

Vegan Menus

for adults 51+ by Christine Kasum Sexton, MPH

On the next pages, you will find a selection of easy-to-prepare menus designed specifically for older vegans (51+ years). Four different calorie levels – 1600, 1800, 2000, and 2200 – are presented in order to meet the needs of men and women of varying activity levels and budgets. In general, a 1600-calorie diet should meet the needs of an inactive older female; an 1800-calorie diet should meet the needs of an active older female; a 2000-calorie diet should meet the needs of an inactive older male; and a 2200-calorie diet should meet the needs of an active older male. These are average numbers, however. If you are more active, you may need more calories. If you find that you are losing weight unintentionally, you should add additional servings of foods. If you are gaining weight unintentionally, you may need to increase activity or choose a lower calorie level.

In addition to a range of calorie levels, we have provided one set of menus with higher food costs, and one set with lower food costs. In general, the higher food cost menus include more vegan convenience foods such as soy burgers and vegan deli slices, as well as more fresh fruits and vegetables, while the lower cost menus include more beans and canned foods, and rely on frozen vegetables and juice. All of these menus were analyzed for nutritional content and meet the U.S. dietary reference intake levels for most nutrients. Some of the menus are somewhat low in vitamin D or potassium. Additional vitamin D can be obtained by using a vitamin D supplement, and/or spending time outdoors in sunlight. To learn more about vitamin D, see the VRG's vitamin D FAQ page by Reed Mangels, PhD, RD at: http://www.vrg.org/journal/vj2009issue2/2009_issue2_vitamin_d.php.

Additional potassium can be obtained by choosing foods that are high in potassium more often. Such foods include acorn squash, baked potatoes, lentils,

spinach, kidney beans, split peas, butternut squash, watermelon, and raisins.

Use of some fortified foods can help meet recommendations for some nutrients. For example, choose soymilk fortified with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12, rather than unfortified soymilk; choose calcium-fortified tofu rather than unfortified tofu. We also recommend choosing low-sodium options whenever available. When using canned beans or tomatoes, for example, lower-sodium choices are increasingly available. Bread products can vary considerably in their sodium content. If sodium is of particular concern in your diet, you may want to seek out lower-sodium brands.

The following menus present one example of an eating pattern – three meals, a breakfast snack, and an afternoon snack. Meals do not need to be eaten exactly at these specified times. You should feel free to make adjustments to fit your lifestyle. For example, if you prefer a larger breakfast, combine the morning snack with breakfast to make one larger meal. If you enjoy having a bedtime snack, eat the afternoon snack later in the evening instead, or eat part of a snack in the afternoon, and the other part after dinner. Swap lunch for dinner if you desire, and so on. In addition, these menus suggest spices to be used for some of the dishes, but any herbs, spices, or low-sodium seasonings that you prefer could also be used without significantly altering the calorie count. For example, you could replace the garlic and ginger in tofu stir-fry with onions and turmeric, or cayenne pepper. The parsley and black pepper used on the baked potatoes could be replaced with onion powder, dried thyme, or dill. Higher-sodium flavorings such as soy sauce, chili paste, or other prepared sauces will add a lot of sodium to the menus and should be limited or avoided. Beverages such as coffee, decaffeinated coffee, tea, herbal tea, and water can accompany all meals.

These menus can also be adapted based on seasonal food availability, for people with food allergies, or those who need softer foods. Fresh produce in the menus can be swapped for any fruits and vegetables that are seasonally available. This will not only help to provide variety and adjust for your own personal tastes, but can also reduce cost by using items that are abundant at the time. For example, for fruit snacks, choose any fresh berries that you enjoy more often in the springtime, and apples or pears more often in the fall. Similarly, you might choose spinach or lettuce more often in the early summer, zucchini more often in the late summer, and frozen green vegetables more often during the winter months. As long as you are choosing a comparable serving size of fruits or vegetables, the menus should still be nutritionally adequate.

For older adults who may be cooking for one, the perishable foods that are used in these menus could ideally be used to prepare more than one meal. For example, the menu for one day suggests a hummus-vegetable wrap for lunch and a brown rice/tofu stir-fry for dinner. The following day, you could use the leftover vegetables and tofu to make a tofu/veggie scramble for breakfast, and the leftover rice and vegetables, along with some black beans, to make a southwestern rice salad for lunch or dinner. Leftover salad or wrap vegetables could also be used to make soups or stir-fries.

Individuals with nut allergies can replace the menu items containing nuts with other protein sources, including beans or seeds. Peanut butter could be replaced with sunflower seed butter, for example.

Almonds or walnuts as a snack or in a salad could be replaced with roasted soybeans, sesame seeds, or chickpeas. The parsley-walnut sauce for pasta could be made using sunflower seeds, or a simple parsley sauce could be used and then topped with white beans.

If softer food is needed because of difficulties chewing or swallowing, alterations or substitutions can be made to these menus to make them suitable. Fruits can be cooked, peeled, or puréed; raw vegetables can be cooked to desired softness and finely chopped; and potatoes, chili, or yogurt can be thinned to needed consistency with soymilk or fruit juice. Foods like crackers and pretzels, which may need to be avoided altogether, can be replaced with well-moistened breads, muffins, or biscuits. Nuts can be replaced with seeds, if tolerated, or with mashed and thinned beans.

For additional information on diets using softer foods, see the article 'Texture Alterations for Vegan Diets,' by Chef and Registered Dietitian Nancy Berkoff at <http://www.vrg.org/journal/vj2009issue2/texture.htm>.

'A Senior's Guide to Good Nutrition' by Registered Dietitian Suzanne Havala Hobbs is available on our website at <http://www.vrg.org/seniors>.

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Photo by Nicolas Raymond

Day 1 | 1600 calories

Breakfast:

½ cup oatmeal, cooked, with an optional sprinkle of cinnamon
½ banana

Morning Snack:

4 whole wheat, low-sodium crackers
½ apple

Lunch:

½ cup grapes or other fruit
1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Hummus wrap made with:

- Whole wheat tortilla
- ½ cup fresh spinach
- ¼ cup chopped raw red pepper
- 2 slices avocado
- ¼ cup hummus

Afternoon Snack:

½ cup sliced raw carrots
1 cup calcium-enriched soy yogurt
½ ounce no-salt dry roasted almonds

Dinner:

Tofu/veggie stir-fry made with:

- 1 cup cooked brown rice (no salt or fat added)
- ¾ cup cooked Swiss chard
- ¼ cup cooked mushrooms
- ¾ cup calcium-enriched tofu
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced and ½ teaspoon ginger, minced (or other spices or low-sodium broth)

1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Day 1 | 1600 calories lower cost

Breakfast:

½ cup oatmeal, cooked, with an optional sprinkle of cinnamon
1 small banana

Morning Snack:

4 whole wheat, low-sodium crackers
1 Tablespoon salt-free peanut butter
½ apple

Lunch:

Wrap made with:

- 8-inch flour tortilla
- ¼ cup chopped green pepper and ¼ cup chopped onion, cooked in 1 teaspoon canola oil
- ½ cup garbanzo beans, mashed, no salt added

½ cup frozen or canned mandarin oranges, drained
1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Afternoon Snack:

½ cup sliced raw carrots
1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Dinner:

Tofu/veggie stir-fry made with:

- 1 cup cooked brown rice (no salt or fat added)
- 1 cup mixed vegetables, cooked with vegetable oil
- ¾ cup calcium-enriched tofu
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes (or other seasoning of choice)

1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Day 2 | 1600 calories

Breakfast:

1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12
1 cup shredded wheat cereal
½ cup pineapple or other seasonal fruit
½ cup cantaloupe or other seasonal fruit

Morning Snack:

1 cup calcium-enriched soy yogurt
½ cup strawberries or other seasonal fruit

Lunch:

Sandwich made with:

- 2 slices whole wheat bread
- ¼ cup alfalfa sprouts
- 4 slices avocado
- 2 meatless turkey slices

1 cup rice or soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Afternoon Snack:

½ cup thin stick, hard, unsalted pretzels
6 baby carrots

Dinner:

Pasta with parsley-walnut sauce made with:

- 1¼ cups cooked whole wheat spaghetti
- ½ clove garlic, minced
- 2 Tablespoons walnuts
- 2 Tablespoons parsley
- Sautéed in 1 Tablespoon olive oil

1 cup cooked kale

Day 2 | 1600 calories lower cost

Breakfast:

¾ cup cooked shredded wheat cereal
1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12
½ cup orange juice, reconstituted from frozen

Morning Snack:

1 small apple
2 Tablespoons sunflower seeds, dry-roasted

Lunch:

Peanut butter-banana sandwich made with:

- 2 slices whole wheat bread
- 2 Tablespoons peanut butter
- ½ medium banana

½ cup cooked broccoli, from frozen
1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Afternoon Snack:

¾ cup thin stick, hard, unsalted pretzels
½ cup sliced raw carrots

Dinner:

Lentil soup made with:

- ¼ cup lentils
- ¼ cup onion and ¼ cup carrot, cooked in 1 teaspoon canola oil
- 1¼ cups water
- Spices (thyme, black pepper, bay leaves)

1 medium baked or microwaved potato, with black pepper, fresh or dried parsley, or other low-sodium seasonings
1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Day 1 | 1800 calories

Breakfast:

¾ cup oatmeal, cooked, with an optional sprinkle of cinnamon
¼ cup raisins
½ cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Morning Snack:

4 whole wheat, low-sodium crackers
1 medium apple

Lunch:

Hummus wrap made with:

- 1½-ounce whole wheat tortilla
- 1 cup fresh spinach
- ¼ cup chopped raw red pepper
- 3 slices avocado
- ¼ cup sliced cucumber
- 5 Tablespoons hummus

½ cup grapes or other seasonal fruit
1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Afternoon Snack:

½ cup sliced raw carrots
1 cup calcium-enriched soy yogurt
½ ounce dry-roasted, salt-free almonds

Dinner:

Seitan/veggie stir-fry made with:

- 1 cup cooked brown rice
- ¾ cup cooked Swiss chard
- ¼ cup cooked mushrooms
- ½ cup seitan strips
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes

1 cup enriched soy or rice milk

Day 2 | 1800 calories

Breakfast:

1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12
1 cup shredded wheat cereal
½ cup orange juice (freshly-squeezed, if desired)

Morning Snack:

½ cup strawberries or other seasonal fruit
1 cup calcium-enriched soy yogurt

Lunch:

Sandwich made with

- 2 slices whole wheat bread
- 2 meatless turkey slices
- ¼ cup alfalfa sprouts
- 4 slices avocado

½ cup snap peas, raw
½ cup diced cantaloupe or other seasonal fruit

Afternoon Snack:

½ cup thin stick, hard, unsalted pretzels
6 baby carrots

Dinner:

Pasta with parsley-walnut sauce made with:

- 1½ cups cooked whole wheat spaghetti
- ½ clove garlic, minced
- 3 Tablespoons walnuts
- 2 Tablespoons parsley
- Sautéed in 1 Tablespoon olive oil

1 cup cooked kale
1 cup rice or soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Day 1 | 1800 calories lower cost

Breakfast:

½ cup oatmeal, cooked, with an optional sprinkle of cinnamon
½ medium banana
¼ cup raisins
½ cup orange juice, reconstituted from frozen

Morning Snack:

4 whole wheat, low-sodium crackers
1 Tablespoon peanut butter, no salt
½ apple

Lunch:

Wrap made with:

- 10-inch flour tortilla
- ¼ cup green pepper, chopped and cooked
- ¼ cup chopped onion, cooked in 1 teaspoon canola oil
- ½ cup garbanzo beans, mashed, no salt added

½ cup canned, low-sodium green beans
½ cup frozen or canned mandarin oranges, drained
1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Afternoon Snack:

½ cup sliced raw carrots
1 cup enriched soymilk (as above)

Dinner:

Tofu/veggie stir-fry made with:

- 1 cup cooked brown rice (no salt or fat added)
- 1 cup canned, low-sodium mixed vegetables, cooked with vegetable oil
- ¾ cup calcium-enriched tofu cooked in 1 teaspoon canola oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced and ½ teaspoon minced ginger (or other spices or low-sodium broth)

1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E and B12

Day 2 | 1800 calories lower cost

Breakfast:

1 cup shredded wheat cereal
1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12
½ cup orange juice, reconstituted from frozen

Morning Snack:

1 medium apple
2 Tablespoons sunflower seeds, dry-roasted

Lunch:

Peanut butter-banana sandwich made with:

- 2 slices whole wheat bread
- 2 Tablespoons peanut butter
- ½ large banana

1 cup broccoli, from frozen
1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Afternoon Snack:

8 whole wheat, low-sodium crackers
½ cup sliced raw carrots

Dinner:

Lentil soup made with:

- ¼ cup lentils
- ¼ cup chopped onion and ¼ cup sliced carrot, cooked in 1 teaspoon canola oil
- 1¼ cups water
- Spices (thyme, black pepper, bay leaves)
- ¼ cup oyster crackers

1 large baked or microwaved potato, with black pepper, fresh or dried parsley, or other low-sodium seasonings
1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Day 1 2000 calories

Breakfast:

1 mini (1-ounce) whole wheat bagel
1½ Tablespoons peanut butter, reduced-sodium and reduced-sugar
1 cup calcium-enriched soy yogurt

Morning Snack:

1 large banana
½ cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Lunch:

2-ounce whole wheat bun with:

- 1 vegan hot dog
- ¼ cup chopped tomatoes

½ cup whole strawberries or other seasonal fruit
1 cup broccoli
1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Afternoon Snack:

• 4 whole wheat, low-sodium crackers
• 6 baby carrots

Dinner:

Seitan/veggie stir-fry made with:

- 1¼ cups cooked brown rice (no salt added)
- 1 cup spinach
- ½ cup snow peas
- ¼ cup sliced mushrooms
- ½ cup seitan strips
- 2 teaspoons canola oil
- 1 Tablespoon reduced-sodium soy sauce

1 large orange
1 cup rice or soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Day 2 2000 calories

Breakfast:

Smoothie made with

- 1 medium banana
- ½ cup strawberries or other seasonal fruit
- 1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12
- ½ cup calcium-enriched tofu
- 1 Tablespoon maple syrup

Morning Snack:

1 whole wheat English muffin
½ cup calcium-enriched soymilk
1½ Tablespoons almond butter

Lunch:

Salad made with:

- ½ cup vegan croutons
- 1 cup fresh spinach
- 1 cup red or green leaf lettuce
- ½ cup raw red pepper slices
- ¼ cup sliced cucumbers
- ½ cup garbanzo beans (canned, low-sodium, drained)

Salad dressing made with:

• 2 teaspoons olive oil
• 1 teaspoon vinegar
• ½ teaspoon vegan sugar

Afternoon Snack:

1-ounce bag hard, no-salt pretzels
½ cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Dinner:

2 whole wheat rolls
2 vegan/soy burgers
2 slices tomato
½ cup cooked couscous
1 cup cooked broccoli
1 cup chopped cantaloupe or other seasonal fruit

Day 1 2000 calories lower cost

Breakfast:

1 slice whole wheat bread
1½ Tablespoons peanut butter, no-salt added
1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Morning Snack:

1 large banana
1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Lunch:

Black beans and rice made with:

- 1 cup cooked brown rice
- 1 teaspoon canola oil
- ½ cup black beans

1 medium sweet potato, baked or microwaved
½ cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Afternoon Snack:

4 whole wheat, low-sodium crackers
½ cup sliced carrots

Dinner:

Pasta with broccoli and chickpeas made with:

- 1 cup cooked whole wheat pasta
- 1 cup broccoli, from frozen
- ¾ cup pasta sauce with 2 teaspoons canola oil
- ½ cup garbanzo beans, canned, drained

1 large apple
1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Day 2 2000 calories lower cost

Breakfast:

Smoothie made with

- ½ cup frozen berries
- ½ banana
- 1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12
- ½ cup calcium-enriched tofu
- 1 Tablespoon maple syrup

Morning Snack:

1 ounce lowfat, unsalted tortilla chips
½ cup pinto beans, unsalted, mashed with 1 Tablespoon salsa
1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Lunch:

Pasta with veggies, made with:

- 1 cup cooked whole wheat pasta
- ½ cup cooked spinach, from frozen
- ½ cup cooked carrots, from frozen
- 2 teaspoons canola oil

1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Afternoon Snack:

½ cup hard, unsalted pretzels
½ cup raw celery
1 cup orange juice, reconstituted from frozen

Dinner:

Eggless banana pancakes with:

- 1 banana
- ¼ cup rolled oats
- ¼ cup whole wheat flour
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder
- ¾ cup water
- 1 teaspoon oil

1 cup mashed sweet potato or winter squash (cooked from frozen)
¼ cup walnuts

Day 1 2200 calories

Breakfast:

1 cup oatmeal, cooked, with an optional sprinkle of cinnamon
¼ cup raisins
1 mini (1-ounce) whole wheat bagel with:
• 2 Tablespoons peanut butter, reduced-salt, reduced-sugar
1 cup grapefruit juice (freshly squeezed, if desired)

Morning Snack:

1 large banana
1 cup calcium-enriched soy yogurt

Lunch:

2-ounce whole wheat bun with
• 1 vegan hot dog
• ¼ cup chopped tomatoes
1 cup broccoli
1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E and B12

Afternoon Snack:

4 whole wheat, low-sodium crackers
6 baby carrots
½ cup raw cauliflower

Dinner:

Seitan/veggie stir-fry made with:
• 1¼ cups cooked brown rice (no salt added)
• 1 cup spinach
• ½ cup snow peas
• ¼ cup sliced mushrooms
• ½ cup seitan strips
• 2 teaspoons canola oil
• ½ teaspoon garlic, minced
• ½ teaspoon ginger, minced
1 large orange
1 cup rice or soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Day 2 2200 calories

Breakfast:

Smoothie made with
• 1 medium banana
• ½ cup strawberries or other seasonal fruit
• ½ cup calcium-enriched tofu
• 1 Tablespoon maple syrup
• 1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Morning Snack:

½ whole wheat English muffin
½ Tablespoon almond butter
½ cup enriched soymilk (as above)

Lunch:

Salad made with:
• ½ cup croutons
• 1 cup fresh spinach
• 1 cup red or green leaf lettuce
• ½ cup raw red pepper slices
• ¼ cup sliced cucumber
• ½ cup garbanzo beans (canned, low-sodium, drained)

Salad dressing made with:

• 2 teaspoons olive oil
• 1 teaspoon vinegar
• ½ teaspoon vegan sugar

Afternoon Snack:

2 ounces hard, unsalted pretzels
½ cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Dinner:

1 whole wheat hamburger roll
1 vegan/soy burger
2 slices tomato
½ cup cooked couscous
1 cup cooked broccoli
1 cup chopped cantaloupe or other seasonal fruit
1 cup rice or soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Day 1 2200 calories lower cost

Breakfast:

1 slice whole wheat bread
2 Tablespoons peanut butter, no salt added
1 cup orange juice, reconstituted from frozen

Morning Snack:

1 large banana
1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E and B12

Lunch:

Black beans and rice made with:
• 1¼ cups cooked brown rice
• 1 teaspoon canola oil
• ½ cup black beans
½ cup chopped spinach, cooked from frozen
½ cup cauliflower, cooked from frozen
1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Afternoon Snack:

6 whole wheat, low-sodium crackers
½ cup sliced carrots

Dinner:

Pasta with veggies & chickpeas made with:
• 1½ cups cooked whole wheat pasta
• 1 cup broccoli, from frozen
• ¾ cup pasta sauce with 2 teaspoons canola oil
• ½ cup garbanzo beans, canned, drained
1 large apple
1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E and B12

Day 2 2200 calories lower cost

Breakfast:

Smoothie made with
• ½ cup frozen berries
• ½ banana
• 1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12
• ½ cup calcium-enriched tofu
• 1 Tablespoon maple syrup or other vegan sweetener

Morning Snack:

2 ounces lowfat, unsalted tortilla chips
1 cup enriched soymilk (as above)
¾ cup pinto beans, unsalted, mashed with 2 Tablespoons salsa

Lunch:

Pasta with veggies, made with:
• 1 cup cooked whole wheat pasta
• ½ cup cooked spinach, from frozen
• ½ cup cooked carrots, from frozen
• 2 teaspoons canola oil
1 cup soymilk, enriched with calcium, and vitamins A, D, E, and B12

Afternoon Snack:

½ cup hard, unsalted pretzels
½ cup raw celery
½ cup orange juice, reconstituted from frozen

Dinner:

Eggless banana pancakes with:
• 1 banana
• ¼ cup rolled oats
• ¼ cup whole-wheat flour
• 1½ teaspoons baking powder
• ¾ cup water
• 1 teaspoon oil
1 cup mashed sweet potato or winter squash (cooked from frozen)
¾ ounce walnuts