

This is the diet we're all Googling

No, it's not Paleo.

By Jaime Rose Chambers



Photo: istock

Gluten-free, dairy-free and sugar-free diets are about as trendy as Gucci loafers and 90s fashion right now (that's to say, *very*) but the one diet we're all Googling, according to Hitwise's Clean Living report, is the vegan diet, which might not be a surprise if you too swear by soy-based snacks.

Blame the #cleaneating movement or those better-than-the-real-thing dessert recipes that flood our feeds, but cutting out all animal products (that's honey included, FYI) has become a much more popular option (to look into, anyway) than it was in 2014. Like, 217% more popular, according to the data published today.

Research shows that interest in veganism spiked in December 2016 and January 2017, with searches increasing by 28% over this period.

There are a host of reasons why people become vegan – including religious, ideological, ethical and the perception that the vegan eating plan might lead to a healthier lifestyle, but as everybody's needs are different, this is best assessed by a health practitioner. Veganism also extends beyond a person's day on a plate - to the clothes they wear, for example – and subscribing to certain philosophies “that reject the commodity status of animals,” in every industry... not just food or fashion.

Interestingly, searches for “paleo” have dropped 22% since 2014, which “could be due to the negative press surrounding paleo guru, Pete Evans and his position on vaccinations,” according to the report.

Other keywords that have seen an upsurge in the same time include “detox” (27%), “gluten free” (85%) and “sugar free” (80%).

Interest in going – or just reading about, anyway – “dairy free” has decreased 8% since 2015 (milk has gotten some better PR since then, apparently) but according to Hitwise, “it’s not statistically drastic enough to warrant writing this ‘diet’ off” quite yet.”

As for us? We’ll be here enjoying our rich, agave-syrup-laden treats – they’re free of all animal products... and they taste amazing, too - and if you're interested too, here's **exactly what a dietitian says vegans should eat in a day**. Just a little something we prepared earlier...

This is exactly what vegans should eat in a day

Jaime Rose Chambers at mybodyandsoul

From breakfast to dinner - and everything in between - this is precisely what a vegan's day on a plate should look like, according to a dietitian.



Photo: iStock

The vegan movement is very strong right now, with many people choosing to make the often-dramatic diet and lifestyle change. There are now countless blogs, Instagram accounts, websites and restaurants dedicated to the diet/ lifestyle that has made veganism more accessible, easy and acceptable than ever.

Where a vegetarian may eat some animal products like dairy and eggs, a vegan eats absolutely no animal products, including any foods that have come from an animal – including things like honey. The reasons for going vegan range from the known health benefits of including more plant foods and reducing animal foods from the diet, environmental reasons and the treatment and harm that may come to the animals in processing.

These are all incredibly valid reasons for making such a drastic change to a diet. However, much care needs to go into creating a perfectly balanced vegan diet because so very many essential nutrients can be missing, which can cause serious health implications in the long term. More often than not, some of those nutrients simply can't be met in the diet alone, and often dietary supplements will be needed to fill in those nutritional gaps.

The following is a list of nutrients that may be lacking in a vegan diet:

Calcium

Up until the age of 30-35, we are still laying down calcium in our bones. After that, calcium is required in the diet to prevent loss from your bones. A long-term calcium deficiency can cause brittle bones, known as osteoporosis.

Plant sources of calcium include:

- Green leafy vegetables such as collard greens, kale and broccoli
- Other vegetables like butternut squash and sweet potato
- Soy products like tofu and soy beans
- Calcium-fortified plant milks such as soy, almond and rice milk
- Legumes & lentils like navy beans, white beans and chickpeas
- Some dried fruits like figs and apricots
- Almonds

Avoid eating these foods with caffeine and alcohol as they can inhibit the absorption of calcium in the gut.

Iron

Iron deficiency is very common in vegans. Iron is essential for carrying oxygen around the blood, so a deficiency can make you feel incredibly tired and lethargic. By combining plant foods with vitamin C rich foods like lemon juice or tomatoes, plant sources of iron, known as non-heme iron can be absorbed more effectively.

Vegan sources of iron include:

- Wholegrains such as brown rice and oats
- Soy beans and its products like tofu
- Green leafy vegetables like kale and spinach
- Peanut butter

Omega 3 fatty acids

This fatty acid is essential in the diet because our bodies can't produce it so we must rely solely on our diet for it. The richest and most bioavailable source are from fatty fish. Plant sources contain only minimal amounts of omega-3 fatty acids so would need to be included in the diet daily. These include:

- Flaxseeds or linseeds (grind them fresh)
- Chia seeds
- Walnuts

Protein

Proteins that contain all of the 9 essential amino acids are known as complete proteins. Animal products all contain complete proteins but there are a few plant sources that also contain complete proteins as well as some that can be combined to create complete proteins if the vegan diet is varied. Good sources of plant protein include:

- Quinoa
- Buckwheat
- Tofu & tempeh
- Soy beans and soy milk
- Lentils, legumes & pulses
- Nuts and nut spreads
- Seeds and seed spreads
- Mycoprotein (some Quorn products)

- Ezekiel bread
- Seitan

Vitamin B12

Vitamin B12 is an essential nutrient that is involved in creating red blood cells, maintaining healthy nerve cells and producing DNA. There are very few plant foods that contain vitamin B12 and vegans will mostly have to get it from vitamin B12 fortified foods such as:

- Nori seaweed
- Tempeh and other soy products
- Yeast extract
- Faux meat substitutes
- Fortified breakfast cereal and breads

Generally, foods that should appear in healthy vegan diet every day include:

- Wholegrains
- Vegetables
- Fruit
- Legumes and lentils
- Nuts and seeds
- Healthy fats like olive oil and avocado

So, what does the perfect 'Day on a Plate' for a vegan look like? Here are a variety of vegan meals and snacks to create the perfect meal plan:

Breakfast:

- Tofu scramble with wholegrain toast and vegetables such as roast tomato, sautéed spinach and mushrooms
- Rolled or steel cut oats made with calcium-fortified plant milk like soy milk, topped with fruit and nuts & seeds
- Smoothie made on calcium-fortified almond milk with mixed fruits (mango, berries, banana), coconut yoghurt, chia seeds, ground flaxseeds and a tablespoon of oats

Lunch

- Brown rice and mixed bean salad with spinach, tomato and onion, avocado and an olive oil vinaigrette
- Ezekiel bread sandwich with hummus, avocado, sprouts and salad
- Large mixed salad with quinoa, pan-fried tofu, mixed seeds and an olive oil, tahini and lemon dressing

Dinner

- Vegan shepherd's pie made with lentils and vegetables and topped with sweet potato mash
- Tempeh and Asian vegetable stir fry with brown rice
- Whole-meal pasta and faux mince bolognese topped with nutritional yeast

Snacks

- Wholegrain crackers and natural peanut butter or cashew cheese
- Fresh fruit and mixed nuts
- Dried figs, apricots and peaches and mixed seeds
- Vegetable sticks and hummus

Nutritional requirements are individual and can change in different life stages as well. For a personally tailored vegan meal plan, make sure to see an accredited practising dietitian.

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Source: My Body and Soul - bodyandsoul.com.au