

10 Ways to Get More Plant-Based Protein in Your Diet

As one of three macronutrients, protein literally forms the building blocks of our bodies. Some of its roles include creating and repairing tissues, boosting energy, regulating hormones, and safeguarding a strong immune system by warding off illness and disease.

Protein is so talked-up in the media and in marketing, many people worry that they aren't eating enough of it. In actuality, most of us get enough or sometimes even too much protein in our diets! There is at least a little protein in many things we eat and we really don't need a ton for our bodies to function properly. About 15% of daily calories from protein (50 grams for the average adult) will meet basic needs, but I believe eating as much as a third of your daily calories from protein is both safe and beneficial.

Protein is used in many bodily functions including cell maintenance and repair, blood clotting and the production of antibodies. It is the primary component of many body tissues such as skin, hair, and muscle. We need the most protein when we are growing (childhood and pregnancy) and repairing (injury or recovery from intense strength training). Protein is digested more slowly than carbohydrates and helps increase feelings of satisfaction – aka my favorite word, satiety.

Research from the Nurse's Health Study shows the average American adult, aged 19 – 30, eats about 91 grams/day. So we're eating enough of it; the struggle for most people is eating the best kinds of protein, and eating a little protein at every meal and snack rather than loading up at dinner.

But protein can be easily found also in plant-based sources which are associated with long-term health and longevity, for

some of you, it can be tough to get plant-based protein in your diet. Here are 10 easy and stress-free ways to get more plant-based protein in your diet:

1. **Mix hemp hearts**, which are a complete plant-based protein, into smoothies or toss them on top of salads, soups or wraps.
2. **Love lentils!** They come in several colors and can be used in salads, soups, or on top of roasted veggies.
3. **Replace your rice with quinoa**, another complete plant-based protein.
4. **Enjoy edamame** in salads, soups, and snacks. Like hemp and quinoa, it's a complete protein and it provides 18-22 grams of protein per cup.
5. **Enjoy chia seeds** in puddings or oatmeal. These protein-rich seeds take any flavors you throw at them.
6. **Toss your home-popped organic popcorn with nutritional yeast**, a cheesy substitute for dairy that offers 8-10 grams of protein per 2 tablespoons.
7. **Sneak spirulina into your smoothies.** It is an excellent source of protein plus an impressive range of vitamins and minerals. When added to a smoothie, it won't change the taste and it will brighten your greens.
8. **Replace store-bought chips or crackers with roasted chickpeas.** They are amazing over salads, soups, and stews.
9. **Use unsweetened organic nut butter** as a spread on gluten-free breads, wraps, crudité veggies, or fresh dates.
10. **Use unsweetened organic soy milk** for your smoothies or morning high-fiber cereal bowl.

1 CUP EDAMAME



=17g

1/2 CUP TOFU



=22g

1 CUP BLACK BEANS



=16g

1 CUP COOKED QUINOA



=8g

1 CUP LENTILS



=18g



1 CUP CHICKPEAS



=14.5g

1/2 ORGANIC SOY MILK



=7g

2 TBSP HEMP SEEDS



=11g

2 TBSP CHIA SEEDS



=10g

2 TBSP SPIRULINA



=8g



How to Navigate Holiday Parties: Tips from Smart Life

Holidays are on the horizon, and the requisite parties and annual celebrations are about to commence. But this doesn't have to mean ditching healthy eating and revoking wellness routines until resolution time comes in the New Year. There

are easy-to-implement ways to successfully navigate holiday parties while having fun, making memories, enjoying the company, all while staying healthy! Here are my Smart Life tips:

Begin with a “pre-party”: Holiday pre-partying includes ensuring you are well hydrated and not showing up to parties overly hungry. Having a small, healthy snack before you leave home can offset the dive into the salty snacks like nuts, chips, and pretzels. When you do arrive, opt for healthier choices like raw vegetables with hummus and sparkling water with lemon. Should you choose to partake in drinking alcohol, make sure you’re keeping hydrated throughout the day. This can also help offset increased sodium consumption that’s common in holiday fare.

Be helpful and bring a dish: Offer to bring along a dish and make that a healthy option. This will give you a solid selection to choose from, but others will also thank you for it! Healthier dishes tend to offer lots of fresh colors, and you can be mindful of sugar, salt, and bad additives when choosing and making a dish. I love to offer to bring a healthy salad, a vegetable platter, or a simply cooked clean protein like baked salmon.

Once and done: Fill up one plate and be done. But know this up front—make your smart choices wisely knowing that this is the plan. Then make the best food choices from what is available, being aware that you are filling up your plate once. Remember to include lots of color and variety. It’s okay to enjoy some goodies —try small bites of one or two goodies and see if that fulfills you. Balance is key!

Liquid calories count: Whatever choices of beverages you choose to include, know that they count towards the “big picture” as well. If you are choosing to drink alcohol, know that lots of holiday cocktails are often full of sugar from fruit juices, soda, and liqueurs. Try to go for a simple glass

or wine, or even a wine spritzer (half wine, half sparkling water). If you prefer hard liquor, mix it with sparkling water and a slice of lime or lemon.

Give yourself grace: Beating yourself up overindulging is never a helpful tactic. Fasting, over-exercising or other restrictive tactics to make up for what you may consider to have been poor choices lead to feelings of inadequacy and lower self-esteem. Instead, practice self-compassion and remember all the positive wellness habits you have incorporated into your lifestyle thus far. Attempt to get back into your routines as soon as possible after the holiday party season and remember that it's the long-term practices you put into place that best benefit your well-being.

The Bottom Line

Health is a journey, not a destination. There will be bumps in the road, and yes, many of them can potentially come during holiday season. Remember that you are in it for the long haul, and this is just a different time to navigate. With the above suggestions, I'm confident that you can successfully navigate holiday parties this year and every year – you got this! And if you need some support in getting back on your Smart Life, reach out. I am here to give you the support you need.

Smart Life Guide to Alcohol this Holiday Season

Let me be clear and upfront: I am not encouraging you to drink alcohol if you haven't been doing so already. But, if you plan to have a drink here and there over the holiday period, I thought I would let you know what the best and worst options

are or how do alcohol the Smart Life way.

In the health community, alcohol is categorized from best to worst by gauging the amount of histamine released and the impurities it contains. In regards to impurities, the “smoother” the alcohol tastes, the better it is made. Remember the tequila shots we used to do in college? We had to get it down quickly to get over the awful taste. That was the “college” tequila – cheap and poorly made (but affordable). You can enjoy and sip a top-shelf tequila – it contains fewer impurities which will make it easier on your liver, thus I would call it a “healthier” choice with a lower chance for a hangover.

Histamine release will also contribute to how you feel; headaches, itching, rashes, ringing in the ears, and flushing are signs of histamine release which would also make you feel sick.

I’ve put this list for you here, to give you an idea of what might be best for you when you go shopping.

BEST vs WORSE ALCOHOL:

BEST

Liquor

- Clear, unflavored vodka
- Clear, unflavored gin
- Silver tequila
- White, unflavored rum

Wines

- Biodynamic, no sugar (best)
- Organic (just OK)

WORST

- Beer (including gluten-free)
- Cider
- Cheap liquors
- Conventional red wine
- Conventional white wine

I don't have liquor brand recommendations, but I have come across great wine by Dry Farm Wines that the health community has given a seal of approval for a truly biodynamic, low histamine, and no-sugar (yes, this is correct, they ferment it until there is no sugar) wine selections of whites, reds, and rose.

One-Pot Chicken Thighs with Chickpeas & Herbs

Ingredients:

- 3 Tablespoons avocado oil (or grapeseed oil)
- 1 Tablespoon cumin seeds (or one teaspoon ground cumin)
- 1 Tablespoon Baharat Spice Blend or Hawaij Spice Blend
- Salt
- Black Pepper
- 2 cups Basmati rice, rinsed
- 2 bunches parsley or cilantro (or one bunch of each)
- 1 can chickpeas, rinsed
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped
- 3 cups boiling water
- 1 lbs. chicken thighs, boneless and skinless

Directions:

1. Heat oven to 375 degrees.

2. Mix together in a small bowl the oil, cumin seeds, Hawaij spice, salt and pepper.
3. Rinse the rice and place in a large skillet. Top with the chopped onion, chopped herbs, rinsed chickpeas, and half of the spiced oil mixture. Add the 3 cups of boiling water and mix together.
4. Add the chicken thighs on top of the rice and brush the chicken with the remaining spiced oil mixture.
5. Cover the pot and bake in the oven for 50 minutes.
6. Uncover and bake for extra 10 minutes until chicken thighs are browned.





Baked Salmon with Fennel and

Herbed Dressing

Ingredients:

- 4 pieces of salmon
- 4 fennel bulbs, quartered

For the dressing:

- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 Tablespoon fresh Thyme, chopped
- 1 Tablespoon fresh Rosemary, chopped
- 1 Tablespoon fresh dill, chopped
- Salt
- Pepper

Directions:

1. Heat oven to 375 degrees.
2. Brush a baking dish with olive oil and place the salmon pieces and fennel bulbs.
3. Brush the fish and fennel with the herbed dressing.
4. Bake for 20 minutes. Roast for 2-3 additional minutes.

Cucumber — Pineapple Guacamole

This refreshing mix is more like a salad than a classic guacamole dip. Its delicious with quinoa or lentil chips or spooned over grilled turkey burgers or fish.

Ingredients

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 2 Tbs. finely chopped purple onion
- 1 Tbs. minced fresh jalapeno, including seeds; more to taste
- sea salt (to taste)
- 1 cup diced Persian cucumbers
- 2 ripe avocados
- 1 cup diced fresh pineapple (cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch dice)
- 1 Tbs fresh lime juice (more to taste)

Directions

1. In a mixing bowl, mash together $\frac{1}{2}$ of the cilantro, onion, jalapeño, and salt.
2. Stir into the mix the diced cucumbers.
3. Halve and remove the pits of the avocados and use a spoon to scoop the avocados into the bowl. Gently stir in the avocados, without mashing, along with the pineapple, the remaining cilantro, and lime juice. Serve immediately.

**This recipe was adapted from Roberto Santibane, Fine Cooking.*

Vanilla Matcha Chia Pudding

Makes 2 Servings

Ingredients

- 2 cups vanilla almond milk (or other non-dairy milk)
- 5 Tbs organic chia seeds
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tsp matcha powder

- 2 tsp maple syrup or raw honey
- A couple dashes of cinnamon (optional)

Directions

1. In bowl add all the ingredients and stir until mixed well.
2. Pour into glass jars, shake and cover. Let sit in the refrigerator for at least one hour.

(Note: Best to have it sit overnight, but it should become pudding like after a few hours.)

3. Enjoy with your favorite toppings: crushed almonds, pecans, goji berries, cacao nibs.

Ronit's Green Smoothie

I love to make a big batch all at once to save time. It keeps in the refrigerator for two to three days or you can freeze in a glass container and thaw the night before drinking.

- 2 cups water or coconut water
- Organic spinach
- 1 head organic romaine
- Juice of $\frac{1}{2}$ organic lemon or one lime
- 3 to 4 sticks organic celery
- 1 organic apple
- 1 organic pear
- Parsley, optional
- Pinch cayenne pepper, optional
- 1 shot wheatgrass, optional

Blend water, spinach and romaine. Add celery, apple, pear, lemon juice and herbs.

Enjoy the energy!

Chocolate & Peanut Butter Chickpea Cookie Bars – Gluten Free & Vegan

The first time I made these bars I was seriously blown away by the buttery taste. These bars contain no butter, no flour, no refined sugar yet taste absolutely decadent and indulgent. Make sure you let others taste these before you reveal the secret ingredient...!

Yield: 12 squares

Ingredients

- 1 can chickpeas, rinsed & drained
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup peanut butter (I used a natural peanut butter that I ground myself at the store)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup maple syrup
- 2 tsp vanilla
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon baking powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon baking soda
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cups semi-sweet or dark chocolate chips, reserve $\frac{1}{4}$ cup for the top
- pinch sea salt

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350F and line a loaf pan with parchment paper
2. In a food processor (or high speed blender), add all ingredients except chocolate chips and process until

- batter is smooth, similar consistency to hummus
3. Stir in 1/2 cup of the dark chocolate chips
 4. Scoop the batter into the lined pan and smooth it out evenly. Lightly press the remaining chocolate chips over top
 5. Bake for 60 minutes or until toothpick comes out clean. This will vary with ovens so be patient and wait until the edges are beginning to brown
 6. Cool for 10 minutes in the pan then transfer to a rack for another 30 minutes for them to set. Cut into squares.
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Is Sitting the New Smoking?

We've all heard the mantra, "Sitting is the new smoking." This past month, the news seemingly got more dire thanks to an article in *Scientific American* called "Killer Chairs: How Desk Jobs Ruin Your Health," by James Levine. In the story, the author discusses the shocking fact that 18 studies conducted over the past 16 years (which included 800,000 participants) suggest that chairs are lethal to your body. It makes sense, he says, if you consider that Americans spend on average 13 hours a day sitting down.

What's so bad about taking a seat? A lot. "Sitters" have a 50% higher likelihood of dying than those who stand, exercise or stay active during the day. After all, the human body was not designed to be sedentary. When you're idle, your metabolism slows, which reduces the amount of food your body converts to energy... and the result? You pack on pounds. The more weight you gain, the harder it becomes to motivate yourself to get up and keep moving. See the problem?

Don't worry, I'm not about to suggest you give up a desk job to get more exercise. That's not realistic, but there are many things you can do to keep yourself moving while you work to counteract the stress of sitting. Here are a few:

1) **Update your desk.** Workstations have gone high-tech, and they don't have to be expensive. Look into desks with tops that raise so you can stand, or fancier options like those that come with a walk pad.

2) **Move around.** Set your alarm every hour on the hour. When it goes off, you get up and move. Take a lap around the office, follow up with co-workers face to face, or deliver messages in person.

3) **Work standing.** Make an agreement with yourself to perform certain activities standing at your desk, whether it's talking on the phone, reading the news, catching up on trades, or following up on e-mail.

4) **Explore your building.** Whether you're using their bathroom, their cafeteria or just breezing through, pop over to other floors in your office to maximize steps and keep legs moving.

5) **Shut your door.** Between meetings or while taking a conference call, shut your door and stand, do some crunches, touch your toes, or lift small weights. Don't just sit there!