

chapter 1

Vegan Nutrition

If you are like most people, you rely on ten well-loved recipes that you make over and over again. In *Cooking Vegan*, you will discover many more that will become lifetime favorites. Only the most healthful, delicious, and easy-to-make recipes have made the cut in this all-star lineup. Our mission is to help people with full and busy lives assemble appetizing and nourishing meals with readily available plant-based ingredients.

This book is designed to assist vegans—and other people who are interested in eating fewer animal-based foods—in pursuing optimal health. A well-balanced vegan diet can provide all the nutrients you need. In addition, this style of eating is the ultimate expression of compassion for the animals and concern for the environment.

A special feature of this book is that each recipe has a complete nutritional analysis that shows exactly how much of a particular nutrient is present. These analyses make it easy to see the number of calories and the amount of protein, fat, carbohydrates, minerals, vitamins, and even essential fatty acids per cup or serving.

The information in this chapter is provided to give you a basic understanding of vegan nutrition. Protein, fat, and carbohydrates are the macronutrients that provide us with calories. In contrast, micronutrients, such as minerals and vitamins, do not provide calories. Both the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have established guidelines that specify the percentage of calories that should come from protein, fat, and carbohydrates. The recommendations from the two groups overlap but differ slightly. Table 1.1 blends and summarizes these recommendations.

products, tempeh is made using the whole soybean, which gives it more fiber and a slightly higher protein content. In Indonesia, tempeh is principally made using 100 percent soybeans; however, in the West, tempeh often includes other legumes, grains, and vegetables. Look for it in the refrigerated or freezer sections of large supermarkets and natural food stores.

GOOD FATS FROM WHOLE FOODS

Fat is an essential nutrient. We all need fat to live, yet it has a bad reputation. However, only some of the fats that we eat undermine human health. The highest-quality fat is that which is naturally present in avocados, olives, nuts, seeds, soybeans, and other plant-based foods. There is simply no contest between the fats found in these fresh foods and the chemically altered fats found in margarine, shortening, and other hydrogenated vegetable oils or the highly saturated fats found in animal-based foods. Furthermore, whole foods are far more nutritious than the oils that are extracted from them because they retain valuable essential fatty acids, fiber, minerals, phytochemicals, protein, sterols, and vitamins. In our recipes, nuts, seeds, and other whole foods add healthful fats while providing rich, creamy textures.

AVOCADO

Most people associate avocados with fat, and for good reason. One cup of cubed avocado contains 240 calories and 21 grams of fat. However, the fats in avocados are primarily monounsaturated fatty acids, which have been shown to reduce total cholesterol while increasing HDL, or “good” cholesterol, when eaten in moderation. Plus, avocado has other bragging rights: 1 cup (250 ml) of cubed avocado impressively has 7 to 10 grams of fiber and 2 to 3 milligrams of vitamin E.

COCONUT

Coconut has been a staple in the cuisines of Asian countries and the Pacific Islands for centuries. The oil of coconuts is high in saturated fats; however, these

Correcting Omega Fatty Acid Imbalance

Standard American diets typically contain as much as ten times the amount of omega-6 fatty acids as omega-3 fatty acids. Because many foods and oils are rich in omega-6 fatty acids but not omega-3 fatty acids, this ratio can climb as high as ten, twenty, or even forty parts omega-6 fatty acids to one part omega-3 fatty acids. Such imbalances are found in both vegan and nonvegan diets and contribute to common degenerative diseases. Researchers believe this excessive imbalance plays a significant role in the rising rate of inflammatory disorders in North America. Omega-3 fatty acids have been shown to reduce inflammation in the body.

Introduction to the Recipes

Welcome to a collection of recipes that were developed for their outstanding flavor combinations and ease of preparation. Each was guided by sound nutritional information. The ingredients are simple to obtain in the marketplace, with just a few that are widely available in natural food or ethnic stores, or over the Internet. A comprehensive shopping list that includes all the food items used in recipes can be found on pages 30 to 32.

If you do not already have a good chef's knife, we recommend that this be your first investment. Visit a store that specializes in knives to get free instruction on what to look for and how to use a good quality knife. Also essential is a cutting board that is large enough to easily hold the food that you are working on. For other recipes, you may need a blender, a food processor, or a juicer. Continue to invest in your health by adding to your equipment one purchase at a time so that you are happy to spend time creating delicious, wholesome food in your kitchen. For a more detailed list of equipment see page 42.

HOW TO APPROACH THE RECIPES

- ✓ Read each recipe through before you start. This will help ensure that you understand the task at hand and will have a successful outcome.
- ✓ If possible, make the recipe exactly as it is written the first time you try it. After that, use your creativity to explore new taste possibilities.
- ✓ Look at the variations and ingredient options for the recipe, as you may find a version you prefer.
- ✓ At the beginning of each recipe you will find the yield, generally in cups (250 ml) or occasionally in servings. We recognize that appetites vary immensely, and what could be considered several servings in one group might be a single serving for one hungry, high-energy person.
- ✓ To increase your understanding of cooking and learn how to balance flavor, read chapter 3, Vegan Cooking.

HOW TO USE THE NUTRITIONAL ANALYSES

A special feature of these recipes is the nutritional analysis that accompanies each one. Following is some information on how to interpret the nutritional analyses.

- The nutritional analysis provided for each recipe does not include optional ingredients.
- Where two or more choices are given for an ingredient, the analysis is based on the first choice.
- Where there is a range in the amount of an ingredient, the smaller amount is used for the analysis.
- Metric measures were used for the analyses.
- Certain nutrients—such as choline, chromium, iodine, manganese, molybdenum, and selenium—are not included due to insufficient data. The databases used are those of the US Department of Agriculture online at nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp/search/ and the professional nutritional analysis program ESHA/The Food Processor, esha.com.
- Although we list a specific amount of each nutrient per serving of a recipe, the actual amount can vary due to differences in plant varieties, growing conditions, and farming practices.
- Most of the values for sugar in the nutritional analyses reflect naturally occurring sugars in fruits and vegetables. Added sugars, such as those from maple syrup, also are included in this figure.
- For recipes calling for nutritional yeast, the analysis was done using Red Star Vegetarian Support Formula Nutritional Yeast, a source of vitamin B₁₂. For recipes calling for nondairy beverages, such as soymilk, fortified products were used.

PERCENTAGE OF CALORIES FROM PROTEIN, FAT, AND CARBOHYDRATE

The amounts of protein, carbohydrate, and fat are listed in grams in the nutritional analyses. Foods and beverages also can be described in terms of the percentage of calories that come from protein, fat, and carbohydrate. The bottom line of the analysis shows the percentage of calories that come from protein, fat, and carbohydrate. Note that 15 percent *calories from fat* is very different from 15 percent of the food's *weight* coming from fat.

By weight, 2 percent milk contains 2 grams of fat per 100 grams of milk (and 89 percent water). When our bodies convert fat, protein, and carbohydrate to calories, we derive 9 calories from each gram of fat and 4 calories from each gram of protein or carbohydrate. Therefore, in 2 percent milk, 35 percent of the calories are derived from fat, 27 percent from protein, and 38 percent from carbohydrate (the sugar lactose). So, from another perspective, it might be called 35 percent milk.