

Vegetarian Diets for Correctional Facilities

PHYSICIANS COMMITTEE FOR RESPONSIBLE MEDICINE

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Many people choose vegetarian diets for reasons of health, ethics, environmental concerns, or others. The American Dietetic Association states that vegetarian and vegan diets have health benefits and are nutritious when appropriately planned. Luckily, planning is easy, and these foods are readily available and often less expensive than non-vegetarian choices.

The Basics of Vegetarian or Vegan Diets

Using the following four food groups is an easy way to provide complete nutrition. These are the building blocks of each meal:

- Whole grains: rice, pasta, bread, oatmeal, breakfast cereals, bagels, etc.
- Legumes: kidney beans, black-eyed peas, lentils, split peas, vegetarian baked beans, soymilk, tofu, nuts, nut butters, etc.
- Vegetables: any canned, frozen, or fresh vegetable, such as green beans, spinach, carrots, potatoes, sweet potatoes, broccoli, and collard greens
- Fruit: any variety of canned, frozen, or fresh fruit

A Word About Vitamin B12

Vitamin B12 is needed for healthy nerves and healthy blood. It is found in fortified foods, such as some breakfast cereals and soymilks. If these foods are not offered on a daily basis, any common multiple vitamin should be provided as a source of vitamin B12. (Non-vegetarians derive vitamin B12 from animal products.)

Meal Examples

Good breakfast choices include: oatmeal with raisins, muffins and toast, cereal with soymilk or rice milk, bagels with jam, and fresh fruits or juices.

Good lunch and dinner choices include: pasta with tomato sauce, peanut butter sandwiches, baked beans, beans and rice, baked potatoes, vegetarian burgers, vegetarian hot dogs, bean and rice burritos, vegetarian chili, bean and vegetable tacos, stir-fried seasonal vegetables with rice, and grilled vegetable fajitas. To make things simple, always offer vegan choices. Vegan (pronounced “vee gun”) foods contain no animal products. They are free of butter, milk, other dairy products, eggs, meat, fish, or poultry products, and do not include any hidden animal products. As a result, they are acceptable to all types of vegetarians, as well as to individuals with certain religious constraints.

Some hidden animal products (all of which should be omitted) include:

- lard or tallow
- mayonnaise
- lactose
- chicken, beef, veal, or fish broth
- whey or casein
- gelatin
- honey

If you do not offer a specific vegetarian option, allow individuals to have double portions of fruits, vegetables, grains, beans, and nut butters. Offer bags of nuts, seeds, and Clif bars in the commissary as nutritious snacks. Suggestions for adapting existing recipes are included below.

Adapting Existing Recipes

You can easily adapt your existing menu items to meet the needs of vegans. Here are some suggestions:

- Use vegetable oil instead of animal fat to fry and sauté.
- Use vegetable stock or commercially prepared vegetable broth in soups, sauces, rice dishes, and other recipes calling for beef or chicken broth.
- Prepare bean or vegetable dishes, such as baked beans, chili, or sautéed vegetables, without butter, meat, or meat flavoring. These dishes will be popular with vegetarians and meat-eaters alike.
- Offer pasta dishes with a meatless pasta sauce and purchase pasta made without eggs.
- Replace cottage or ricotta cheese with crumbled tofu in lasagna or other dishes.
- Offer and use vegetable oil-based margarine instead of butter. Vegetable margarine or shortening can replace butter or lard in recipes.
- Purchase breads and rolls made without animal fat, eggs, or dairy products, and with little or no added fat.

Looking for Commercial Convenience Foods?

Many handy vegetarian products are available that are easy to prepare and store well. The following list will get you started. For additional products and suppliers, check with your distributor or contact the Vegetarian Resource Group (410-366-8343; www.vrg.org) for a comprehensive listing of vegetarian food manufacturers.

Meat Substitutes

- **Archer Daniels Midland**, 800-637-5850; *www.admfoodservice.com/products*: Natural Burger, NutriSoy chicken, vegetarian meatballs and sausage, etc.
- **Boca Burger**, 312-201-0300; *www.bocaburger.com*: vegan burgers, lasagna, pizza, sausage, chili
- **Dixie USA Inc.**, 800-233-3668; *www.dixiediner.com*: meatless meat loaf, meatball, taco filling, and chili mixes; vegetarian chicken, turkey, beef, and tuna substitutes
- **Eco-Cuisine**, 303-402-0289; *http://www.eco-cuisine.com/*: vegan breakfast sausage, chicken, and beef substitutes; also vegan broth and baked goods mixes; available in bulk
- **Eden Foods**, 888-424-EDEN (3336); *www.edenfoods.com*: beans (chickpeas, pinto, black, etc.)
- **Gardenburger Foodservice**, 877-6-VEGGIE (834443); *http://www.gardenburgerfoodservice.com/*: vegetarian and vegan burgers, sandwiches, and meals; vegan chicken substitutes; available in bulk
- **Lightlife Foods**, 800-SOY-EASY (769-3279); *www.lightlife.com*: vegan burgers, vegetarian hot dogs and sausage (breakfast and Italian), vegetarian cold cuts, Gimme Lean ground meat substitute, chili
- **Nasoya Foods**, 800-229-TOFU (8638); *www.nasoya.com*: tofu
- **Northern Soy Inc.**, 585-235-8970; *www.soyboy.com*: vegetarian hot dogs, breakfast links, and burgers; tempeh, tofu, ravioli
- **Vitasoy**, 800-VITASOY (848-2769); *www.vitasoy-usa.com*: tofu
- **White Wave**, 303-635-3470; *www.whitewave.com*: vegetarian cold cuts, hot dogs, and burgers; tempeh, tofu, and seitan
- **Yves Veggie Cuisine**, 800-434-4246; *www.yvesveggie.com*: vegetarian hot dogs, cold cuts, pepperoni, and burgers

Dairy Alternatives

- **Eden Foods**, 800-248-0301; *www.edenfoods.com*: soymilk and rice milk blends
- **Ener-G Foods**, 206-767-6660 or 800-331-5222; *www.ener-g.com*: egg and milk substitutes
- **Hain Pure Foods**, 800-434-4246; *www.hainpurefoods.com*: soymilk
- **Rich Products**, 800-828-2021; *www.richs.com*: fat-free and low-fat nondairy dessert topping, icing, and filling
- **Tofutti Brands**, 908-272-2400; *www.tofutti.com*: dairy-free “ice cream,” cream cheese substitute, sour cream substitute, soy cheese, egg replacement, pizza, blintzes
- **Vitasoy**, 800-VITASOY (848-2769); *www.vitasoy-usa.com*: soymilk
- **White Wave**, 303-443-3470; *www.whitewave.com*: soymilk and dairy-free yogurt

Other Ingredients

- **Dixie USA Inc.**, 800-233-3668; *www.dixiediner.com*: vegetarian broth mixes
- **Ener-G Foods**, 206-767-6660 or 800-331-5222; *www.ener-g.com*: pasta, crackers, soup
- **Fantastic Foods**, 707-778-7801 or 800-888-7801; *www.fantasticfoods.com*: falafel, hummus, instant black beans, tabouli salad, vegetarian chili, whole-wheat couscous, Nature’s Burger (original flavor); available in bulk
- **Imagine Foods**, 800-434-4246; *www.imaginefoods.com*: soups, broths, and cooking stock
- **Nasoya Foods**, 800-229-TOFU (8638); *www.nasoya.com*: egg-free mayonnaise substitute
- **Scenario International Co.**, 818-986-3777 or 800-400-7772; *www.organic-gourmet.com*: vegetarian broth concentrate and bouillon cubes
- **Worthington Foods**, 614-555-9511; *www.kelloggs.com/brand/worthington*: vegetarian chili, vegetarian cutlets, vegetable scallops, and vegetarian burgers; available in bulk