

The Vegan Sauce Matrix

10 sauces that make any meal prep container exciting

VeganPreps

Why Sauces Matter for Meal Prep

The number one reason people quit meal prep is boredom. You eat the same rice-and-vegetables container three days in a row and by Wednesday you are ordering takeout. Sauces fix that problem. The same base ingredients taste completely different when you swap from tahini to peanut sauce to chipotle lime.

How This Guide Works

- 10 sauces organized by cuisine: Asian, Mediterranean, Mexican, and all-purpose
- Each sauce uses 5 or fewer ingredients and takes under 10 minutes
- A pairing matrix showing which sauce goes with which grain and protein
- 25 dinner recipes from the VeganPreps collection that pair well with these sauces
- 3 spotlight recipes that show sauce usage in practice

BATCH SAUCE PREP

Make 2–3 sauces on Sunday when you do your meal prep. Store in small mason jars. Most keep for 5–7 days in the fridge. Having multiple sauces ready means you can change the flavor of your meals every day without cooking anything new.

For the full recipe collection, visit veganpreps.com.

10 Sauces for Meal Prep

Each sauce uses 5 or fewer ingredients. Make them in under 10 minutes.

Asian

GINGER SESAME DRESSING

Ingredients: soy sauce, sesame oil, fresh ginger, rice vinegar, maple syrup

Prep time: 5 min (whisk or blend)

Pairs with: Rice bowls, noodles, stir-fries, roasted vegetables

Storage: 7 days in fridge

SPICY PEANUT SAUCE

Ingredients: peanut butter, sriracha, soy sauce, lime juice, warm water

Prep time: 5 min (whisk or blend)

Pairs with: Noodles, spring rolls, tofu, grain bowls, wraps

Storage: 5 days in fridge

EASY TERIYAKI GLAZE

Ingredients: soy sauce, brown sugar, garlic, ginger, cornstarch

Prep time: 10 min (whisk or blend)

Pairs with: Baked tofu, stir-fried vegetables, rice bowls

Storage: 7 days in fridge

Mediterranean

CLASSIC TAHINI SAUCE

Ingredients: tahini, lemon juice, garlic, water, salt

Prep time: 5 min (whisk or blend)

Pairs with: Grain bowls, roasted vegetables, wraps, falafel

Storage: 5 days in fridge

LEMON HERB DRESSING

Ingredients: olive oil, lemon juice, fresh parsley, garlic, salt

Prep time: 5 min (whisk or blend)

Pairs with: Salads, quinoa bowls, roasted potatoes, steamed greens

Storage: 5 days in fridge

SMOKY ROMESCO

Ingredients: roasted red peppers, almonds, garlic, smoked paprika, olive oil

Prep time: 10 min (whisk or blend)

Pairs with: Pasta, roasted vegetables, grain bowls, bread

Storage: 5 days in fridge

Mexican

CHIPOTLE LIME CREMA

Ingredients: cashews (soaked), chipotle in adobo, lime juice, garlic, water

Prep time: 10 min (whisk or blend)

Pairs with: Tacos, burritos, grain bowls, roasted sweet potatoes

Storage: 4 days in fridge

AVOCADO CREMA

Ingredients: ripe avocado, lime juice, cilantro, garlic, salt

Prep time: 5 min (whisk or blend)

Pairs with: Tacos, rice bowls, black bean dishes, toast

Storage: 2 days in fridge

All-purpose

MAPLE MUSTARD DRESSING

Ingredients: Dijon mustard, maple syrup, apple cider vinegar, olive oil, salt

Prep time: 5 min (whisk or blend)

Pairs with: Salads, roasted root vegetables, grain bowls, wraps

Storage: 7 days in fridge

GARLIC TAHINI DRIZZLE

Ingredients: tahini, roasted garlic, lemon juice, water, salt

Prep time: 5 min (whisk or blend)

Pairs with: Everything: bowls, roasted vegetables, wraps, baked potatoes

Storage: 5 days in fridge

Sauce Pairing Matrix

Which sauce goes with which grain and protein. Pick one from each column for a complete meal.

SAUCE	BEST GRAINS	BEST PROTEINS
Ginger Sesame	Rice, Noodles	Tofu, Tempeh, Edamame
Spicy Peanut	Rice, Noodles	Tofu, Tempeh, Chickpeas
Teriyaki	Rice, Noodles	Tofu, Tempeh
Tahini	Quinoa, Farro, Rice	Chickpeas, Lentils, Tofu
Lemon Herb	Quinoa, Couscous, Farro	Chickpeas, Lentils, Beans
Romesco	Pasta, Quinoa, Farro	Chickpeas, Beans, Tofu
Chipotle Lime	Rice, Quinoa	Black Beans, Chickpeas, Tempeh
Avocado Crema	Rice, Quinoa	Black Beans, Lentils
Maple Mustard	Quinoa, Farro, Rice	Chickpeas, Lentils, Tempeh
Garlic Tahini	Any grain	Any protein

HOW TO USE THIS MATRIX

Pick a grain you have cooked. Pick a protein you have prepped. Find a sauce in the matrix that pairs with both. Drizzle, toss, eat. That is the entire system.

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Recipes

1. Easy Vegan Portabello Mushroom Bake (30 Minutes)

10 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

4 large Portobello mushrooms, stems removed and gills scraped

1/2 cup (75 g) raw almonds

1/4 cup (60 ml) extra-virgin olive oil

1/4 cup (60 ml) Bragg's Liquid Aminos

1/3 cup (80 ml) water, plus more to adjust consistency

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

3 cloves garlic, roughly chopped

1 teaspoon dried rosemary

1 teaspoon dried oregano

1/2 medium onion, sliced into rings

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C). Lightly oil a 9x13-inch (23x33 cm) baking dish.
2. Combine almonds, olive oil, Liquid Aminos, water, balsamic vinegar, garlic, rosemary, and oregano in a blender. Blend on high for 60 seconds until smooth and creamy. Add 1–2 more tablespoons water if needed to reach a pourable but thick sauce.
3. Place mushrooms gill-side up in the prepared baking dish. Scatter sliced onion around and over the mushrooms.
4. Pour almond sauce generously over each mushroom cap, letting it pool in the gills and surround the onions.
5. Bake uncovered for 20–22 minutes until mushrooms are tender and juicy and the sauce is set and lightly browned at the edges.
6. Transfer to plates and spoon any sauce from the dish over the top. Serve immediately as a main dish or over cooked grains.

2. Crispy Tofu with Olives & Preserved Lemon

15 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

3 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided

1 1/2 pounds extra-firm tofu, drained and cut into 1-inch cubes

1 small onion, finely chopped (about 1/2 cup)

3 cloves garlic, minced (about 1 tablespoon)

1 teaspoon ground ginger

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

2 cups low-sodium vegetable broth

1 preserved lemon, pulp discarded, peel rinsed and finely chopped

2/3 cup green olives, pitted and halved

3 tablespoons fresh parsley, finely chopped

Salt and black pepper to taste

Cooked couscous or rice, to serve

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Pat tofu cubes very dry with paper towels. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a large skillet or Dutch oven over medium-high heat; add tofu in a single layer and cook undisturbed for 4 to 5 minutes until golden brown on the bottom. Flip and cook 3 to 4 more minutes until crispy on all sides. Transfer to a plate.
2. Reduce heat to medium and add remaining 1 tablespoon oil to the same pan. Cook onion for 3 minutes until softened; add garlic, ginger, and cinnamon and stir for 1 minute until fragrant.
3. Pour in vegetable broth and bring to a simmer, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom of the pan.
4. Return tofu to the pan along with the chopped preserved lemon peel and olives. Simmer uncovered for 10 to 12 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the sauce reduces by about one-third and coats the tofu.
5. Taste and adjust salt and pepper as needed (the preserved lemon and olives are very salty, so add salt only if required). Stir in fresh parsley just before serving.
6. Serve over couscous or steamed rice, spooning extra sauce over the top.

3. Crispy Breaded Spiced Tofu (Ready in 30 Minutes)

45 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

1 block (400g / 14 oz) extra-firm tofu, pressed 30 minutes and cut into 1/2-inch thick sticks

1 cup vegetable broth

1/2 cup all-purpose flour

3 tablespoons plant-based milk

1 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon fresh ground black pepper

1 teaspoon dried sage

1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper

3 tablespoons vegetable oil

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Press tofu for 30 minutes, then cut into sticks roughly 1/2 inch thick and 3 inches long. Soak sticks in vegetable broth for 10 minutes to add flavor, then drain and pat dry.
2. Combine flour, salt, pepper, sage, and cayenne in a shallow bowl. Add plant-based milk and stir until a thick batter forms.
3. Dredge each tofu stick in the spiced batter, letting excess drip off, so each piece is evenly coated.
4. Heat vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Working in batches without crowding, fry tofu sticks for 3–4 minutes per side until golden brown and crispy on all sides.
5. Drain on a paper-towel-lined plate and season lightly with extra salt if desired. Serve immediately while crispy.

4. 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.

5. Smoky Barbecue Tofu (Crispy & Easy)

30 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

2 lb previously frozen firm tofu, thawed, pressed well, and cut into 1/2-inch thick strips

3 tablespoons neutral oil (canola or vegetable), divided

3 tablespoons peanut butter

1 tablespoon smoked paprika

1 teaspoon regular paprika

2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar

1 tablespoon soy sauce

1 tablespoon maple syrup or molasses

2 teaspoons salt

1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

1/4 teaspoon garlic powder

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Freeze tofu overnight, then thaw completely in the refrigerator (8+ hours). Press the thawed tofu firmly – it will release a significant amount of liquid. Cut into strips about 1/2-inch thick.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together peanut butter, smoked paprika, regular paprika, apple cider vinegar, soy sauce, maple syrup, salt, cayenne, garlic powder, and 1 tablespoon oil until smooth. Add tofu strips and toss to coat. Marinate 30 minutes at room temperature.
3. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Line a large rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Brush with 1 tablespoon oil.
4. Arrange marinated tofu strips in a single layer on the baking sheet. Drizzle remaining 1 tablespoon oil over the top. Bake 20 minutes, flip each strip, then bake 10–15 more minutes until edges are caramelized and tofu is firm.
5. Alternatively, pan-fry in a cast-iron skillet with 1 tablespoon oil over medium-high heat, 3–4 minutes per side undisturbed, until a dark crust forms. Work in batches to avoid steaming.
6. Serve immediately over rice or in a wrap. Leftovers keep refrigerated 3 days and reheat well in a 375°F oven for 8 minutes.

6. Quick Veggie Red Curry (20-Minute Recipe)

5 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons canola oil (or neutral vegetable oil)

2 tablespoons red curry paste

2 tablespoons fresh basil leaves, torn (or Thai basil)

3 baby bok choy, quartered lengthwise

2 medium carrots, peeled and sliced diagonally 1/4 inch thick

1/2 red bell pepper, sliced into strips

One 13.5-oz (400ml) can full-fat coconut milk

12 oz (340g) firm tofu, pressed and cut into 3/4-inch cubes

1 tablespoon brown sugar

Juice of 1 lime (about 2 tablespoons)

1/3 cup fresh cilantro leaves, roughly chopped

Cooked jasmine rice, for serving

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Press tofu between paper towels for at least 5 minutes to remove excess moisture, then cut into 3/4-inch cubes.
2. Heat canola oil in a large wok or 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Add red curry paste and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute until fragrant.
3. Add tofu cubes and cook undisturbed for 3 minutes until golden on one side, then stir and cook 2 more minutes.
4. Add carrots and red pepper. Stir-fry for 2 minutes, then pour in coconut milk and add bok choy. Stir to combine.
5. Add brown sugar and basil. Reduce heat to medium and simmer for 5–7 minutes until vegetables are tender and sauce has slightly thickened.
6. Remove from heat. Stir in lime juice and half the cilantro. Taste and adjust salt or sugar. Serve over jasmine rice, garnished with remaining cilantro.

7. Crispy Spicy Tofu Crumbles (Weeknight Easy)

10 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

1 pound extra-firm tofu, sliced 3/4-inch thick
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 Fresno chile, thinly sliced
3 tablespoons soy sauce
2 tablespoons mirin
2 tablespoons Sriracha or gochujang
2 tablespoons unseasoned rice vinegar
2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil
1 teaspoon fresh ginger, finely grated
Cooked rice, noodles, or lettuce cups to serve
Sliced green onion and sesame seeds, to garnish

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Press tofu slices firmly between several layers of paper towels for 10 minutes to remove as much moisture as possible. Pat dry.
2. Whisk together soy sauce, mirin, Sriracha (or gochujang), rice vinegar, toasted sesame oil, and grated ginger in a small bowl; set sauce aside.
3. Heat vegetable oil in a cast iron skillet or heavy non-stick pan over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add tofu slices in a single layer and cook undisturbed for 4 to 5 minutes until the bottom is deeply golden and crispy. Flip and cook 3 to 4 more minutes.
4. Using a spatula or wooden spoon, break and crumble the tofu into irregular pieces directly in the pan. Add the sliced Fresno chile and toss for 1 minute.
5. Pour the sauce over the tofu crumbles and toss to coat. Cook for 1 to 2 minutes until the sauce reduces and glazes the crumbles, with slightly caramelized edges.
6. Serve hot over steamed rice, noodles, or in lettuce cups, garnished with sliced green onion and sesame seeds.

8. Easy Tofu Pesto Pasta (Plant-Based Classic)

5 min Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

8 oz (225 g) whole-grain pasta (spaghetti or penne)
14 oz (400 g) firm tofu, pressed and drained
2 cups fresh basil leaves (loosely packed)
2 garlic cloves
3 tablespoons pine nuts (or walnuts)
4 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon salt, plus more for pasta water
Black pepper to taste
2 tablespoons nutritional yeast (optional, for cheesy depth)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil and cook the pasta according to package directions until al dente (about 8-10 minutes). Reserve 1/4 cup pasta water before draining.
2. While the pasta cooks, combine basil, garlic, pine nuts, olive oil, lemon juice, salt, and nutritional yeast in a food processor and blend until smooth, scraping down the sides once.
3. Press the tofu dry and crumble it into rough 1/2-inch pieces with your hands — the texture should resemble chunky ricotta.
4. Drain the pasta and return it to the pot off the heat. Add the pesto and crumbled tofu, tossing well. Add a splash of reserved pasta water if the sauce is too thick.
5. Taste and adjust salt, lemon, or black pepper, then divide into two bowls and serve immediately.

9. 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

10. Best Cauliflower Tofu Casserole (Vegan Comfort)

20 min Serves 6

INGREDIENTS

2 medium heads cauliflower (about 2 lbs total), cut into bite-sized florets

1 block (14 oz) extra-firm tofu, pressed and cubed into 3/4-inch pieces

2 tablespoons olive oil, divided

1 teaspoon salt, divided

1/2 teaspoon black pepper

1 (28 oz) can crushed tomatoes

3 cloves garlic, minced

1 small onion, finely chopped

1 teaspoon dried oregano

1 teaspoon dried basil

1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika

1/4 cup nutritional yeast

1/2 cup breadcrumbs (use gluten-free if needed)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 400 F (200 C). Grease a 9x13-inch baking dish with a little olive oil.
2. Toss the cauliflower florets and tofu cubes with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and the black pepper on a large rimmed baking sheet. Roast for 20 minutes, turning once halfway, until the cauliflower is tender with lightly browned edges.
3. While the vegetables roast, heat the remaining tablespoon of olive oil in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion and cook for 5 minutes until soft. Add the garlic and cook 1 minute more. Stir in the crushed tomatoes, oregano, basil, smoked paprika, and remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt. Simmer for 8 minutes.
4. Remove the sauce from heat and stir in the nutritional yeast. Transfer the roasted cauliflower and tofu to the prepared baking dish and pour the tomato sauce evenly over the top.
5. Scatter the breadcrumbs over the surface. Bake at 400 F for 20 to 25 minutes until the sauce is bubbling around the edges and the breadcrumb topping is golden brown.
6. Let the casserole rest for 5 minutes before serving so the sauce sets slightly.

11. Easy Vegan Blueberry Buckle (One-Bowl Recipe)

20 min Serves 8

INGREDIENTS

Streusel topping:

3/4 cup (90 g) whole wheat pastry flour or spelt flour

1/3 cup (65 g) vanilla-flavored sugar (or plain sugar + 1/2 tsp vanilla)

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1/2 teaspoon baking powder

1/4 teaspoon salt

4 tablespoons (60 ml) canola oil

Cake batter:

1 cup (125 g) all-purpose flour

1 cup (120 g) whole wheat pastry flour or spelt flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

1/2 teaspoon salt

3/4 cup (180 ml) pure maple syrup

1/3 cup (80 ml) canola oil

1/2 cup (120 ml) unsweetened plant milk

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

4 cups (600 g) fresh blueberries

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 180°C (350°F). Grease a 23 cm x 23 cm (9x9-inch) baking pan or a 23 cm (9-inch) round cake pan.
2. Make the streusel: stir together flour, sugar, cinnamon, baking powder, and salt in a small bowl. Drizzle in canola oil and mix with a fork until crumbly clumps form. Set aside.
3. Make the cake batter: whisk together both flours, baking powder, and salt in a large bowl. In a separate bowl, whisk maple syrup, canola oil, plant milk, and vanilla extract until combined.
4. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and fold gently until just combined — a few streaks of flour are fine. Fold in blueberries. Spread batter evenly into the prepared pan.
5. Scatter the streusel topping evenly over the batter. Bake for 60–65 minutes at 180°C (350°F) until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean and the streusel is golden brown.
6. Cool in the pan on a wire rack for at least 20 minutes before slicing into 8 pieces. Store covered at room temperature up to 2 days or refrigerate up to 4 days.

12. 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.

13. Overnight Toasted Oat & Quinoa Bowl (Easy)

10 min Serves 1

INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup thick rolled oats (certified gluten-free if needed)

1/4 cup quinoa, rinsed

1 3/4 cups unsweetened almond milk (or other plant milk)

1/2 ripe banana, sliced

1 Medjool date, pitted and finely chopped

1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Pinch of ground ginger

Pinch of ground cardamom

Pinch of fine salt

1 tablespoon chia seeds

1/2 cup frozen blueberries

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Toast the grains: place oats and quinoa in a dry skillet over medium heat. Toast for 4–5 minutes, stirring frequently, until golden and fragrant. The quinoa will begin to pop. Transfer to a bowl and let cool for 5 minutes.
2. Assemble the jar: add toasted oats and quinoa to a jar or bowl. Add almond milk, banana slices, chopped date, cinnamon, ginger, cardamom, salt, and chia seeds. Stir well to combine.
3. Refrigerate overnight (at least 8 hours) until the grains have softened and absorbed the liquid. The chia seeds will expand and thicken the mixture.
4. In the morning, stir the bowl. If it is too thick, loosen with a splash of almond milk.
5. Top with frozen blueberries (they will thaw quickly) and serve cold, or warm in a saucepan over medium–low heat for 3–4 minutes, stirring gently, until heated through.

14. Easy Sesame Asparagus Tofu Salad (20 Minutes)

8 min Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

12 oz firm tofu, drained, patted dry, cut into 3/4-inch cubes

2 bunches asparagus, trimmed and cut into 2-inch pieces

1/3 cup soy sauce

1/4 cup rice bran oil, divided

2 tsp mirin

1 tsp Dijon mustard

1 tsp sesame oil

2 cloves garlic, crushed

1 long red chili, de-seeded and finely sliced

2 tbsp sesame seeds, toasted

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Whisk together soy sauce, 2 tablespoons rice bran oil, mirin, Dijon mustard, sesame oil, garlic, and chili in a bowl to make the dressing; set aside.
2. Heat remaining 2 tablespoons rice bran oil in a large skillet or wok over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add tofu in a single layer and cook undisturbed for 3-4 minutes per side until golden and crisp; remove to a plate.
3. Add asparagus to the same pan and stir-fry over medium-high heat for 3-4 minutes until bright green and just tender-crisp.
4. Return tofu to the pan, pour dressing over everything, and toss to coat. Cook 1 minute until heated through.
5. Transfer to a serving plate, scatter toasted sesame seeds and chili slices over the top, and serve immediately.

15. Tofu Nicoise Salad (Plant-Based Protein)

15 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

¼ cup low-fat Italian dressing

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

1 clove garlic, finely minced

⅓ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

6 cups baby salad greens

4 medium tomatoes, cut into wedges

2 packages (8 oz each) Italian-style baked tofu, sliced ¼ inch thick

¼ pound (4 oz) baby green beans, trimmed

4 medium white mushrooms, thinly sliced

16 niçoise or kalamata olives

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Bring a small saucepan of lightly salted water to a boil. Add green beans and cook for 3 to 4 minutes until just tender but still bright green. Drain and immediately transfer to a bowl of ice water for 2 minutes to stop cooking. Drain and pat dry.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together the Italian dressing, lemon juice, minced garlic, and black pepper until combined.
3. Divide salad greens between 4 plates or arrange on a large platter. Arrange tofu slices, tomato wedges, chilled green beans, sliced mushrooms, and olives over the greens.
4. Drizzle the dressing evenly over each salad and serve immediately.

16. Roasted Garlic Kale Quinoa Salad (Best)

20 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

12 cloves garlic, unpeeled
2 cups (200 g) fresh cranberries
1 tablespoon olive oil (for roasting)
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil (for dressing)
1/2 tablespoon chia seeds
1/4 cup (60 ml) fresh lemon juice
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
2 teaspoons maple syrup
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
4 cups (120 g) kale, stems removed and leaves chopped
2 cups (370 g) quinoa, cooked and cooled
1 small fennel bulb, thinly shaved
1 cup (100 g) walnuts, roughly chopped
1/2 cup (75 g) red bell pepper, diced
1/2 cup (80 g) red onion, thinly sliced

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 375 F (190 C). Toss garlic cloves (unpeeled) and cranberries with 1 tablespoon olive oil on a rimmed baking sheet. Roast for 20 to 25 minutes until garlic is soft and golden and cranberries have burst. Let cool for 10 minutes, then squeeze garlic cloves out of their skins.
2. Make dressing: whisk together roasted garlic (mashed into a paste), lemon juice, Dijon mustard, maple syrup, chia seeds, and 3 tablespoons olive oil. Season with salt and pepper. Let stand 5 minutes so chia seeds hydrate slightly and thicken the dressing.
3. Place chopped kale in a large bowl. Drizzle 2 tablespoons of dressing over kale and massage firmly with your hands for 1 to 2 minutes until leaves soften and turn dark green.
4. Add cooled quinoa, fennel, walnuts, red bell pepper, red onion, and roasted cranberries to the kale. Pour remaining dressing over and toss well to coat everything evenly.
5. Taste and adjust salt, pepper, and lemon juice. Serve immediately or refrigerate for up to 4 hours – the kale holds well dressed.

17. Grilled Vegan Tofu & Zucchini Sandwich

15 min Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

4 slices sourdough or wholegrain bread
200 g (7 oz) firm tofu, pressed and drained
1 medium zucchini (about 200 g), thinly sliced lengthways into 4–5 strips
1 teaspoon canola oil
1 teaspoon sesame oil
1/2 teaspoon salt, divided
1/4 teaspoon chili powder
1 tablespoon Japanese-style sesame dressing
1/2 cup baby spinach or mixed greens

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Press the tofu for at least 10 minutes, then slice into 4 rectangular pieces about 1 cm thick. Pat dry with paper towels. Season with 1/4 teaspoon salt and the chili powder on both sides.
2. Heat canola oil in a non-stick or cast iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add tofu and cook for 4–5 minutes per side without moving, until each side is deep golden brown and crisp. Transfer to a plate.
3. In the same pan, add sesame oil over medium heat. Lay zucchini strips in a single layer, season with remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt, and cook 2–3 minutes per side until tender with grill marks. Remove from heat.
4. Toast the bread slices until golden. Spread sesame dressing evenly on one side of each slice.
5. Layer the sandwich: place spinach on the dressed side of two slices, then top with the grilled tofu and zucchini strips. Close with the remaining bread slices, press gently, and cut in half. Serve immediately.

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18. 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.

19. Easy Teriyaki Tofu Wraps (Ready in 20 Min)

5 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

8 oz (225 g) extra-firm tofu, pressed and cut into 1/2-inch cubes
3 tablespoons canola oil (divided)
1 yellow onion, thinly sliced
8 oz (225 g) coleslaw mix (shredded cabbage and carrot)
4 garlic cloves, minced (or 2 teaspoons garlic powder)
1–2 teaspoons Chinese five spice powder
1/2 teaspoon sriracha sauce
4 tablespoons teriyaki sauce with pineapple juice
4 green onions, thinly sliced
8 medium flour tortillas

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Press the tofu dry and cut into 1/2-inch cubes. Heat 2 tablespoons canola oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat and add the tofu in a single layer. Cook undisturbed for 3–4 minutes until golden on the bottom, then flip and cook another 2–3 minutes. Remove and set aside.
2. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon oil to the pan, reduce heat to medium, and add the sliced yellow onion. Cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until softened and beginning to caramelize.
3. Add garlic and five spice powder and stir for 30 seconds until fragrant. Add the coleslaw mix and sriracha, and stir-fry for 2–3 minutes until the cabbage is just wilted.
4. Return the tofu to the pan, pour in the teriyaki sauce, and toss everything together over medium-high heat for 1–2 minutes until the sauce coats all the ingredients and reduces slightly.
5. Warm the tortillas in a dry pan for 30 seconds per side or wrap in a damp paper towel and microwave for 45 seconds. Fill each tortilla with the tofu-vegetable mixture, top with sliced green onions, and serve immediately.

20. Easy Tempeh Fajitas (Ready in 20 Minutes)

5 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

1 (8 oz / 225 g) package tempeh, broken into bite-sized pieces

2 tablespoons corn oil (or vegetable oil)

2 tablespoons soy sauce

1 tablespoon fresh lime juice

1 1/2 cups green bell pepper, chopped (about 1 large pepper)

1 (4.5 oz) can sliced mushrooms, drained

1/2 cup frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry

1 tablespoon chopped green chile peppers (canned or fresh)

1 tablespoon fresh cilantro, chopped

1 tablespoon dried minced onion

6 medium flour tortillas, warmed

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the tempeh pieces and cook for 4–5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until browned on most sides.
2. Add soy sauce and lime juice directly to the pan and stir for 1 minute as the liquid sizzles and coats the tempeh.
3. Add the green bell pepper, mushrooms, spinach, green chile, and dried minced onion. Stir-fry over medium-high heat for 5–6 minutes until the bell pepper is tender and any excess liquid has reduced.
4. Taste and adjust seasoning with additional soy sauce or lime juice if needed. Remove from heat and stir in the fresh cilantro.
5. Warm the tortillas in a dry pan for 30 seconds per side. Divide the tempeh filling between the tortillas and fold to serve. Top with avocado, salsa, or vegan sour cream if desired.

21. Peanut Sauce Vegetable Stir Fry With Tofu

15 min Serves 3

INGREDIENTS

400g (14 oz) extra firm tofu, pressed and cut into 1-inch cubes

3 cups broccoli florets

200g (7 oz) mushrooms, sliced

1 red bell pepper, sliced

1 tablespoon neutral oil (such as sunflower or avocado)

2 scallions, sliced, to garnish

1/2 cup natural peanut butter

1/2 cup hot water

2 tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce

1 tablespoon rice vinegar

1 clove garlic, minced

1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper (adjust to taste)

Cooked rice or noodles, to serve

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Make the peanut sauce: whisk together peanut butter, hot water, soy sauce, rice vinegar, minced garlic, and cayenne pepper in a bowl until smooth. Set aside.
2. Press tofu for at least 15 minutes. Cut into 1-inch cubes and pat dry. Heat oil in a large wok or 12-inch skillet over high heat. Add tofu in a single layer and cook for 4–5 minutes, turning occasionally, until golden and crisp on most sides. Transfer to a plate.
3. In the same wok over high heat, add broccoli and bell pepper. Stir-fry for 4–5 minutes until tender-crisp.
4. Add mushrooms and stir-fry for 2 minutes until just softened.
5. Return tofu to the wok. Pour peanut sauce over everything and toss to coat. Cook for 1–2 minutes over medium heat until sauce is heated through and coats all ingredients.
6. Serve immediately over rice or noodles, garnished with sliced scallions.

22. Quick Vegan Teriyaki Tofu Stir Fry (Easy)

25 min Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

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

2 tablespoons cornstarch

2 tablespoons neutral oil, divided

1 white or sweet onion, sliced into half-moons

1 (6–8 ounce) can sliced mushrooms, drained (or 8 oz fresh, sliced)

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger

1 cup broccoli florets

1 cup snap peas or green beans

1/2 cup vegan teriyaki sauce

1 tablespoon soy sauce

1/4 cup hulled sesame seeds

3 green onions, sliced (for garnish)

2 cups cooked rice (for serving)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Press tofu for 20 minutes, then cut into 1-inch cubes. Toss cubes in cornstarch until evenly coated.
2. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large skillet or wok over medium-high heat. Add tofu in a single layer and cook undisturbed 3–4 minutes per side until golden and crispy on all sides. Transfer to a plate.
3. Add remaining 1 tablespoon oil to the skillet over high heat. Add onion and cook 3 minutes until softened. Add garlic, ginger, and mushrooms; stir-fry 2 minutes.
4. Add broccoli and snap peas; stir-fry 3 minutes until vegetables are tender-crisp.
5. Return tofu to the skillet. Pour in teriyaki sauce and soy sauce; toss everything to coat and cook 1–2 minutes until sauce thickens slightly.
6. Divide rice among bowls. Top with stir-fry, sprinkle with sesame seeds and green onions, and serve immediately.

23. Szechuan Tofu Stir-Fry (Spicy & Easy)

15 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons canola oil, divided
3 garlic cloves, minced
1 inch piece ginger root, grated
2 tablespoons brown sugar or coconut sugar
1/2 cup water
2 tablespoons chili garlic sauce
1 tablespoon cider vinegar
3 tablespoons soy sauce
1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
1 pound extra firm tofu, pressed, drained, and cut into 3/4-inch cubes
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1 bunch fresh asparagus, tough ends removed, sliced into 1-inch lengths
1/2 red bell pepper, thinly sliced
5 ounces baby spinach
3/4 cup unsalted cashews, toasted
Sea salt to taste
3 scallions, chopped, for garnish
4 cups cooked rice, to serve

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Whisk together garlic, ginger, brown sugar, water, chili garlic sauce, cider vinegar, soy sauce, and red pepper flakes in a small bowl to make the sauce. Set aside. Toss tofu cubes with cornstarch until evenly coated.
2. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large wok or 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Add tofu in a single layer and cook undisturbed for 4 minutes until golden and crispy on the bottom. Flip and cook 3 minutes more. Remove tofu and set aside.
3. Add remaining 1 tablespoon oil to the wok. Add asparagus and red bell pepper and stir-fry over high heat for 3–4 minutes until crisp-tender.
4. Add baby spinach and toss until just wilted, about 1 minute. Pour in the sauce and stir everything together. Return tofu to the pan and toss to coat.
5. Cook 1–2 minutes until the sauce thickens and glazes the tofu. Remove from heat, fold in cashews, and season with sea salt.
6. Serve over steamed rice, topped with scallions.

24. 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.

25. Homemade Tofu Jerky (Vegan Snack, Ready in 1 Hour)

15 min Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

1 lb extra-firm tofu, pressed for 20 minutes
3 tablespoons soy sauce
1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
1 teaspoon liquid smoke
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon onion powder
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
1 teaspoon maple syrup
1/4 teaspoon salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Press tofu for 20 minutes. Slice into strips about 1/4-inch thick and 3 inches long.
2. Whisk together soy sauce, apple cider vinegar, liquid smoke, garlic powder, onion powder, smoked paprika, black pepper, maple syrup, and salt in a shallow dish.
3. Add tofu strips in a single layer. Marinate for at least 30 minutes, flipping once (or up to 4 hours for deeper flavor).
4. Preheat oven to 300°F (150°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Arrange tofu strips in a single layer.
5. Bake for 45 minutes, flip each strip, then bake another 30–40 minutes until dark, firm, and chewy. The strips should feel dry to the touch, not soft.
6. Cool on the baking sheet for 10 minutes – they firm up further as they cool. Store in an airtight container at room temperature up to 5 days.

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