

## Low Fuss Vegetarian Cooking

"I can't become a vegetarian because I don't have the time to work up complicated vegetarian meals."

That is a common misconception about what it means to live the lifestyle of a vegetarian. Oh yes, it is possible to become a fanatic about exotic vegetarian meals or to become so extreme about limiting not only meat but anything but vegetables from your diet that meal planning and preparation has to become the only other thing in your life other than work, school or taking care of your family. But as is true in any area of life, there are the extremes and the fanatics and then there is how the rest of us live.

Most vegetarians are not full time devotees to their desire to live meat free. So these hard working friends and coworkers of yours who have "gone vegetarian" have found ways to prepare good wholesome meals with little fuss so they can work a healthy diet into an already busy lifestyle. We can learn a lot from how they do it so we don't let the alleged "fuss" of being vegetarian stop us from enjoying all the benefits this lifestyle can bring.

In truth, vegetarian eating should by its very nature be easier than preparing meals with meats because few of us eat raw meat but most of us can eat raw vegetables and enjoy them. So with some well thought out grocery shopping, you can keep the basics on hand so the vegetarians in your household can come home and put together a fast vegetarian meal with very little difficulty.

Many vegetarian families take a weekend afternoon and go to the store together to stock up on things they know they will turn to for meals throughout the week. By making sure you keep wholesome breads, fresh fruit and vegetables and cereals around all the time, your family can grab a quick breakfast of toast and cereal which will serve them well all day long. That night, anyone in the family can combine fresh vegetables and lettuce or spinach into a salad quickly and dine like a gourmet in a matter of moments. Remember to keep the little extras that make a salad special on hand such as nuts, shredded carrots, cheese if your diet permits it and a good variety of low fat salad dressings so you always have a salad to fall back on for a quick and easy evening meal.

The crock pot is the savior of many a working family and the same is true for vegetarians. Few vegetables do not go together well in a soup or a stew. So with a little planning, you can put together a delicious blend of vegetables, beans and spices in the crock pot in the morning and have a steamy and delicious meal waiting for you when you walk in the door after work. And with a couple cups of water, you create a rich and nutritious stock that goes well with the

meal or can be used afterwards as the base for rice or another dish and that carries all the nutrients of the original crock pot soup with it with each new meal.

The microwave oven can also do a lot to help your vegetarian cooking be easy to do. With a little low fat cooking spray, you can sauté onions, peppers, potatoes, garlic and many other ingredients that can come out of the crock pot ready to be used in a simple dinner recipe. A fall back for easy dinner cooking is to prepare a good sized bowl of freshly warmed or sautéed vegetables and combine that with two cups of brown rice cooked in vegetable broth (from a previous soup) and a can of low fat soup. The result is a fast stew that will be gobbled up by your family.

There is no reason to avoid the vegetarian lifestyle because you are a busy family. If anything by embracing vegetarianism, you are embracing a more simple way of life that works very well with an active work and family life. And you will be eating healthier as well which benefits everyone along the way.

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