

The No-Recipe Guide  
to Plant-Based Eating®

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Published serially by Littleviews.com - 2018

## Chapter 1

# The Plant-Based Diet

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# The Plant-Based Diet

What you need to know about a whole-food, plant-based diet

I wrote this book to help people easily adopt whole-food, plant-based dietary habits. It was not written to convert anyone to this lifestyle, provide concrete rules, or take a stand for its health benefits, although I believe there are many.

I assume by the time you've acquired this book, you are familiar with the subject of whole-food, plant-based eating, (from now on, called "*plant-based eating*"), are attracted to it, and have given your own nutritional needs a great deal of thought.

It's my purpose to help you successfully make the transition from Western-style eating that includes foods soaked in saturated fat, salt, sugar, and empty calories to one that reduces or eliminates many foods that have been fattening us up and reducing the quality of our health. Before I offer advice on how to proceed, however, let's discuss two very common questions that challenge a plant-based diet lifestyle:

1. Do I have to completely give up meat (including eggs and fish), dairy (milk, cheese), and possibly more stressful, white bread?
2. Will I get enough protein if I do not eat meat or dairy?

In answer to the first question, there are no hard and fast rules to follow except to *reduce* or *eliminate meat* and *dairy products*. The key here is the word "*reduce*." Some people give up eggs, while others eat eggs in baked goods (such as cookies, which I frequently make and decorate). Some give up all types of oil, while others subscribe to the theory "a little goes a long way."

To address fears about not consuming enough protein, remember that many of the animals and poultry we eat obtain their protein from plants. It is not necessary for us to eat meat that ate meat. If, however, you decide to reduce or eliminate animal-based products and are fearful you made the wrong decision, ask your healthcare professional to perform a blood panel test at the onset of your diet, and then follow-up six months later. If the comparisons between these tests show improved health on all measures, congratulate yourself for making good dietary decisions! If not, adjust as needed, or return to your previous eating patterns.

The only exception to the above advice is that when people exclusively stop eating animal-based foods, they are strongly advised to take Vitamin B12. This issue is addressed by many nutritionists, but double-check with your own healthcare professional if you have questions.



## It's not all about salads

Another misconception about plant-based eating is that you'll dine almost exclusively on fresh, raw vegetables, straight from a farm, grown under meticulous conditions, prepared from scratch, along with whole-grain bread, under the loving hands of someone who loves spending hours in a kitchen.

This misconception is underscored by pictures of bucolic farms, fresh-picked produce, and bowls of salads that illustrate healthy eating habits. It is no wonder why many grocery stores sell flowers in their vegetable departments. They are pretty!

Staples of most plant-based meals, however, include bowls of rice, potatoes, oatmeal, or beans, none of which make stimulating or colorful pictures, especially if photos of sizzling stakes or cheese-soaked hamburgers once attracted you.



## What you'll learn from this book

To feel nourished (especially on the job, or when commuting), you need to eat several meals a day – large and small. Failure to regularly feed yourself healthy foods results in snacking; some candy here and potato chips there.

I've written this book to show you how easy it is to find, prepare, and eat plant-based foods to satisfy your hunger throughout the day. While cookbooks provide excellent ideas about how to build plant-based meals, this book shows you how those meals are constructed so you understand how to access food when you are hungry with a minimum of prep time.

## The bowl

You may have heard the word “bowl” used to describe meals, many of them ethnic or street foods.

Essentially, *the bowl* refers to a combination of foods, all packed in the same container. Many items from a Chinese restaurant, for example, are served as “a bowl,” or packed into a carton. Conversely, Western-style food tends to be served as individual portions, many of which are identified in restaurants as *sides*.

The center of most bowls (not including cold salads) are starches, such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, rice, whole grains, noodles, and beans. Starches provide the calories that help you feel full. The remaining plant-based foods (vegetables, fruits, and nuts) mixed with the starches in a bowl provide an additional range of nutritional components, all of which keep you nourished and your bowel functions normal.

Eating meals from a bowl is a metaphor (*example*) of how many plant-based meals are created. If you are short of time, buy carry-out Chinese steamed vegetable and brown rice dishes, and request that sauce be packaged separately. A single order often will contain enough ingredients for several meals to eat hot or

cold, plus, you can add veggies, fruit, and nuts you already have available to the mix. Use the separately packaged sauce for dipping, not gravy.

## The guide to plant-based food

What is whole-grain, plant-based food? Generally, it is everything that is not overly processed (like highly refined white flour) and is 100% derived from plants.

In addition to that simple definition, you might follow *evidence based* recommendations, which suggest one food might provide significant health advantages over others. Other influencers include social recommendations, such as made by animal rights groups, religious recommendations, which might specify specific, ritualistically-prepared food types, or cultural recommendations, which recommend locally produced foods. It is up to you to follow your own program.

The following guide summarizes things to be considered when shaping your future around plant-based dining.

### *Recommended plant-based foods*

**Vegetables:** These food products can be purchased fresh, frozen, canned, or dried and cooked by steaming, baking, light frying (*grilling*), or broiling. All vegetables, including potatoes and other root vegetables, are relatively low in calories, and taste equally good raw or cooked. They can be combined with no restrictions and do not require detailed instructions to prepare.

**Non-refined Grains:** These are seeds served “whole,” rather than processed in a way that eliminates sections of a grain’s nutritive body. Examples of non-refined grains include whole-wheat flour, cracked wheat (*bulgur*), brown rice, oatmeal, and cornmeal, all of which once prepared can be eaten hot, warm, or cold. Grains usually require soaking or boiling to make them palatable (many in under an hour). Milled (*crushed*) whole grains can be worked into dough to make bread and noodles.

**Beans and legumes:** A bean is a plant seed that can develop in- or outside of a pod. Legumes, such as lentils, soybeans, and chickpeas, refer to seeds that grow in a pod. Non-legume beans include navy, kidney, pinto, and Lima, as well as black, red, and white beans.

Beans can be eaten fresh, but are commonly dried for storage, then re-moisturized for consumption. After re-moisturization (or straight out of a can), they can be eaten cold, warm, or hot.

Beans are starchy foods, high in fiber and nutrients, and are an excellent source of protein. Whole or mashed, they can be combined with other foods. Mashed beans (such as hummus or refried beans) are often used as a spread.

**Nuts:** A nut is a tree seed which can be eaten raw or roasted. Like beans and legumes, nuts are high in fiber, nutrients, and are an excellent protein source. Mix nuts, chopped or whole, with other meal ingredients to give the mixture *crunch*.

**Seeds:** In general, reference to *seeds* for snacking or garnishment usually refers to flowering plant seeds, such as sesame, poppy, and sunflower, although grains of any type are seeds. These seeds can be eaten raw or roasted, are high in fiber, and are an excellent source of protein. Seeds are also high in calories, so sprinkle them on other ingredients, rather than making them a meal.

**Fruits:** These can be eaten fresh, steamed, dried, or baked. Whole, fresh fruit is recommended, but frozen fruit is an excellent substitute, especially when you want to stretch your budget and reduce spoilage. They can also be used as an ingredient in a hot dish, such as oatmeal. Most canned fruit, however, is usually sweetened by sugar. When advertised as “no sugar added,” the fruit is usually soaked in sugary, white grape juice.

Dried fruit, such as raisins, dates, and apricots, are good for snacks, especially when combined with nuts. Their sugar-per-volume ratio, however, is significantly higher than their fresh fruit counterparts.

## *Non-recommended foods*

In general, the plant-based diet recommends reducing or eliminating the following:

**Meat (including eggs):** This category includes the flesh of any animal, fowl, fish, or insect. Note that vegetarians who do not consider themselves vegans (*meat-free eaters*) often include eggs, cheese, and milk products in their diet.

**Dairy:** This category includes milk in all forms, including cheese, yogurt and butter.

**Refined grains:** This category includes white flour and rice, plus anything made with these products, such as pasta, bread, breakfast cereal, and bakery that contains overly-processed ingredients. During the refining process, portions of the grains are removed, and the remaining product is as smooth as baby-powder

The objective of plant-based dining is to consume enough *whole-food* fiber to make you poop at least once or more a day. Refined foods, unfortunately, disintegrate in your digestive track and the resulting mush leads to constipation. Digestive system blockage is the source of many serious medical issues, including peripheral arterial disease.

## *Controversial foods*

Not every expert agrees on whether the following items should be eliminated or simply reduced. Small amounts of any ingredient will not harm you. It is up to you, however, to practice portion control and understand the potential for harm by over-consumption:

**Fat:** This includes any type of dairy and animal fat, as well as plant fats, such as found in peanut butter, coconut oil, and even avocados. Is there universal agreement on what is a good or bad fat? No, but fats from animal products are known to increase bad cholesterol in humans.

**Oil:** This includes any type of liquid fat, such as olive or vegetable oil. Olive oil, of course, is a beloved ingredient. Some nutritional gurus recommend complete abstinence from olive oil simply because the oil is highly refined, adds calories, and has no known nutritional value. Others disagree. Under all conditions, if you do use olive oil, practice portion control. A tablespoon of olive oil on your salad, instead of a half-cup, is preferable.

**Cane, Corn, Beet, and Grape Sweeteners:** Almost all types of sweeteners are suspected of promoting ill health and dental problems, even honey. Enough, of course, is enough. As there are only 16 calories in a teaspoon of white sugar, sprinkling a small amount of it on fresh fruit is safe for healthy people. Eating large amounts of sugar as contained in processed foods (even in some spaghetti sauces), adds empty calories to your diet, is addictive, and makes you crave more.

The problem with sugar of any type is how it relates to other ingredients. Consider the calorie count of a medium-sized donut:

There are approximately 11 grams of sugar in a medium-sized, non-frosted donut. Eleven grams equates to approximately 2.6 teaspoons of sugar, or 41.6 calories. This caloric count is added to 153 calories from fat and processed flour, for a total of almost 200 useless calories per donut.

One or two daily donuts increase your cholesterol and weight, thus increasing the potential of stroke and heart failure. Moderation, of course, is a key. If you eat one donut a month, the impact is minimal. Your task, then, is understanding what is meant by “reduce or eliminate.” The concept of *reduction* refers to portion control.

Should you use an artificial sweetener? Keep in mind that one person’s low-calorie sweetener is often regarded as another’s poison. Reducing an over-dependence on sweeteners of any type leads to better portion control. A little bit goes a long way. None, even longer.

**Salt:** Some people attempt to eliminate salt altogether from their diets, while others simply reduce their use of it. Although there are conflicting arguments on the subject, excessive salt on highly processed foods like potato chips leads to salt-addiction, destroys portion control, and is complicit in weight gain.

**GMO, non-organic, and non-natural or non-ecologically farmed produce:** More important than GMO versus non-GMO products is knowing where your food grows and the types of pesticides and chemical growth enhancers that were used in the growth process. Keep in mind that non-GMO, GMO, and organic products can all be grown under similar conditions.

**Alcohol:** The controversy related to alcohol centers around on how much can be drunk on a weekly basis that will not increase the odds of disease. Is wine or beer good for the heart? Maybe. Maybe not. Generally, very light drinking, such as a woman having no more than a single, 6-ounce glass of wine in a day, is OK, but agreement is not universal.

## Food allergies, sensitivities, and supplements

Except for Vitamin B12, food allergies, sensitivities, supplements, and the pros-and-cons of specific foods related to health issues are **NOT** discussed in this book. Your food choices are related to your knowledge of the subject based on your reading, research, and consultation with experts in the field of nutrition and health

This book is about developing your own “whole-food, plant-based” eating plan, the very loose rules of which recommend increasing the consumption of unrefined, plant-based products and the reduction of dairy products.

Sensitivities, such as a gluten sensitivity, refers to specific dietary issues that affect specific individuals. People with special needs must be vigilant when making food selections.

People who suffer from diabetes benefit from a whole-food, plant-based diet, but must still be extra vigilant about what they eat in keeping with their doctor’s orders.

The same goes for people who suffer from chronic health issues (or who want to avoid them) must still be vigilant about their dining habits related to the “*reduce or eliminate*” guidelines mentioned in this book.

Some people believe that supplementation is not required for those who closely follow a plant-based diet plan, while others do. People who closely follow vegan eating styles, which greatly reduces or eliminates meat and dairy products, are encouraged to supplement with Vitamin B12, which is only found in meat and dairy products.

## Dietary styles

There are many eating styles and rules practiced, including “no rules at all” dining. One person’s healthy diet, in fact, might seem like suicide by another. The following list generally describes common dietary practices:

The **Western** eating style refers to people who can select from an abundance of affordable food, both natural and man-made concoctions. Obesity in countries favored with abundant food availability is significant, as are diseases related to obesity. For information about obesity in the United states, see the *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention* (<http://www.CDC.gov>).

**Vegetarians** eat a full range of dairy products. A subset of that group, called *lacto-ovo vegetarians*, eat eggs. Pescatarian vegetarians include fish. With the exception to personal preference, a vegetarian has no imperative to exclusively eat “whole-foods,” or avoid fried or sugary snacks, although many are mindful.

**Vegans** do not eat meat or dairy of any type, but some might eat processed foods and refined grains, such as white rice and bakery, as well as common snacks and sweet beverages. As with vegetarians, many do consider the value of whole-foods in their diet, however.

**Paleo, primal, and high-protein diets** emphasize meat.

**Raw** dieters eat unprocessed foods, such as uncooked vegetable products and some eat unpasteurized dairy foods, such as raw eggs, fish, and meat.

The **whole-food, plant-based** eaters avoid or eliminate food that studies show to be detrimental to health, while selecting food that is not. They eat starchy, plant-based foods, whole grains, beans, leafy and root vegetables, nuts, and fruit. Because of their dining habits, they have daily bowel movements, a key to good health. As this dietary practice is not based on a social movement, a religious dictate, or an animal-rights proclamation, individuals are free to select the foods that they believe will enhance their physical well-being, while avoiding others.

## What experts say about plant-based eating

The information published by the following four health-care professionals should be enough to inform you about the values of plant-based dining. They, in turn, will point you to additional resources. They are:

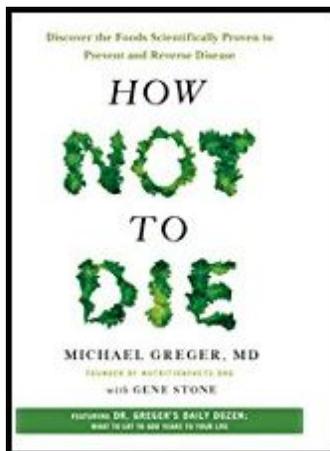
Dr. Michael Greger, through his *New York Times*’ best-selling book, *How Not to Die*, and related website, [NutritionFacts.org](http://NutritionFacts.org), report on scientific observations and their conclusions on how food affects health.

T. Colin Campbell, Ph.D., introduced the whole-food, plant-based diet to the USA through his research as documented in his famous book, *The China Study: Startling Implications for Diet, Weight Loss and Long-term Health*.

Dr. McDougall, through his book, *The Starch Solution*, and website document his recommendations as a practicing Internist and nutritionist based upon his background in the service of public health.

Dr. Ronald Weiss of [www.myethoshealth.com](http://www.myethoshealth.com), is a practicing Internist and botanist who sees patients at his New Jersey farm-based practice and consults with patients worldwide.

## NutritionFacts.org



Dr. Greger's book, *How Not to Die: Discover the Foods Scientifically Proven to Prevent and Reverse Disease*, became an instant and steady *New York Times* best seller since being published in December 2015. Its recommendations are known as “evidence-based,” because its reports are tied to scientifically documented studies.

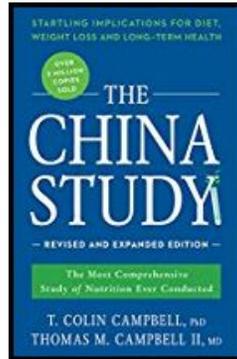
Dr. Greger's non-profit website, [NutritionFacts.org](http://NutritionFacts.org), is an encyclopedia of evidenced-based information. If you want to dig deeper, simply follow citations in his articles, or search the site with personal questions.

Dr. Greger's style is engaging and easy to understand. Almost every report is published as a spoken video, followed by a transcript and links to citations. Recommendations are based on scientific studies, rather than conjecture. If these recommendations persuade you to eat some foods, while avoiding others, the choice is yours.

None of his reports contain magical cures, but they do suggest lifestyle and eating changes that might be helpful. Even though I started my own plant-based eating style after being diagnosed with stage 3 breast cancer, I immediately became the “healthiest sick person” after changing my dietary habits by following Dr. Greger's observations. These included the disappearance of severe fibromyalgia, weight loss, increased flexibility, and resistance to stomach upset during my chemo regiment.

I highly recommend Dr. Greger's work.

## NutritionStudies.org

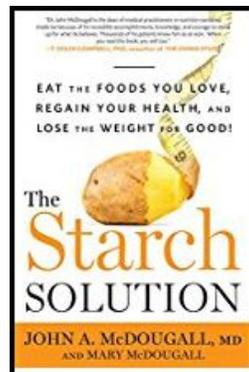


The *Center for Nutrition Studies* is reported through Dr. T. Colin Campbell's website, [NutritionStudies.org](http://NutritionStudies.org). Dr. Campbell's three books, *The China Study: Startling Implications for Diet, Weight Loss and Long-term Health*, *Whole*, and *The Low-Carb Fraud*, introduced the theory and practice of a plant-based diet in the United States. (A complete list of books by Dr. Campbell and his associates is posted on the website.)

The *T. Colin Campbell Center for Nutritional Studies* is a 501(c)3 nonprofit center based in Ithaca, NY. It is associated with Cornell University, where he is the Jacob Gould Schurman Professor Emeritus of Nutritional Biochemistry.

While his website publishes articles, recipes, and information related to the plant-based diet, it also offers a formal *Plant-Based Nutrition Certificate* for healthcare professionals through accredited courses in nutritional studies.

## DrMcDougall.com



Dr. John McDougall observed the effects of a plant-based diet on his patients, many of whom immigrated to Hawaii from China, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines where rice was once their main staple. Following generations, however, adopted a Western diet and gradually developed associated diseases. He began practicing nutritional medicine in the mid-1980s and has since developed several programs that introduce the topic to the public.

Dr. McDougall's book, *The Starch Solution*, covers a wide array of subjects related to plant-based eating. Most notably, he observed that starch-based vegetables (potatoes, rice, grains, and corn) represented the

core of meals that provided the dietary calories required by humans the world-over. He recommends that approximately 70% of meals be made up of whole-food, starch-based vegetables, such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, brown rice, oatmeal, and/or other grains. The remainder should consist of other vegetables, such as beans, leafy and root vegetables, fruit and nuts.

Dr. McDougall's recommendations are very specific and possibly too ridged for many people. They are, however, helpful for those starting on a whole-food, plant-based diet.

Dr. McDougall runs a for-profit business through his website, [DrMcDougall.com](http://DrMcDougall.com). He sells his services through nutritional counseling and seminars. If you do not have the time or money to attend a program, his [Free McDougall Program](#), outlines his seminars and includes lists of recommended foods, as well as an introduction to his own product line.

*myEthosHealth.com*



Dr. Weiss' New Jersey farm is the center of his practice as a holistic, board-certified, Internal Medicine Physician. If you seek medical advice, plus instructions on how plant-based eating can keep you healthy (or return you to good health), Dr. Weiss provides patients traditional medical care, as well as his 30-Day Detox program where he introduces you to a very strict, whole-foods, plant-based eating plan.

If you visit "The Doctor's Farm Stand" in the summer, you can buy exceptionally high-quality, nutrient-dense produce grown on his 342-acre farm.

Check his website, [MyEthoshealth.com](http://MyEthoshealth.com), to read about Dr. Weiss' mission and services, as well as an overview on the [nutritional value of a wide-range of vegetables and fruit](#).

## Dietary decisions

A decision to reduce or eliminate meat, dairy, and processed food from your diet is radical for many Westerners. Arguments can develop as to whether people who follow this course are misled.

I made my decision to change my diet based on the advice of my personal physician, "evidence-based" information on the web, and support of my oncological team. I wish I had done it well before I was diagnosed with cancer! Thankfully, the cancer was caught in time, but had I followed better nutritional guidelines, I might not have gotten it in the first place.

When you search the Internet and bookstores on good nutrition, you'll be exposed to a wide-range of advice, evidence-based or not. If you are unsure about your dietary decisions, discuss the subject with your healthcare provider, but understand that universal agreement on nutrition does not exist.

To address possible fears about whether reducing or eliminating meat, dairy, and processed foods will harm your health, even though you decide to go forward with plant-based eating habits, ask your doctor to

perform a blood test panel at the start, then at six months from the onset of your diet to compare the results.

If your tests point to physical improvements, congratulate yourself. If not, adjust as needed, or return to your previous eating habits.

# What's Next?

*Chapter 1* contains an introduction to the whole-food, plant-based eating style.

*Chapter 2* re-introduces you to grocery shopping for whole-food, plant-based eaters.

*Chapter 3* recommends kitchen tools most suitable for preparing whole-food, plant-based meals.

*Chapter 4* shows you how to prepare foods for your whole-food, plant-based diet.

*Chapter 5* discusses eating at home or *on the go* by yourself or with family and friends.

*Chapter 6* examines diet and easy exercise considerations

*Chapter 7* provides cookbook, website, and other recommendations



The first three chapters of *The No-recipe Guide to Plant-Based Eating* were published on January 25, 2018 as individual PDF files, with the remaining chapters to be published as PDF files on or about February 28. Feel free to share these files!

Note that information in the individual PDF files might be slightly changed over time by the author. Please sign up for our [Littleviews.com](http://Littleviews.com) newsletter for updates on the progress of this manuscript and corrections, if you have not already done so.

Ultimately, the information found in these files will be published as a book, price yet to be determined.

Short portions of this manuscript may be quoted, but out of consideration, please let the author, Karen Little of [Littleviews.com](http://Littleviews.com), know where.

For long articles, contact [Karen Little](mailto:Karen Little) directly.

Karen Little is a retired technical writer who specialized in creating corporate training materials and programs in Milwaukee, WI, and New York City, plus books and articles on travel, art, and computer programming. She was the founder of [LetsKickScoot.com](http://LetsKickScoot.com), which was turned over to a new publisher in 2017. Many of her articles remain on that site.

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