



Plant-Based Ingredient Substitutions

By **Center for Nutrition Studies**

May 24, 2019



Whether you are new to whole food, plant-based food preparation, or an experienced chef, you will come across many instances when recipe substitutions are necessary. Thankfully, there are plenty of substitutions plant-based eaters can use in place of animal products and added salt, sugar and oil, that will make cooking and baking a breeze.

Meat, fish, or poultry: There are many meat substitutes available today that are vegan including, hotdogs, hamburgers, chicken nuggets, deli meat, and more. We recommend that you stay away from heavily processed “fake meat” products that contain isolated proteins (i.e. soy protein isolate) and added oils.

Coarsely ground or mashed beans like chickpeas, white beans and black beans makes a great sandwich and burrito fillings. Adding cooked bulgur to your soups, stews, marinades, tacos, and casseroles gives them a ground meat texture. It absorbs flavors well, so try seasoning it with any flavor. Portobello mushrooms and eggplant can be used in place of grilled meats, burgers or steaks.

Eggs: Chickpea flour makes amazing omelets, and aquafaba is useful for making recipes that originally call for egg whites, like mousse and meringue. Try skillet-cooked crumbled tofu with spices and vegetables to create a “scrambled-like” egg substitute. In dishes where eggs are usually used for binding you can use rolled oats, cooked oatmeal, bread crumbs, instant potato flakes, nut butters, or tomato paste.

Milk: There are many varieties and flavors of non-dairy milks that are made from soy, rice, almond, hemp, etc. Be sure to read the label and choose products with no added sugar or oils.

Cheese: There are many cheese substitutes made from soy, rice, almond, hemp, and other ingredients. We recommend that you stay away from heavily processed “fake cheese” products that contain isolated proteins (i.e. soy protein isolate) and added oils. Tofu, nut butters, and nutritional yeast can be used as well in some recipes to replace cheese or give a cheesy flavor. Soaked and blended raw cashews are often used as the creamy/cheesy part of plant-based dishes. Miso, tamari, and tahini are also used to replace cheese flavored ingredients in recipes.

Sugar, honey, or other sweeteners: When it comes to a whole food plant-based lifestyle, refined sugars, like high fructose corn syrup and white sugar, are off the table. These are heavily processed and devoid of nutrients and fiber. Go for whole food sources of sugar like date sugar, paste* or syrup, dried fruits, fruit purees like unsweetened applesauce, and mashed bananas.

*To make date paste just blend 1 cup pitted dates with 1 cup of water until smooth.

Butter, Shortening, Fats and Oils: You can use vegetable stocks, water or other liquids for sautéing or frying. When preparing salad dressings use a base of vegetable stock, water or vinegar in place of the oil.

When fats and oils are used in baking one of the best substitutes is date paste or unsweetened applesauce. Pureed pumpkin, bananas, and other fruits will work in some recipes but they can change the flavor of the finished product.

Salt: Use one of a variety of granulated spices such as onion, parsley, garlic, etc. instead of salt to give a “spice” to your meal. Other substitutes include fresh onion, garlic, lemon juice, salsa, and hot sauces. There are several “salt substitutes” on the market which do not contain salt. Try low-sodium soy or tamari sauce in some recipes.

Meat Substitutes

Legumes

beans, peas, and lentils are a high-fiber protein source that can easily be used as a main course or in place of meat in recipes

Veggie Burgers

can be made from a variety of plant foods including beans, vegetables & grains

Tempeh

made from fermented soybeans, has a meaty texture that can be used in place of ground meat and works well in curries, chilis, and stir-fries

Tofu

made from soybeans, is mild in taste and easily absorbs the flavor of any recipe

Portobello Mushrooms

have a savory flavor and can be used in place of grilled meats, burgers or steaks

Dairy Substitutes

Milk

equal portion of unsweetened almond, hemp, soy, hazelnut, or rice milk

Cream

soymilk, coconut milk, mashed potatoes, pureed garbanzo beans, aquafaba (liquid from canned beans), soaked & blended cashews, pureed tofu

Cheese

nutritional yeast, soaked & blended cashews or almonds, pureed tofu, miso. Store bought brands with no added oils or protein isolates

Buttermilk

1 tsp of apple cider vinegar or lemon juice to 1 cup of non-dairy milk

Yogurt

unsweetened, non-dairy varieties

Ice Cream

place frozen fruit like bananas and strawberries with a few dates and a bit of liquid in the blender for “nice cream”

Egg Substitutes

Baking—1 egg is equal to:

- ¼ cup silken tofu blended
- 1 tbsp ground flaxseed meal + 3 tbsp water
- ½ mashed banana
- ¼ cup applesauce or pureed fruit
- ¼ cup cooked oats
- ½ cup unsweetened non-dairy yogurt

Cooking—1 egg is equal to:

- ¼ cup mashed potato or sweet potato
- ¼ cup cooked oats
- 2-3 tbsp. tomato paste
- ½ cup unsweetened non-dairy yogurt

Scrambled eggs

skillet-cooked crumbled tofu with spices and vegetables

Egg Whites

use Aquafaba (the liquid from canned chickpeas)

Oil Substitutes

Sautéing

water, vegetable broth, vinegar

Baking

equal parts unsweetened applesauce, pureed pumpkin, bananas and other fruit, date paste

Salad Dressings

vinegars, low-sodium soy sauce, lemon juice can all be used as bases for dressings

Pick out of a few of your **favorite recipes** and try just one substitution at a time until you find the right combination for you and your family. Remember...be creative and experiment. Keep your taste buds and thoughts open as you create and enjoy new, delicious and healthy plant-based meals!

Copyright 2021 Center for Nutrition Studies. All rights reserved.