

No-Reheat Vegan Lunchbox Guide

The ultimate modular system for cold vegan lunches
that actually taste good

VeganPreps

How This Guide Works

No microwave at the office. No kitchen at the job site. No time to heat anything up. This guide gives you a complete system for packing cold vegan lunches that taste just as good at room temperature as they do straight from the fridge.

The No-Microwave Problem

Most meal prep advice assumes you can reheat. That leaves out anyone who eats at a desk, in a car, at a park, or anywhere without a kitchen. Cold lunches get boring fast when all you know is sandwiches. This guide gives you a modular system that creates 100+ meal combinations from the same batch of prepped ingredients.

What You Get

- A Build-A-Bowl formula with 100+ combinations
- A fridge shelf life table so nothing goes to waste
- 25 cold-friendly recipes in a compact reference table
- 3 full recipe cards for no-reheat meals
- Container guidance to prevent sogginess

THE GOLDEN RULE OF COLD LUNCHES

Keep wet and dry separate until you eat. Dressing in a small container. Grains on the bottom. Crunchy toppings in a baggie. The number one reason cold lunches taste bad is soggy ingredients. Separation solves that.

For the full recipe collection, visit veganpreps.com.

Build-A-Bowl Formula

Pick one from each column = a complete cold lunch. $5 \times 5 \times 10 \times 5 = 1,250$ possible combinations.

BASE (PICK 1)	PROTEIN (PICK 1)	VEGGIES (PICK 2)	SAUCE (PICK 1)	CRUNCH (PICK 1)
Quinoa	Smoked Tofu	Shredded Carrots	Ginger Sesame	Sesame Seeds
Soba Noodles	Chickpeas	Cabbage (red/green)	Spicy Peanut	Crushed Peanuts
Kale (massaged)	Edamame	Cucumber	Lemon Tahini	Sunflower Seeds
Brown Rice	Marinated Tempeh	Bell Pepper	Sriracha Mayo	Crispy Onions
Couscous	White Beans	Corn	Balsamic	Nori Strips
		Cherry Tomatoes		
		Radish		
		Snap Peas		
		Broccoli (raw)		
		Avocado (day-of)		

SUNDAY PREP STRATEGY

Cook 2 bases (e.g. quinoa + soba noodles). Prep 2 proteins (e.g. baked tofu + marinated chickpeas). Chop all vegetables. Make 2 sauces. Store everything in separate containers. Each morning, scoop one from each column into your lunchbox. 5 minutes to pack, different meal every day.

Fridge Shelf Life Table

How long each prepped ingredient stays good. Plan your week around these timelines.

INGREDIENT	FRIDGE LIFE	STORAGE NOTE
Cooked quinoa	5 days	Sealed container, fridge
Cooked brown rice	5 days	Sealed container, fridge
Cooked soba noodles	3 days	Toss with sesame oil to prevent sticking
Cooked couscous	5 days	Fluff with fork before storing
Baked/smoked tofu	5 days	Sealed container, fridge
Marinated chickpeas	5 days	Keep in marinade for better flavor
Marinated tempeh	4 days	Sealed container, fridge
Edamame (shelled)	4 days	Sealed container, fridge
White beans (cooked)	5 days	In liquid or drained, both work
Shredded carrots	5 days	Sealed bag, remove air
Shredded cabbage	5 days	Gets better with time (natural ferment)
Sliced cucumber	2 days	Salt draws out water. Slice day-of if possible
Bell pepper strips	4 days	Sealed container, fridge
Cherry tomatoes	5 days	Store whole, do not slice until eating
Snap peas	4 days	Sealed bag, remove air
Ginger sesame dressing	7 days	Shake before using
Peanut sauce	7 days	Thin with water if it thickens
Lemon tahini dressing	5 days	Shake before using

INGREDIENT	FRIDGE LIFE	STORAGE NOTE
Avocado	0 days	Cut and add day-of only. Oxidizes fast

What's Inside

1. Warm Vegan Leafy Greens Salad (Best & Healthy)
2. Exotic Vegan Mango Endive Salad (Fresh)
3. Garlicky Kale & Chickn Salad (Easy & Cheesy)
4. Best Vegan Chick'N-Pea Salad (No Cook)
5. Best Elote Bowl (Vegan Mexican)
6. Bean Curd Peanut Salad (Best Protein)
7. Best Vegan Potato Salad (Creamy & Easy)
8. Big Vegan Buddha Bowl (Meal Prep Ready)
9. Japanese Inari Sushi (Homemade & Easy)
10. Best Kale, Carrot & Sunflower Seed Salad
11. Best Tofu Pepper Tacos (Ready in 30 Min)
12. Best Tofu & Bok Choy Summer Rolls (Easy)
13. Crunchy Vegan Rainbow Wrap (20-Minute)
14. Easy Vegan Sushi Rolls (Ready in 30 Minutes)
15. No-Fuss BBQ Tofu Sandwiches (5-Ingredient)
16. Best Mushrooms in Lettuce Wraps (30-Min)
17. Tibetan Seitan Burritos (Vegan Comfort Food)
18. Savory Tofu Sandwich Filling (Easy Spread)
19. Fresh Strawberry-Apple Juice (Quick, Detox)
20. Raw Zucchini Basil Hummus (Vegan & Fresh)
21. Easy Vegan Dumplings (Rice Paper)
22. Best Raw Superfood Oat Smoothie (Vegan)
23. Easy Peanut Noodles With Tofu (Quick Dinner)
24. Raw Zucchini Pasta with Creamy Basil Sauce
25. Vegan Sweet Potato Noodle Coconut Curry

Recipes

1. Warm Vegan Leafy Greens Salad (Best & Healthy)

10 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

2 medium sweet potatoes (about 1 lb total), peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes

2 large onions, peeled and sliced into 1/4-inch half-moons

3 tablespoons olive oil, divided

1 teaspoon salt, divided

1/2 teaspoon black pepper, divided

8 cups leafy greens (such as Swiss chard, kale, bok choy, or spinach), stems and leaves roughly chopped

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 400 F (200 C). Toss the sweet potato cubes and sliced onions together on a large rimmed baking sheet with 2 tablespoons of the olive oil, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon black pepper. Spread in a single layer.
2. Roast for 20 to 25 minutes, stirring once halfway through, until the sweet potatoes are tender when pierced and the onion edges are caramelized and lightly browned.
3. While the vegetables finish roasting, heat the remaining 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the greens and any stems.
4. Cook the greens, tossing frequently, for 4 to 6 minutes until wilted and stems are just tender. Season with the remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon black pepper.
5. Add the roasted sweet potatoes and onions directly to the skillet with the greens and toss everything together over low heat for 1 to 2 minutes to combine and warm through.
6. Taste and adjust salt and pepper, then serve immediately.

2. Exotic Vegan Mango Endive Salad (Fresh)

15 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

2 ripe but firm mangoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks

1 cup pomegranate seeds (from about 1 large pomegranate)

1 cup fresh coconut flesh, thinly sliced (or 1/2 cup unsweetened coconut flakes)

1/4 cup red onion, finely minced

3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

1 teaspoon olive oil

1/2 teaspoon sea salt

2 tablespoons fresh mint or cilantro leaves, roughly torn

1 head Belgian endive, base trimmed, leaves separated

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Combine mango chunks, pomegranate seeds, coconut, and red onion in a large bowl.
2. Drizzle with lemon juice and olive oil, then season with sea salt. Toss gently to coat without breaking up the mango.
3. Fold in fresh mint or cilantro and taste, adjusting lemon juice or salt as needed.
4. Arrange endive leaves in a single layer on a serving platter, curved side down to form natural cups.
5. Spoon the mango mixture into and over the endive leaves. Serve immediately while the endive is still crisp.

3. Garlicky Kale & Chickn Salad (Easy & Cheesy)

15 min Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

1/4 cup tahini, well-stirred
5 tablespoons water
2 tablespoons nutritional yeast
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1 (8-ounce) package plant-based crispy chicken strips
1 (12-ounce) bunch lacinato or red kale, stems removed, leaves torn into bite-size pieces

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Whisk together tahini, water, nutritional yeast, garlic, lemon juice, salt, and pepper in a large bowl until smooth and creamy.
2. Add torn kale leaves to the bowl and massage the dressing into the leaves with your hands for 2 to 3 minutes until the kale softens and reduces in volume.
3. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour, or overnight, to allow the kale to fully tenderize and absorb the dressing.
4. Prepare the plant-based crispy chicken according to package directions, then slice or leave whole.
5. Remove salad from the refrigerator, toss once more, and top with the crispy chicken. Taste and adjust seasoning before serving.

4. Best Vegan Chick'N-Pea Salad (No Cook)

5 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

14 oz (1 can) chickpeas, drained and rinsed
1/2 cup vegan mayo, chilled
2 tablespoons celery, thinly sliced
2 tablespoons green onion (white part), thinly sliced
1 tablespoon green bell pepper, finely chopped
1 1/2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes (optional)
1/4 teaspoon salt, plus more to taste
1/4 teaspoon black pepper, plus more to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Drain and rinse chickpeas thoroughly. Transfer to a large bowl and mash with a fork until mostly broken down but still chunky — about half the beans should remain whole.
2. Add vegan mayo and Dijon mustard. Stir until evenly combined and creamy.
3. Fold in celery, green onion, and green bell pepper. Add red pepper flakes if using. Season with salt and pepper, taste, and adjust.
4. Serve immediately on bread, in a wrap, or over greens. For best texture, refrigerate for 15–20 minutes before serving. Keeps refrigerated up to 3 days.

5. Best Elote Bowl (Vegan Mexican)

45 min Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

For the bowl base:

1 red onion, thinly sliced

1/4 cup (60ml) red wine vinegar

1/2 teaspoon salt (for pickling)

120g (2/3 cup) dry quinoa

240ml (1 cup) water or vegetable broth

2 ears of corn on the cob, husked

200g (1 cup) cooked pinto beans, drained and rinsed

30g (1/2 cup) fresh coriander (cilantro), roughly chopped

60g (1/3 cup) sunflower seeds, toasted

For the aguachile dressing:

1 corn tortilla

1 habanero chile, stem removed

1/4 cup (60ml) olive oil

1/4 cup (60ml) fresh lime juice

2 celery stalks, roughly chopped

2 tablespoons red wine vinegar

1 clove garlic

1/4 teaspoon salt

For the cashew cream:

50g (1/3 cup) raw cashews, soaked in water 2 hours and drained

50ml (3 tablespoons) water

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

1 heaped teaspoon capers

1 clove garlic

1 teaspoon apple cider vinegar

1 tablespoon nutritional yeast

1/2 teaspoon chipotle powder

Juice of 1/2 lime

Salt to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Make the pickled onions: combine sliced red onion, red wine vinegar, and 1/2 teaspoon salt in a bowl. Toss well and set aside for at least 30 minutes. Make the cashew cream: blend drained cashews, water, Dijon mustard, capers, garlic, cider vinegar, nutritional yeast, chipotle powder, and lime juice until completely smooth. Season with salt and refrigerate.
2. Cook quinoa: rinse well, then combine with water or broth in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer 15 minutes until liquid is absorbed. Remove from heat and let steam, covered, 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork.
3. Make the aguachile dressing: hold the corn tortilla and habanero directly over an open gas flame (or under a broiler) for 1-2 minutes, turning, until lightly charred. Blend charred tortilla, habanero, olive oil, lime juice, celery, red wine vinegar, garlic, and salt until smooth.
4. Grill or char corn: place husked corn cobs directly over a gas burner or on a hot grill pan on medium-high heat for 8-10 minutes, turning every 2 minutes, until kernels are charred in spots. Cut kernels off the cob.
5. Assemble bowls: divide quinoa between 2 bowls. Top with pinto beans, charred corn kernels, pickled onions, and fresh coriander. Drizzle aguachile dressing over everything, add dollops of cashew cream, and scatter toasted sunflower seeds on top.
6. Serve immediately, with extra lime wedges on the side.

6. Bean Curd Peanut Salad (Best Protein)

15 min Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

1 lb (450g) fresh medium-firm tofu, pressed and cut into 1/4-inch cubes

1 teaspoon fresh ginger root, finely minced

3 tablespoons scallions, minced

3 tablespoons fresh cilantro leaves, minced

2 tablespoons sesame oil

1 tablespoon low-sodium soy sauce

1 tablespoon dry sherry

1/2 teaspoon sugar

1 dash hot sauce (such as Tabasco)

3 tablespoons dry-roasted peanuts

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Press tofu wrapped in a clean towel under a heavy pan for 10 minutes to remove excess moisture. Cut into uniform 1/4-inch cubes and place in a medium bowl.
2. Add ginger, scallions, cilantro, sesame oil, soy sauce, sherry, sugar, and hot sauce to the bowl.
3. Using clean hands or two spoons, toss gently to coat the tofu without breaking the cubes. Every piece should be evenly coated with dressing.
4. Let the salad rest for 10 minutes at room temperature so the tofu absorbs the flavors. Scatter peanuts over the top and serve.

7. Best Vegan Potato Salad (Creamy & Easy)

20 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

4 small red-skinned potatoes (about 1 lb total), quartered

1 1/2 cups haricot verts (French green beans), trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces

2 tablespoons whole-grain mustard

2 tablespoons red wine vinegar

2 tablespoons olive oil

1/2 teaspoon agave nectar (or maple syrup)

3 tablespoons chopped fresh dill (or 1 tablespoon dried dill)

1 small leek, white part only, halved lengthwise and thinly sliced

3 stalks celery, diced

1/2 cucumber, seeded and diced

1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place potatoes in a large pot, cover with cold salted water, and bring to a boil over high heat. Cook 10 minutes, then add the haricot verts and cook 4–5 minutes more until potatoes are fork-tender and beans are crisp-tender. Drain and rinse briefly under cold water to stop cooking.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together mustard, red wine vinegar, olive oil, agave, salt, and pepper until emulsified.
3. Add the warm potatoes and green beans to the dressing and toss gently — they absorb the dressing better while still warm.
4. Add leek, celery, cucumber, dill, and chives. Toss everything together until evenly coated.
5. Taste and adjust salt and vinegar as needed. Serve at room temperature or refrigerate at least 30 minutes before serving for best flavor.

8. Big Vegan Buddha Bowl (Meal Prep Ready)

15 min Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

1 large sweet potato (about 400 g), chopped into ¾-inch cubes

1 (15 oz / 425 g) can chickpeas, drained and rinsed

1 tablespoon olive oil

½ teaspoon garlic powder

½ teaspoon chili powder

¼ teaspoon cumin

Pinch of cayenne pepper

½ teaspoon fine sea salt

1 cup uncooked quinoa

1½ cups water

1 large carrot, peeled and julienned

1½ cups purple cabbage, shredded

2 large handfuls mixed greens or spinach

4 tablespoons hummus

1 ripe avocado, sliced

2 tablespoons hulled hemp seeds

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper. Toss sweet potato cubes and chickpeas with olive oil, garlic powder, chili powder, cumin, cayenne, and salt. Spread in a single layer on the baking sheet and roast for 30–35 minutes, flipping halfway, until sweet potato is tender and chickpeas are golden.
2. While vegetables roast, rinse quinoa and combine with 1½ cups water in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil, cover, reduce heat to low, and simmer for 15 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand 5 minutes, then fluff with a fork.
3. Divide greens between 2 bowls. Top each with quinoa, roasted sweet potato and chickpeas, julienned carrot, and shredded purple cabbage.
4. Add sliced avocado and a dollop of hummus (2 tablespoons per bowl) to each bowl. Sprinkle with hemp seeds and serve immediately. Store components separately in the fridge for up to 4 days.

9. Japanese Inari Sushi (Homemade & Easy)

25 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

1 cup short-grain sushi rice
1 cup plus 1 tablespoon water
1 tablespoon rice vinegar
1 tablespoon sugar
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
1 medium-small carrot, finely diced
3 oz shiitake mushrooms (about 9), stemmed and finely diced
1/2 teaspoon dark sesame oil
2 tablespoons sesame seeds, toasted
1/2 kirby cucumber, peeled, seeded, and finely diced
1 oz Japanese yellow pickled daikon (about a 2-inch piece), finely diced
1 teaspoon freshly squeezed lime juice
1/4 teaspoon finely grated lime zest
12 prepared inari-age tofu pockets, patted dry
Ground sansho pepper, to taste
Pickled ginger, wasabi, and soy sauce for serving

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Rinse sushi rice until water runs clear. Combine with 1 cup plus 1 tablespoon water in a small pot. Bring to a boil, reduce to lowest heat, cover, and cook 15 minutes. Remove from heat and steam covered for 10 minutes.
2. Stir rice vinegar, sugar, and salt together until dissolved. Fold gently into hot rice with a rice paddle. Spread on a plate to cool to room temperature.
3. While rice cools, toss diced carrot and shiitake with sesame oil in a small pan over medium heat. Cook 3–4 minutes until just tender. Remove from heat.
4. Fold cooked vegetables, cucumber, pickled daikon, sesame seeds, lime juice, and lime zest into cooled rice.
5. Open each inari-age pocket gently. Fill with about 2 tablespoons of rice mixture, pressing lightly so it holds together. Do not overfill – the rice should mound just slightly above the pocket opening.
6. Arrange on a platter, sprinkle with sansho pepper, and serve with pickled ginger, wasabi, and soy sauce.

10. Best Kale, Carrot & Sunflower Seed Salad

15 min Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

1/2 lemon, juiced (about 1 1/2 tablespoons)
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 teaspoon apple cider vinegar
1/2 teaspoon nutritional yeast
1 pinch dried oregano
1 pinch dried basil
2 medium carrots, shaved into thin strips with a vegetable peeler
1 1/2 cups chopped kale, stems removed
1/3 cup cooked quinoa, cooled
1/3 cup raw sunflower seeds

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a large bowl, whisk together lemon juice, olive oil, apple cider vinegar, nutritional yeast, dried oregano, and dried basil until combined.
2. Add chopped kale to the bowl. Using clean hands, massage the kale with the dressing for 1–2 minutes until leaves soften and darken slightly.
3. Add shaved carrots, cooked quinoa, and sunflower seeds. Toss everything together until evenly coated in dressing.
4. Taste and adjust seasoning with a pinch of salt or extra lemon juice if needed. Serve immediately or refrigerate up to 1 hour before serving.

11. Best Tofu Pepper Tacos (Ready in 30 Min)

10 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

1 pound (450g) soft tofu, well drained
2 tablespoons sesame oil
2 tablespoons tamari (soy sauce)
2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
2 garlic cloves, minced
8 large radicchio leaves (used as taco shells)
1 cup shredded jicama
Salsa for serving (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Drain tofu thoroughly and pat dry with paper towels; crumble into rough chunks into a medium bowl. Add tamari, black pepper, and minced garlic; stir gently to coat and marinate for 5 minutes.
2. Heat sesame oil in a large non-stick skillet over medium-high heat. Add the marinated tofu mixture in a single layer and cook undisturbed for 3–4 minutes until the bottom starts to brown.
3. Stir and continue cooking for another 3 minutes, breaking up any large chunks, until tofu is heated through and coated in the savory glaze. Remove from heat.
4. Arrange radicchio leaves on a plate as taco shells. Spoon tofu filling into each leaf, top with shredded jicama, and add salsa if desired. Serve immediately.

12. Best Tofu & Bok Choy Summer Rolls (Easy)

20 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

10.5 oz (300g) firm silken tofu, halved horizontally and cut into 12 strips
12 baby corn cobs, halved lengthwise
24 baby bok choy leaves (from about 6 small bok choy)
5 oz (140g) bean sprouts
1/3 cup sweet chili sauce, divided
1 tablespoon soy sauce
24 rice paper sheets (7-inch/18cm rounds)
Warm water for softening rice paper

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Bring a small pot of water to a boil. Blanch baby corn halves 2 minutes and bok choy leaves 30 seconds. Drain and pat dry. Combine sweet chili sauce and soy sauce in a small bowl; reserve half for dipping and use the rest to lightly coat the tofu strips.
2. Fill a large shallow bowl with warm (not boiling) water. Working one at a time, submerge a rice paper sheet for 15–20 seconds until just pliable – it should still feel slightly firm as it will soften further. Lay flat on a clean damp tea towel.
3. Place 1 tofu strip, 1 baby corn half (2 pieces), 1 bok choy leaf, and a small pinch of bean sprouts across the lower third of the rice paper sheet.
4. Fold the bottom edge up over the filling, fold in both sides, then roll tightly upward to seal. Place seam-side down on a plate. Repeat with remaining wrappers and filling to make 24 rolls.
5. Serve immediately with the reserved sweet chili dipping sauce. Do not refrigerate assembled rolls as the rice paper will harden.

13. Crunchy Vegan Rainbow Wrap (20-Minute)

10 min Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

8 oz (225g) three-grain tempeh, sliced into 1/4-inch strips

1 tablespoon neutral oil (for sauteing tempeh)

1 teaspoon tamari or soy sauce (for tempeh seasoning)

2 large flour tortillas

4 tablespoons beet hummus

1/2 yellow bell pepper, thinly sliced

1/2 red bell pepper, thinly sliced

2 oz (about 1 cup loosely packed) pea shoots

1 avocado, pitted and sliced

Salt, black pepper, and garlic powder to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add tempeh strips and cook for 3–4 minutes per side until golden brown. Add tamari and toss to coat. Remove from heat and set aside.
2. Warm tortillas in a dry skillet over medium heat for 30 seconds per side, or wrap in a damp paper towel and microwave for 20 seconds, until pliable.
3. Lay each tortilla flat. Spread 2 tablespoons of beet hummus in a thin layer over each tortilla, leaving a 1-inch border around the edges.
4. Arrange fillings in rows across the center of each tortilla: bell pepper strips, pea shoots, sauteed tempeh, and avocado slices. Season lightly with salt, black pepper, and garlic powder.
5. Fold the bottom edge of the tortilla up over the filling, then fold in the sides and roll tightly away from you to seal.
6. Slice each wrap diagonally in half and serve immediately.

14. Easy Vegan Sushi Rolls (Ready in 30 Minutes)

15 min Serves 5

INGREDIENTS

2 cups (370 g) sushi short-grain white rice

2 1/2 cups (600 ml) water

6 tablespoons rice vinegar

2 teaspoons sugar

1 teaspoon salt

5 sheets nori (seaweed)

1 medium carrot, peeled and julienned into thin strips

1 medium cucumber, seeds removed and julienned into thin strips

1 ripe avocado, peeled, pitted, and sliced into thin strips

5 tablespoons roasted sesame seeds

Soy sauce and wasabi, to serve

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Rinse rice under cold water until water runs clear. Combine with 2 1/2 cups water in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low, cover tightly, and cook for 18 minutes. Remove from heat and let steam, covered, for 10 minutes.
2. Whisk together rice vinegar, sugar, and salt until dissolved. Spread cooked rice into a wide bowl and fold in the vinegar mixture with a spatula. Fan to cool to room temperature, about 10 minutes.
3. While rice cools, steam carrot strips for 3–4 minutes until just tender. Cut cucumber and avocado into thin strips about the same length as the nori sheets.
4. Place a nori sheet on a bamboo sushi mat, shiny side down. Spread a thin, even layer of rice over the nori, leaving a 1-inch border at the far edge. Sprinkle with 1 tablespoon sesame seeds.
5. Arrange carrot, cucumber, and avocado strips in a line across the near edge of the rice. Using the mat, roll tightly away from you, pressing firmly as you go. Seal the edge with a little water. Repeat with remaining sheets.
6. Using a sharp wet knife, slice each roll into 8 pieces with a single smooth cut per slice. Serve immediately with soy sauce and wasabi.

15. No-Fuss BBQ Tofu Sandwiches (5-Ingredient)

35 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

1 lb extra-firm tofu, pressed for 30 minutes

1 cup barbecue sauce, divided

1 medium yellow onion, thinly sliced

1 green or red bell pepper, thinly sliced

1 tablespoon olive oil

4 whole wheat hoagie rolls

Salt and black pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Press tofu for at least 30 minutes. Cut pressed tofu into 1/2-inch slabs. Place tofu in a shallow dish, pour 3/4 cup barbecue sauce over it, and marinate for at least 30 minutes (or up to 24 hours in the refrigerator).
2. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Arrange marinated tofu slabs on the prepared baking sheet in a single layer.
3. Bake tofu for 20 minutes, flip each piece, brush with remaining marinade from the dish, and bake for another 20 minutes until edges are caramelized and slightly crispy.
4. While tofu bakes, heat olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add sliced onion and bell pepper with a pinch of salt; cook for 10 to 12 minutes, stirring occasionally, until softened and lightly caramelized.
5. Warm the hoagie rolls. Drizzle the inside of each roll with the remaining 1/4 cup fresh barbecue sauce. Layer with tofu slabs and top with sautéed onion and bell pepper. Serve immediately.

16. Best Mushrooms in Lettuce Wraps (30-Min)

35 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

16 medium dried shiitake mushrooms (about 2 inches in diameter)
2 cups hot water (for soaking mushrooms)
2 tablespoons soy sauce
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
1 tablespoon dry red wine
1 1/2 teaspoons sugar
1 teaspoon fresh ground black pepper
1 teaspoon cornstarch
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
4 celery ribs, finely diced
3 carrots, peeled and finely diced
4 green onions, trimmed and minced
2 oz (55g) firm tofu, finely diced
1 teaspoon dark sesame oil
2–3 tablespoons lightly toasted pine nuts
8–12 Boston or iceberg lettuce leaves
2–3 tablespoons hoisin sauce, for serving

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place the dried mushrooms in a bowl and pour over 2 cups of hot (not boiling) water. Soak for 25–30 minutes until fully rehydrated and tender. Drain, reserving 2 tablespoons of the soaking liquid. Squeeze the mushrooms dry, remove and discard the tough stems, and finely dice the caps.
2. Whisk together the soy sauce, red wine vinegar, dry red wine, reserved mushroom soaking liquid, sugar, black pepper, and cornstarch in a small bowl until the cornstarch is fully dissolved. Set the sauce aside.
3. Heat the vegetable oil in a wok or large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the diced celery and carrots and stir-fry for 3 minutes until just tender with a slight bite. Add the diced mushrooms and tofu and stir-fry for 2 more minutes.
4. Pour the sauce over the vegetables and stir constantly for 1–2 minutes until the sauce thickens and glazes everything evenly. Remove from heat and stir in the sesame oil and green onions.
5. Pat the lettuce leaves dry with paper towels and arrange on a serving platter in a cupped shape. Spoon the mushroom filling into each leaf, scatter pine nuts over the top, and serve with hoisin sauce on the side for drizzling.

17. Tibetan Seitan Burritos (Vegan Comfort Food)

15 min Serves 6

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons vegetable oil
2 cups onions, thinly sliced
2 tablespoons garlic, minced
3 tablespoons fresh ginger, grated
4 cups cabbage, shredded
2 cups carrots, peeled and grated
8 oz (about 1½ cups) seitan, cut into thin ½-inch strips
2 teaspoons Asian chili paste (such as sambal oelek), or to taste
2 tablespoons soy sauce or tamari
1 teaspoon dark sesame oil
1 teaspoon salt, or to taste
6 large flour tortillas (10-inch)
1 tablespoon sesame seeds, for garnish (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat vegetable oil in a large skillet or wok over medium-high heat. Add onions and cook, stirring, for 4 to 5 minutes until softened and beginning to caramelize.
2. Add garlic and ginger; cook for 1 minute until fragrant. Add seitan strips and stir-fry for 3 to 4 minutes until lightly browned.
3. Add cabbage and carrots; stir-fry for 4 to 5 minutes until vegetables are tender but still have some bite. Stir in chili paste, soy sauce, and salt. Cook for 1 more minute. Remove from heat and stir in sesame oil.
4. Warm tortillas one at a time in a dry skillet for 30 seconds per side, or wrap in a damp paper towel and microwave for 30 seconds.
5. Divide filling among tortillas, placing it in the center lower third. Fold in the sides, then roll up tightly from the bottom. Serve immediately, or place seam-side down in a baking dish, spray lightly with oil, and bake at 375°F (190°C) for 10 minutes for a crispier finish.

18. Savory Tofu Sandwich Filling (Easy Spread)

10 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

1 lb (450 g) firm tofu, pressed
1/4 cup (65 g) brown miso
1/3 cup (85 g) roasted tahini
2 tablespoons yellow or white onion, finely minced
3 tablespoons carrot, finely minced (optional)
3 tablespoons unsalted sunflower seeds
Black pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Press tofu for 30 to 40 minutes: wrap the block in a clean kitchen towel, set on a plate, and weigh down with a heavy skillet. The goal is to remove as much moisture as possible so the spread is thick and not watery.
2. Break pressed tofu into chunks and place in a large bowl. Mash thoroughly with a fork or potato masher until crumbly and no large lumps remain.
3. Add brown miso and tahini to the mashed tofu. Mix well until fully combined and creamy. The miso provides all the salt needed – taste before adding any extra.
4. Stir in minced onion and carrot (if using). Fold in sunflower seeds. Season with black pepper.
5. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes before serving to let the flavors meld. Store covered in the refrigerator for up to 5 days. Serve on bread, crackers, or use as a wrap filling.

19. Fresh Strawberry-Apple Juice (Quick, Detox)

10 min Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

2 cups fresh strawberries, hulled
1 medium apple (Red Delicious, Gala, or Fuji), cored and roughly chopped
1/2 cup cold water (if blending; omit if using a juicer)
1 tablespoon chia seeds (optional)
Ice cubes, to serve

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Wash and hull the strawberries. Core and roughly chop the apple; no need to peel if using a juicer.
2. Juicer method: Feed strawberries and apple through a cold-press or centrifugal juicer. Stir and serve over ice. Blender method: Combine strawberries, apple, and cold water in a high-powered blender and blend on high for 60 seconds until smooth, then strain through a fine-mesh sieve or nut milk bag, pressing to extract all liquid.
3. If using chia seeds, stir them into the finished juice and let sit for 5 minutes so they begin to swell slightly before serving.
4. Pour over ice into two glasses and serve immediately for the best flavor and nutrition.

20. Raw Zucchini Basil Hummus (Vegan & Fresh)

10 min Serves 3

INGREDIENTS

1 medium zucchini (about 200g), cut into 1-inch disks
1/2 cup fresh basil leaves, packed
5 tablespoons raw tahini
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
2 garlic cloves, peeled
1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt
1–2 tablespoons water (to adjust consistency)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Wash and dry the zucchini, then cut it into 1-inch disks. No peeling required.
2. Add zucchini, basil, tahini, lemon juice, garlic, and salt to a food processor fitted with the S-blade.
3. Process on high for 60–90 seconds, scraping down the sides once, until smooth and creamy. Add water 1 tablespoon at a time if the mixture is too thick to blend.
4. Taste and adjust lemon juice or salt as needed. Transfer to a serving bowl.
5. Serve immediately with carrot sticks, celery, bell pepper strips, or crackers. Refrigerate leftovers in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

21. Easy Vegan Dumplings (Rice Paper)

30 min Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

8 sheets rice paper (22 cm / 9-inch)
150 g shiitake mushrooms, finely minced
50 g carrots, finely minced
30 g leeks, thinly sliced
30 g shallots, finely minced
10 g fresh ginger, finely minced
1 tablespoon chia seeds
15 ml (1 tablespoon) hot water
15 ml (1 tablespoon) soy sauce (use tamari for gluten-free)
15 ml (1 tablespoon) sesame oil
1/2 teaspoon Chinese five spice powder
1/4 teaspoon black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Stir chia seeds into the hot water in a small bowl and let sit 5 minutes until a gel forms.
2. Heat sesame oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add shallots, ginger, and leeks and cook 2 minutes until softened. Add mushrooms and carrots, cook 4 minutes until moisture evaporates. Stir in soy sauce, five spice, black pepper, and chia gel. Remove from heat and cool completely.
3. Fill a wide shallow bowl with warm water. Dip one rice paper sheet for 10–15 seconds until just pliable but not limp. Lay flat on a damp work surface.
4. Place 1 heaped tablespoon of filling in the lower third of the wrapper. Fold the bottom edge up over the filling, fold in both sides, then roll tightly upward to seal. Repeat with remaining wrappers and filling.
5. Set a steamer basket over 2.5 cm (1 inch) of boiling water. Line the basket with parchment or cabbage leaves. Place dumplings seam-side down without touching. Steam over medium-high heat for 6–8 minutes until wrappers are translucent and tender.
6. Serve immediately with soy sauce, rice vinegar, or chili oil for dipping.

22. 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.

23. Easy Peanut Noodles With Tofu (Quick Dinner)

5 min Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

4 oz soba noodles
4 oz firm tofu, drained, patted dry, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
1/2 cup natural peanut butter
3 tbsp reduced-sodium soy sauce
3 tbsp rice wine vinegar
1/2 tbsp toasted sesame oil
2 tsp chili paste with garlic (optional)
2 cups carrots, shredded or grated
3 scallions, thinly sliced
1 tsp sesame seeds, toasted
1 tsp neutral oil for cooking tofu

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cook soba noodles according to package directions (typically 4–5 minutes in boiling salted water). Drain, rinse under cold water, and set aside.
2. Whisk together peanut butter, soy sauce, rice wine vinegar, sesame oil, and chili paste in a large bowl until smooth. If the sauce is too thick, thin with 1–2 tablespoons warm water.
3. Heat neutral oil in a non-stick skillet over medium-high heat. Add tofu in a single layer and cook undisturbed for 3–4 minutes until golden; flip and cook another 2–3 minutes. Remove from heat.
4. Add drained noodles and shredded carrots to the peanut sauce bowl; toss well to coat everything evenly.
5. Divide into two bowls, top with cooked tofu, sliced scallions, and toasted sesame seeds. Serve immediately or at room temperature.

24. Raw Zucchini Pasta with Creamy Basil Sauce

15 min Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

3 medium zucchini, washed
1/2 ripe avocado, peeled and pitted
3/4 medium onion, peeled and quartered
3 cloves garlic, peeled
2 cups unsweetened almond milk
1/4 cup raw cashews (soaked 30 min if not using high-speed blender)
4 tablespoons Bragg's Liquid Aminos (or tamari)
1/3 cup nutritional yeast
1 cup cauliflower florets
3/4 cup fresh basil leaves, packed
1/4 teaspoon sea salt, plus more to taste
Pinch of cayenne pepper
Black pepper to taste
Optional garnish: diced tomatoes, fresh basil leaves

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Using a mandoline slicer or julienne peeler, slice zucchini lengthwise into thin pasta-like strands. Place noodles in a large bowl and set aside.
2. Combine avocado, onion, garlic, almond milk, cashews, Bragg's Liquid Aminos, nutritional yeast, cauliflower florets, basil, salt, pepper, and cayenne in a high-speed blender. Blend on high for 60–90 seconds until completely smooth and creamy.
3. Taste sauce and adjust salt, cayenne, and aminos as needed.
4. Optional: Heat a large skillet over medium-low heat (about 250°F / 120°C). Add zucchini noodles and toss for 2–3 minutes just until slightly softened but not mushy. Skip this step to keep the dish fully raw.
5. Pour desired amount of sauce over zucchini noodles and toss well to coat evenly.
6. Divide between 2 bowls and garnish with diced tomatoes and fresh basil. Serve immediately.

25. Vegan Sweet Potato Noodle Coconut Curry

15 min Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

For the curry:

1 tablespoon coconut oil

1/3 cup onion, chopped

1 teaspoon fresh ginger, minced

3 cloves garlic, minced

1/2 tablespoon yellow curry powder

1 large carrot, peeled and sliced

1 small red bell pepper, stem and seeds removed, sliced

1 cup broccoli, cut into bite-sized pieces

1 (13.5-ounce) can full-fat coconut milk

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 large sweet potato (250–300g), peeled and spiralized into noodles

For the mango salsa:

3/4 cup mango, diced

2 tablespoons red onion, finely diced

1 red Thai chili, minced

1/2 teaspoon apple cider vinegar

1/4 cup fresh cilantro, chopped, plus extra for garnish

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Make the mango salsa first: combine mango, red onion, Thai chili, apple cider vinegar, and cilantro in a small bowl. Toss to combine and set aside at room temperature while you cook the curry.
2. Heat coconut oil in a large skillet or wok over medium-high heat. Add onion and cook for 3 minutes until softened. Add ginger and garlic and cook for 1 minute until fragrant. Stir in curry powder and cook for 30 seconds to bloom the spice.
3. Add carrot, red bell pepper, and broccoli to the pan. Stir-fry for 3–4 minutes until the vegetables begin to soften but still have some bite.
4. Pour in coconut milk and salt, stir to combine, and bring to a simmer over medium heat. Add the spiralized sweet potato noodles, pressing them gently into the liquid.
5. Cover and cook for 4–6 minutes, stirring once halfway through, until the sweet potato noodles are just tender but not mushy. They should bend without snapping.
6. Divide the curry into bowls and top generously with mango salsa and additional fresh cilantro.

Container Guide: Preventing Sogginess

The right container makes or breaks a cold lunch. Here is what works.

COMPARTMENT CONTAINERS (BEST FOR BOWLS)

Bento-style containers with 3–4 compartments keep ingredients separated until you eat. Grains in one section, protein in another, raw vegetables in a third. This prevents everything from turning into one soggy mass by lunchtime.

DRESSING CONTAINERS (2 OZ / 60ML)

Always pack dressing and sauces separately. Small leak-proof containers or even clean shot glasses with lids work. Pour the dressing on right before eating. This single habit makes cold salads taste fresh instead of wilted.

MASON JARS (BEST FOR LAYERED SALADS)

Layer from bottom to top: dressing, hearty vegetables (carrots, peppers, beans), grains, protein, then leafy greens on top. The greens stay dry because they sit above everything else. Shake and pour into a bowl at lunchtime.

SIZE GUIDE

A standard lunch portion fits in a 32 oz (1 liter) container. If you add a grain base, go up to 40 oz. Wraps and sushi work best in flat, wide containers rather than deep ones. Line the bottom with a paper towel to absorb condensation.

WHAT TO AVOID

Do not use containers that do not seal completely. Even a small leak lets air in and makes greens wilt faster. Avoid stacking heavy items on top of soft items (tomatoes, avocado) during transport. Pack an ice pack if your commute is longer than 2 hours without refrigeration.

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