand and preparation method.

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Recipes

1. Grilled Indonesian Tofu With Mango Salsa (Best Recipe)

30 min

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

See veganpreps.com for full recipe

INSTRUCTIONS

See veganpreps.com for full recipe

2. Easy Teriyaki Cabbage With Tofu (Ready in 15 Minutes)

5 min

Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

2 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1 teaspoon fresh ginger, finely chopped

400 g (14 oz) green cabbage, roughly chopped

150 g (5 oz) straw mushrooms, sliced

150 g (5 oz) firm tofu, drained and diced into 1/2-inch cubes

4 teaspoons teriyaki sauce

6 teaspoons plum sauce

2 teaspoons all-purpose flour

3/4 cup cold water (divided: 2 tbsp for slurry, rest for sauce)

1 tablespoon canola oil

1 teaspoon sesame oil

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a small bowl, whisk the flour with 2 tablespoons of the cold water until smooth to make a slurry. Combine the remaining water with the teriyaki sauce and plum sauce in a separate bowl. Set both aside.
2. Heat canola oil in a large wok or skillet over medium-high heat. Add garlic and ginger and stir-fry for 30 seconds until fragrant.
3. Add the tofu cubes and cook for 2–3 minutes, turning occasionally, until lightly golden on the edges. Add the mushrooms and cabbage and stir-fry for 3–4 minutes until the cabbage is just beginning to wilt.
4. Pour the sauce mixture into the pan and stir to combine. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, then stir in the flour slurry. Cook for 1–2 minutes, stirring constantly, until the sauce thickens and coats the vegetables.
5. Drizzle with sesame oil, toss once more, and serve immediately over steamed rice.

3. Best Tofu & Chickpea Curry (30-Minute)

15 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon canola oil

1 cup chopped onion

2 garlic cloves, minced

1 tablespoon Madras curry powder

1 tablespoon grated peeled fresh ginger

1 tablespoon brown sugar

1 1/4 teaspoons salt

2 cups sweet potato, peeled and cut into 3/4-inch cubes

2 cups small cauliflower florets

1 (14-ounce) package extra-firm tofu, pressed and cut into 3/4-inch cubes

1 (16-ounce) can chickpeas, rinsed and drained

1 (14.5-ounce) can no-salt-added diced tomatoes, undrained

1 (13.5-ounce) can light coconut milk

Freshly ground black pepper to taste

3 cups hot cooked rice, to serve

3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro, to garnish

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Press tofu for 15 minutes to remove excess moisture, then cut into 3/4-inch cubes. Heat canola oil in a large pot or Dutch oven over medium-high heat.
2. Add onion and cook 4 minutes until softened. Add garlic, curry powder, ginger, brown sugar, and salt. Stir and cook 1 minute until fragrant.
3. Add sweet potato, cauliflower, chickpeas, diced tomatoes with their juice, and coconut milk. Stir to combine and bring to a boil.
4. Reduce heat to medium, cover, and simmer 15 minutes until sweet potato is just tender. Add tofu cubes, stir gently, and cook uncovered 5 minutes more until tofu is heated through and sauce has thickened slightly. Season with black pepper.
5. Serve over cooked rice and garnish with fresh cilantro.

4. Braised Tofu Casserole (Comfort in a Dish)

40 min Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

6 dried black mushrooms (shiitake), soaked in 1 cup hot water for 30 minutes

7 oz (200 g / 1/2 package) firm tofu, drained and cut into 1-inch cubes

2 teaspoons soy sauce (for tofu coating)

1 tablespoon cornstarch (for tofu coating)

2 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided

1 small zucchini, halved lengthwise and sliced into 1/2-inch pieces

1/2 cup sliced bamboo shoots, drained if canned

1 leek, white part only, cut into 1/2-inch rings

3/4 cup vegetable broth

2 tablespoons soy sauce (for braising)

2 teaspoons sugar

1 teaspoon sesame oil

1 teaspoon cornstarch dissolved in 2 teaspoons cold water (for thickening)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place dried mushrooms in a bowl and cover with 1 cup hot water. Soak for 30 minutes until fully softened. Remove mushrooms, squeeze out excess liquid, trim off any tough stems, and slice into strips. Reserve the soaking liquid.
2. Pat tofu cubes dry with paper towels. Toss with 2 teaspoons soy sauce, then dust evenly with 1 tablespoon cornstarch. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a wok or large non-stick skillet over medium-high heat (about 375°F / 190°C). Fry tofu cubes for 2–3 minutes per side until golden. Transfer to a plate.
3. Add remaining 1 tablespoon oil to the pan over medium heat. Stir-fry leek rings for 2 minutes until softened. Add zucchini, bamboo shoots, and soaked mushrooms and stir-fry 2 minutes more.
4. Return tofu to the pan. Pour in vegetable broth and 1/4 cup of the reserved mushroom soaking liquid. Add soy sauce and sugar, stir to combine, and bring to a gentle simmer.
5. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover, and braise for 10–12 minutes until the vegetables are tender and the tofu has absorbed the flavors. If a thicker sauce is desired, stir in the cornstarch slurry and simmer uncovered for 1–2 minutes until the sauce thickens.
6. Drizzle with sesame oil, give a gentle stir, and serve hot over steamed rice.

5. Best Vegan Oatmeal With Cranberries (30-Minute)

5 min Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

1 cup steel cut oats

3 cups water

1/4 cup fresh or frozen cranberries

1/4 cup fresh or frozen raspberries

2 tablespoons maple syrup

1/4 teaspoon kosher salt

1 teaspoon coconut oil or neutral oil

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat oil in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add steel cut oats and toast, stirring constantly, for 2–3 minutes until fragrant and lightly golden.
2. Pour in 3 cups water and add the salt. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low. Simmer uncovered, stirring occasionally, for 20–22 minutes until oats are creamy and most of the liquid is absorbed.
3. Stir in the cranberries and raspberries during the last 5 minutes of cooking. Press them gently against the side of the pan with a wooden spoon to burst the skins and release their juice.
4. Remove from heat, stir in maple syrup, and taste for sweetness. Divide between two bowls and serve immediately.

6. Vegan Quinoa-Stuffed Peppers (Easy)

20 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

4 large green bell peppers, tops cut off, seeds and membranes removed

1 cup quinoa, rinsed

1 (14.5-ounce) can vegetable broth

1 bay leaf

1 (6-ounce) can tomato paste

1 teaspoon dried parsley

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon paprika

1/2 teaspoon dried oregano

1/2 teaspoon dried basil

1/4 teaspoon dried thyme

1 tablespoon olive oil

4 carrots, finely chopped

1 onion, finely chopped

2 stalks celery, finely chopped

2 cloves garlic, finely chopped

2 large white mushrooms, sliced

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C). Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add the hollowed bell peppers and boil for 5 minutes to partially soften them. Remove, drain upside-down, and place upright in a 9x13-inch baking dish.
2. In a medium saucepan, combine quinoa, vegetable broth, and bay leaf. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer for 15 minutes until all liquid is absorbed. Remove bay leaf and fluff with a fork.
3. While quinoa cooks, heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add onion, carrots, and celery and cook for 5–6 minutes until softened. Add garlic and mushrooms and cook for another 3 minutes until mushrooms release their moisture.
4. Stir cooked quinoa into the vegetable skillet. Add tomato paste, parsley, paprika, oregano, basil, thyme, and salt. Mix thoroughly until the tomato paste coats all the quinoa and vegetables evenly.
5. Pack the quinoa filling firmly into each bell pepper, pressing down to fill all the way. Mound any extra filling over the top. Pour 1/4 cup water into the bottom of the baking dish to prevent the peppers from scorching.
6. Cover the dish tightly with foil and bake at 375°F for 30 minutes. Remove foil and bake for a further 5 minutes to lightly char the tops. Let rest 5 minutes before serving.

7. Cilantro Lime Grilled Tofu (Simple & Fresh)

40 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

1 (14 oz / 400 g) package firm tofu, pressed 30 minutes

1/4 cup fresh lime juice (about 2–3 limes)

1 tablespoon olive oil

2 cloves garlic, minced

5 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

2 teaspoons chili powder

1 teaspoon garlic powder

2 teaspoons salt

1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Black pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Press tofu for at least 30 minutes using a tofu press or by placing it between two plates weighted with a heavy object. Once pressed, slice into 8 equal slabs about 1/2-inch thick.
2. In a shallow dish, whisk together lime juice, olive oil, minced garlic, cilantro, chili powder, garlic powder, salt, cayenne, and black pepper. Add tofu slabs, turning to coat both sides. Cover and marinate in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes, or up to 8 hours.
3. Heat a grill or grill pan over medium-high heat (about 400°F / 200°C). Brush the grates or pan lightly with oil.
4. Remove tofu from the marinade and grill for 5–7 minutes per side until firm grill marks form and the tofu is heated through. Brush with remaining marinade during cooking.
5. Serve immediately, garnished with extra fresh cilantro and lime wedges on the side.

8. Best Vegan Baked Beans à la Crock Pot

30 min Serves 6

INGREDIENTS

2 cups dried navy beans
Water for soaking and boiling
1/3 cup unsulphured molasses
1/4 cup brown sugar, packed
1 tablespoon mustard powder
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
2 teaspoons nutritional yeast
3 drops liquid smoke (optional)
3 teaspoons Bragg liquid aminos or light soy sauce
2 medium onions, diced
4 garlic cloves, minced
1 teaspoon sea salt, plus more to taste
Black pepper to taste
2 bay leaves
4 cups water (for slow cooker)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Soak navy beans in a large bowl covered by 3 inches of cold water for 8–12 hours or overnight. Drain and rinse.
2. Place drained beans in a pot, cover with fresh water by 2 inches, and bring to a boil over high heat. Boil uncovered for 10 minutes, then drain and rinse.
3. Transfer par-boiled beans to a slow cooker. Add onions, garlic, molasses, brown sugar, mustard powder, cayenne, nutritional yeast, liquid smoke (if using), liquid aminos, salt, pepper, bay leaves, and 4 cups fresh water. Stir to combine.
4. Cover and cook on HIGH for 6–7 hours or LOW for 8–10 hours, stirring once or twice during cooking, until beans are completely tender and the sauce has thickened.
5. Remove bay leaves. Taste and adjust salt, pepper, and sweetness. If beans are very liquid, cook uncovered on HIGH for 20–30 minutes more to thicken. Serve hot.

9. Quick Enoki Mushroom Miso Soup (10 Min)

5 min Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

1000ml water
1/2 teaspoon vegan kombu dashi powder (or 1 strip dried kombu, simmered and removed)
100g enoki mushrooms, root ends trimmed and clusters separated
150g firm tofu, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
1 tablespoon dried wakame seaweed
3 tablespoons white miso paste (or red miso for a stronger flavor)
2 green onions, thinly sliced, for serving

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Bring water to a gentle simmer in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Stir in vegan kombu dashi powder until dissolved.
2. Add enoki mushrooms and simmer for 2–3 minutes until just tender.
3. Add tofu cubes and dried wakame; simmer for 1–2 more minutes until wakame has rehydrated and expanded.
4. Remove pot from heat. Place miso paste in a small sieve or ladle, submerge in the broth, and whisk until miso is fully dissolved into the soup – never boil miso as it destroys flavor and beneficial enzymes.
5. Ladle into bowls, top with sliced green onions, and serve immediately.

10. Silky Roasted Garlic Zucchini Quinoa Soup

20 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

2 heads garlic
3 teaspoons olive oil, divided (1 teaspoon for garlic, 2 teaspoons for sauteing)
1 medium onion, diced
3 cups zucchini, diced (about 2 medium zucchini)
1/2 cup quinoa, rinsed
4 cups water
2 tablespoons Better Than Bouillon vegetable base
1 (12.3 oz) box silken tofu
Juice of 2 medium lemons (about 6 tablespoons)
2 teaspoons dried dill
2 teaspoons fine salt
1 teaspoon white pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Slice the top quarter off both heads of garlic to expose the cloves. Drizzle 1 teaspoon olive oil over the exposed cloves, wrap tightly in foil, and roast for 40 to 45 minutes until the cloves are golden, soft, and caramelized. Remove and let cool enough to handle, then squeeze the cloves out of the skins.
2. While the garlic roasts, heat the remaining 2 teaspoons olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the onion and cook for 5 minutes until softened. Add the zucchini and cook for another 3 minutes.
3. Add the rinsed quinoa, water, vegetable base, dill, salt, and white pepper to the pot. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes until the quinoa is fully cooked and the zucchini is tender.
4. Remove from heat. Add the roasted garlic cloves and the silken tofu (broken into chunks) to the pot. Use an immersion blender to blend until completely smooth and creamy, or carefully transfer in batches to a countertop blender with the lid vented.
5. Stir in the lemon juice. Taste and adjust salt, white pepper, and lemon as needed. Reheat gently over low heat if needed before serving.

11. Perfect Homemade Miso Soup (5 Minutes)

5 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

6 cups cold water
One 12-inch (30cm) piece of dried kombu
2 tablespoons brown miso paste
2 tablespoons white miso paste
6 oz (170g) silken tofu, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
2 scallions, white and green parts, thinly sliced on the diagonal
2 tablespoons mirin (sweetened rice wine), optional
2 teaspoons dried wakame seaweed, rehydrated in cold water (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Make vegan dashi: combine cold water and kombu in a medium saucepan. Let soak for 30 minutes (or up to overnight in the refrigerator). Bring to a gentle simmer over medium-low heat - do not boil. Just before it reaches a boil, remove kombu with tongs and discard. You now have about 4-5 cups of vegan dashi.
2. Keep the dashi at a low simmer. If using mirin, stir it in now.
3. Place miso pastes in a small bowl. Ladle about 1/4 cup of hot dashi into the bowl and whisk until the miso is fully dissolved with no lumps. Pour the mixture back into the pot. Do not boil the soup after adding miso or the flavor will dull.
4. Gently add silken tofu cubes and rehydrated wakame (if using). Warm over low heat for 2 minutes until tofu is heated through.
5. Ladle into bowls, top with sliced scallions, and serve immediately.

12. Best Raw Cucumber Soup (Dairy-Free, 10 Min)

10 min Serves 3

INGREDIENTS

2 cups cucumber, roughly chopped (about 1 medium cucumber, peeled if waxed)

1 cup zucchini, roughly chopped

1 cup ripe avocado, peeled and pitted (about 1 large avocado)

1 clove garlic, minced

2 cups lukewarm water

1/2 lemon, juiced (about 2 tablespoons)

2 tablespoons olive oil

1/2 teaspoon sea salt

Fresh dill or chives, for garnish (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Peel the cucumber if the skin is thick or waxed, then roughly chop cucumber and zucchini. Scoop avocado flesh into the blender.
2. Add cucumber, zucchini, avocado, garlic, lemon juice, olive oil, and sea salt to a high-speed blender. Pour in lukewarm water.
3. Blend on high for 60 seconds until completely smooth and creamy. If the soup is too thick, add water 2 tablespoons at a time and blend again.
4. Taste and adjust seasoning with additional salt or lemon juice. For a chilled version, refrigerate for 20 to 30 minutes before serving.
5. Ladle into bowls and garnish with fresh dill, chives, a drizzle of olive oil, or a few thin cucumber slices. Serve immediately.

13. Quick Vegan White Chili (One-Pot Recipe)

10 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon olive oil

1/2 onion, diced

2 cloves garlic, chopped

1 pint fresh mushrooms (white button or baby bella), medium chop

1 teaspoon ground cumin

2 cups vegetable stock

1 (15 ounce) can northern beans, drained and rinsed

1 (15 ounce) can navy beans, drained and rinsed

16 ounces fresh mild salsa

16 ounces frozen corn

1/4 cup jalapenos, chopped

1/2 cup chipotle-style salsa or 2 chipotles in adobo, chopped

Salt and black pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 5 minutes. Add garlic and cumin; cook 1 minute until fragrant.
2. Add mushrooms and cook, stirring, until they release their liquid and begin to brown, about 5 minutes.
3. Pour in vegetable stock, northern beans, navy beans, mild salsa, frozen corn, jalapenos, and chipotle salsa. Stir to combine.
4. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium-low and simmer uncovered for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally, until flavors meld and corn is fully cooked.
5. Taste and season with salt and black pepper. Serve hot with crusty bread or tortilla chips.

14. Quick Mole Seitan Stew (One-Pot Comfort Food)

10 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon olive oil
1 medium onion, diced
2 jalapeno peppers, seeded and cut into bite-size pieces
2 cups seitan, room temperature, thinly sliced
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
1/4 teaspoon ground allspice
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
15 ounces tomato sauce or canned stewed tomatoes
1 cup vegetable stock
1 ounce unsweetened vegan dark chocolate (100% cacao), chopped
1 flour tortilla (8-inch), cut into small pieces

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat olive oil in a large pot or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add diced onion and jalapeno pieces; cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes until softened.
2. Add seitan slices and cook for 2 minutes, stirring, until lightly browned. Stir in garlic powder, allspice, and cinnamon; cook 30 seconds until fragrant.
3. Pour in tomato sauce and vegetable stock; stir to combine. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat, then reduce to medium-low.
4. Add chopped chocolate and tortilla pieces; stir until chocolate is fully melted and incorporated, about 2 minutes.
5. Use an immersion blender to partially blend the stew (or transfer half to a blender, blend smooth, and stir back in) to create a velvety mole texture.
6. Simmer uncovered for 10 minutes until sauce thickens. Taste and adjust salt if needed. Serve hot over rice or with warm tortillas.

15. Easy Tofu & Vegetable Rice Salad (Quick)

10 min Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

10.5 oz (300 g) long-grain white rice (uncooked)
12 oz (340 g) firm tofu, pressed and sliced into 1/2-inch slabs
1 large zucchini, sliced into 1/4-inch rounds
2 tablespoons garlic-infused olive oil (divided)
5 oz (140 g) red cabbage, finely shredded
3 tablespoons fresh lime juice
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon chili flakes (or 1 teaspoon sriracha)
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/3 cup mixed fresh herbs (flat-leaf parsley, basil, and mint), roughly chopped

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cook the rice according to package directions (bring to boil with 2x volume water, then cover and simmer 18 minutes on low). Fluff and set aside to cool slightly.
2. Whisk together lime juice, 2 tablespoons olive oil, chili flakes, and salt in a small bowl to make the dressing. Set aside.
3. Heat a griddle or grill pan over medium-high heat. Brush tofu slabs and zucchini rounds with garlic-infused olive oil on both sides. Grill tofu for 3–4 minutes per side until golden with grill marks, and zucchini for 2 minutes per side until just tender. Cut grilled tofu into cubes.
4. In a large bowl, combine the warm rice, shredded red cabbage, grilled zucchini, and tofu cubes. Pour the dressing over and toss gently.
5. Add the fresh herbs and toss once more. Taste and adjust salt or lime juice, then divide between two bowls and serve warm or at room temperature.

16. Tofu Mango Laab (Easy Thai Inspired)

25 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

12 ounces firm tofu, pressed and crumbled into small pieces

¼ cup fresh lime juice (about 3 limes)

1 tablespoon tamari

1 teaspoon kosher salt

1 cup fresh mango, diced into small cubes

¼ cup lemongrass, white part only, very finely minced

3 fresh kaffir lime leaves, stems removed, very finely sliced (chiffonade)

2 tablespoons lime zest

2 Thai chiles, deseeded and finely minced

1 Fresno chile, deseeded and finely minced

2 cups fresh cilantro (stems included), roughly chopped

1 cup fresh mint leaves, finely sliced (chiffonade)

¼ cup rau ram (Vietnamese coriander), finely sliced, or extra cilantro as substitute

½ cup fresh Thai basil leaves, finely sliced (chiffonade)

¼ cup green onions, thinly sliced

1 tablespoon uncooked brown rice

3 heads Belgian endive, separated into individual leaves

Cilantro or mint sprigs, for garnish

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Toast brown rice in a dry skillet over medium heat for 5 to 7 minutes, stirring constantly, until golden and fragrant. Remove from heat, cool for 5 minutes, then grind in a spice grinder or mortar and pestle to a coarse powder. Set aside.
2. In a large bowl, combine crumbled tofu, lime juice, tamari, and salt. Toss well and let stand for 10 minutes so the tofu absorbs the dressing.
3. Add mango, lemongrass, lime leaves, lime zest, Thai chiles, Fresno chile, cilantro, mint, rau ram (or extra cilantro), Thai basil, and green onions to the tofu. Toss everything together until well combined.
4. Sprinkle the ground roasted rice powder over the salad and toss once more to distribute. Taste and adjust lime juice, tamari, or salt as needed.
5. Arrange endive leaves on a large platter or individual plates to act as cups. Spoon the laab filling into each endive leaf. Garnish with cilantro or mint sprigs and serve immediately.

17. Best Tofu Taegu Salad (Protein-Packed)

20 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

1 block (14 oz) extra-firm tofu, pressed and cubed
1 tablespoon sesame oil
1 tablespoon tamari or soy sauce
1 bunch watercress (about 6 oz), cut into 1-inch pieces
8 oz bean sprouts, rinsed
1 red onion, thinly sliced
2–3 medium tomatoes, diced
6 oz takuwan (Japanese pickled daikon radish), thinly sliced
2/3 cup green onions, chopped
1/4 cup neutral oil (such as avocado or grapeseed)
1/4 cup shoyu (soy sauce)
1 tablespoon rice vinegar
1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
2 cloves garlic, minced or grated
1 teaspoon sugar

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Press tofu for at least 15 minutes, then cut into 3/4-inch cubes. Toss with 1 tablespoon sesame oil and 1 tablespoon tamari. Pan-fry in a non-stick skillet over medium-high heat for 3–4 minutes per side until golden. Set aside to cool.
2. Blanch bean sprouts in boiling water for 1 minute, drain, and rinse under cold water. Squeeze out excess moisture.
3. Whisk together neutral oil, shoyu, rice vinegar, toasted sesame oil, garlic, and sugar in a small bowl to make the dressing.
4. Layer watercress, bean sprouts, red onion, tomatoes, takuwan, and baked tofu in a large salad bowl. Scatter green onions on top.
5. Pour dressing over the salad, toss gently to coat, and serve immediately.

18. Vegan Lentil Salad With Apples (Make-Ahead)

15 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

1 cup brown lentils, picked over and rinsed
2 1/2 cups water or vegetable broth
1 carrot, peeled and diced into 1/2-inch cubes
2 apples, cored and chopped into 1/2-inch pieces (Granny Smith or Honeycrisp)
1/2 bunch chives, finely chopped
1 tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped
5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
Salt and black pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place the rinsed lentils in a medium saucepan with the water or broth. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce to a steady simmer. Add the diced carrot and cook for 18 to 20 minutes until the lentils are tender but still hold their shape. Drain any excess liquid and let cool for 10 minutes.
2. While the lentils cool, whisk together the olive oil, apple cider vinegar, and Dijon mustard in a large bowl until emulsified. Season generously with salt and black pepper.
3. Add the warm lentils and carrot to the dressing bowl and toss to coat. The residual heat helps the lentils absorb the dressing.
4. Add the chopped apple, chives, and parsley to the bowl and toss again until everything is evenly combined. Taste and adjust salt, pepper, or vinegar as needed.
5. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes before serving to allow the flavors to meld. The salad keeps well in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 4 days.

19. Easy Vegan Tofu Quinoa Burgers (Herbisd)

20 min Serves 6

INGREDIENTS

480 g (17 oz) firm tofu, pressed and drained
3/8 cup (70 g) uncooked quinoa
3/4 cup cooked quinoa water or vegetable broth (for cooking quinoa)
3/4 cup ground flax seeds
6 tablespoons soy sauce
1 teaspoon olive oil
3 tablespoons finely chopped onion
1/4 teaspoon dried dill
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1 dash dried marjoram
1/8 teaspoon kosher salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Rinse quinoa under cold water, then cook in 3/4 cup water or broth over medium heat for 12–15 minutes until absorbed and tender. Let cool slightly.
2. Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C). Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.
3. Press tofu for at least 15 minutes, then crumble into a large bowl using your hands until no large chunks remain.
4. Add cooked quinoa, ground flax seeds, soy sauce, olive oil, chopped onion, dill, black pepper, garlic powder, marjoram, and salt to the crumbled tofu. Mix thoroughly until a uniform dough forms that holds together when pressed.
5. Divide mixture into 6 equal portions and shape each into a firm patty about 3/4 inch thick. Place on the prepared baking sheet.
6. Bake for 12–13 minutes, flip each patty carefully, then bake for another 12–13 minutes until firm and golden on both sides. Serve on buns or lettuce wraps.

20. Marinated Sesame Tofu on Ciabatta

20 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

1/4 cup soy sauce
1/4 cup sherry vinegar
1/4 cup vegetable oil
1/4 cup toasted sesame oil
1/4 cup Dijon mustard
1 (8-ounce) package extra-firm tofu, pressed and drained
2 tablespoons sesame seeds
1 large loaf ciabatta bread (or 6 ciabatta rolls), sliced for serving
1 seedless cucumber, thinly sliced
2 cups arugula

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Press tofu for at least 15 minutes, then slice into 1/2-inch planks. Whisk together soy sauce, sherry vinegar, vegetable oil, sesame oil, and Dijon mustard in a shallow dish. Add tofu slices and marinate for at least 20 minutes, flipping halfway through. Reserve the marinade.
2. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Remove tofu from marinade, sprinkle both sides with sesame seeds, and arrange in a single layer on the baking sheet.
3. Bake tofu for 20 to 25 minutes, flipping once halfway, until golden and firm with lightly toasted sesame seeds.
4. While tofu bakes, cut ciabatta into sandwich-sized portions and brush cut sides lightly with reserved marinade. Toast cut-side down in a dry skillet over medium heat for 2 to 3 minutes until golden.
5. Assemble sandwiches: layer arugula on the bottom half of the ciabatta, top with baked sesame tofu planks and cucumber slices, then close with the top half. Serve immediately.

21. Best Tofu Hummus Sprout Pita (Protein-Packed)

10 min Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

2 whole wheat pita breads
1 cup (about 6 oz) firm tofu, pressed and cut into small cubes
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 teaspoon soy sauce
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
1/4 teaspoon smoked paprika
4 tablespoons hummus
1 cup alfalfa sprouts
1/2 small cucumber, thinly sliced
Salt and black pepper to taste
Squeeze of lemon juice

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Press tofu for at least 10 minutes, then cut into small 1/2-inch cubes. Heat olive oil in a nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add tofu cubes and cook 4–5 minutes, turning occasionally, until lightly golden on several sides. Add soy sauce, garlic powder, and paprika, toss to coat, and cook 1 minute more. Season with salt and pepper.
2. Warm pita breads in a dry skillet over medium heat for 30 seconds per side, or wrap in a damp paper towel and microwave 20 seconds, until pliable.
3. Cut each pita in half to form 4 pockets. Spread 1 tablespoon hummus inside each pocket.
4. Divide the seasoned tofu cubes, alfalfa sprouts, and cucumber slices evenly among the 4 pita pockets. Squeeze a little lemon juice inside each pocket and serve immediately.

22. Easy Green Scrambled Tofu (5-Minute Recipe)

5 min Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

1 (12 oz) package firm tofu, drained and crumbled
1 tablespoon olive oil
1–2 tablespoons soy sauce
1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
6–8 kalamata olives, pitted and roughly chopped
1/2 cup sun-dried tomatoes, drained if oil-packed, roughly chopped
1/2 cup fresh spinach, roughly chopped

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat olive oil in a medium non-stick skillet over medium-high heat. Add crumbled tofu and cook 3–4 minutes, stirring occasionally, until it starts to dry out and take on a little color.
2. Season with soy sauce, turmeric, oregano, and black pepper. Stir well to coat the tofu evenly with the yellow color from the turmeric.
3. Add sun-dried tomatoes and olives. Cook 2 minutes, stirring, until heated through.
4. Add spinach and stir 1 minute until just wilted. Remove from heat and serve immediately on toast, in a wrap, or alongside roasted vegetables.

23. Spanish Tofu Omelette (30-Minute Vegan Dinner)

15 min Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon olive oil
1 clove garlic, minced
1 small onion, finely chopped
1 medium potato (about 6 oz), thinly sliced into 1/8-inch rounds
1/4 green bell pepper, diced
1 small tomato, finely chopped
1/4 teaspoon dried oregano
1 lb (16 oz) soft tofu, drained and patted dry
1/4 cup unbleached all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon cornstarch
1/4 teaspoon ground turmeric
1 teaspoon nutritional yeast
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat olive oil in a 10-inch non-stick skillet over medium heat. Add potato slices in a single layer and cook 4–5 minutes per side until just tender and lightly golden. Remove and set aside.
2. In the same skillet, add onion, garlic, and bell pepper. Cook over medium heat 4–5 minutes until softened. Add tomato and oregano, cook 2 minutes. Remove from heat.
3. In a blender or using a fork, mash tofu with flour, cornstarch, turmeric, nutritional yeast, salt, and pepper until smooth and uniform – the mixture should be thick and pourable.
4. Arrange cooked potato slices in the bottom of the skillet over the sautéed vegetables. Pour the tofu batter evenly over the top. Cover with a lid and cook over low heat for 12–15 minutes until the edges are set and the center is firm to the touch.
5. To flip: place a large plate over the skillet, invert to turn the omelette onto the plate, then slide it back into the skillet uncooked-side down. Cook uncovered 3–4 minutes until the bottom is golden. Alternatively, finish under the broiler for 3–4 minutes until set and lightly browned.
6. Slide onto a serving plate and let rest 2 minutes before cutting into wedges. Serve warm.

24. Crispy Spiced Chickpea Nuts (Vegan Snack)

15 min Serves 6

INGREDIENTS

1 pound (450g) dried chickpeas, soaked overnight in cold water and drained
1 teaspoon sea salt, plus more for boiling
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1/2 cup nutritional yeast
2 teaspoons ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon granulated garlic

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Drain soaked chickpeas and place in a large pot. Cover with fresh water by 2 inches, add a generous pinch of salt, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 45–60 minutes until tender but not mushy. Drain and spread on a clean towel; pat very dry.
2. Preheat oven to 400F (200C). Spread dried chickpeas on a rimmed baking sheet in a single layer. Roast for 20 minutes, shaking the pan once halfway through.
3. Remove pan from oven and drizzle chickpeas with olive oil. Sprinkle with nutritional yeast, cumin, granulated garlic, and 1 teaspoon salt. Toss to coat evenly.
4. Return to oven and roast for another 20–25 minutes, shaking the pan every 10 minutes, until chickpeas are deep golden and fully crunchy throughout.
5. Let cool on the baking sheet for 10 minutes before serving – they crisp further as they cool. Store in an open container at room temperature for up to 3 days.

25. Best Raw Superfood Oat Smoothie (Vegan)

5 min Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

2 sweet apples, cored and roughly chopped
2 cups unsweetened almond milk
2 ripe bananas, peeled
1 tablespoon almond butter
1 tablespoon coconut sugar
1 tablespoon maca powder
1 teaspoon spirulina powder
1 teaspoon chlorella powder
1 cup rolled oats (certified gluten-free if needed)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. If you have time, soak oats in almond milk for 15 minutes beforehand to make blending easier and the texture smoother.
2. Add almond milk to the blender first, then add oats, bananas, chopped apples, and almond butter.
3. Add coconut sugar, maca powder, spirulina, and chlorella.
4. Blend on high for 60 to 90 seconds until completely smooth. If the smoothie is too thick, add additional almond milk 1/4 cup at a time and blend again.
5. Pour into two glasses and serve immediately. If new to spirulina or chlorella, start with 1/2 teaspoon each and increase gradually over time.

Protein Per Dollar: What Gives You the Most

Cost per 10g of protein, sorted from cheapest to most expensive. Dried lentils win.

FOOD	TYPICAL PRICE	TOTAL PROTEIN	COST PER 10G PROTEIN
Dried red lentils	\$1.50/lb	~90g protein/lb	\$0.13/10g
Dried black beans	\$1.60/lb	~88g protein/lb	\$0.14/10g
Dried chickpeas	\$1.80/lb	~82g protein/lb	\$0.17/10g
Rolled oats	\$2.50/42oz	~52g protein/lb	\$0.19/10g
Firm tofu	\$1.80/14oz	~40g protein/block	\$0.23/10g
Peanut butter	\$3.00/16oz	~100g protein/jar	\$0.24/10g
Canned black beans	\$0.90/15oz	~21g protein/can	\$0.26/10g
Brown rice	\$2.00/2lb	~60g protein/bag	\$0.27/10g
Whole wheat bread	\$3.00/loaf	~48g protein/loaf	\$0.50/10g
Tempeh	\$3.50/8oz	~34g protein/block	\$0.82/10g
Seitan (homemade)	\$5.00/bag wheat gluten	~75g protein	\$0.53/10g
Soy milk	\$3.50/half gallon	~56g protein	\$0.50/10g
Vegan protein powder	\$35/tub	~600g protein/tub	\$0.47/10g

■ Best value (under \$0.25/10g) ■ Good value (\$0.25–\$0.50/10g) ■ More expensive (\$0.50+/10g)

THE TAKEAWAY

Dried lentils and beans are the cheapest protein sources on earth. At \$0.13–0.17 per 10g of protein, they beat even eggs (\$0.30/10g) and chicken thighs (\$0.35/10g). Tofu is competitive at \$0.23/10g. Protein powder is convenient but not cheaper than whole foods.

Nutritional estimates based on USDA FoodData Central values for standard portions. Actual values may vary by brand and preparation method.

Grocery List + Batch Cooking Schedule

Buy once on Saturday, cook in bulk on Sunday, eat all week.

DRIED LEGUMES (BEST VALUE)

- ☐ Red lentils, 2 lb bag (~\$2.50)
- ☐ Dried chickpeas, 1 lb bag (~\$1.80)
- ☐ Dried black beans, 1 lb bag (~\$1.60)
- ☐ Canned black-eyed peas, 2 cans (~\$1.80)

PROTEIN

- ☐ Firm tofu, 3 blocks (~\$5.40)
- ☐ Peanut butter, 16 oz jar (~\$3.00)

GRAINS

- ☐ Brown rice, 2 lb bag (~\$2.00)
- ☐ Rolled oats, canister (~\$2.50)
- ☐ Long-grain white rice, 2 lb (~\$1.50)
- ☐ Whole wheat bread, 1 loaf (~\$3.00)

PRODUCE

- ☐ Onions, 3 lb bag (~\$2.00)
- ☐ Bell peppers, 2 (~\$2.00)
- ☐ Garlic, 2 heads (~\$1.00)
- ☐ Lemons, 2 (~\$0.80)
- ☐ Carrots, 1 lb bag (~\$1.00)
- ☐ Green onions, 1 bunch (~\$0.80)
- ☐ Celery, 1 bunch (~\$1.50)
- ☐ Bananas, 6 (~\$1.50)

CANNED & PANTRY

- ☐ Canned diced tomatoes, 2 cans (~\$1.80)
- ☐ Vegetable broth, 2 cartons (~\$3.00)
- ☐ Canned black beans, 2 cans (~\$1.80)
- ☐ Olive oil, soy sauce, spices (pantry staples)

Sunday Batch Cook Schedule

10:00 AM - START SOAKING & BOILING

Put dried black beans in a pot, cover with water, bring to boil, then simmer.
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Takes 60–90 min. Start these first.

10:15 AM – COOK GRAINS

Start brown rice (45 min) and a pot of lentils (25 min) on separate burners.

Lentils will finish first. Set aside.

10:30 AM – PREP TOFU

Press 2 blocks of tofu. Bake or pan-fry in bulk. Season half savory, half BBQ.

This gives you grab-and-go protein for the week.

11:00 AM – MAKE THE BIG POT

Start a large batch of lentil soup or tofu bean chili. Makes 6+ servings.

One big pot = 3–4 lunches done.

12:00 PM – PORTION & STORE

Divide everything into containers. Label with contents and date.

Total active time: ~90 minutes. Meals for the full week.

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more.

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