Five Super Protein-Rich Vegan Foods for Healthy Living

Healthy living is usually based upon the concept of meeting nutritional needs and eating plenty of high protein foods, which balances the equation of other required nutrients.

However, if you're a vegetarian, it can be quite tough to meet your protein requirements without any meat-based products. Since that's the case, here are five meat-free options that can help you reach your nutritional goals.

Nutritional Yeast

If you've never heard of nutritional yeast, you've been missing out. This is one of the best kept vegetarian secrets when it comes to complete plant-based protein sources.

Nutritional yeast is actually harvested from molasses and has a similar texture and consistency to parmesan cheese. At 14 grams per ounce, nutritional yeast is an easy way to add thickness and "cheesy" flavor to pasta sauces or even popcorn.

Brewer's yeast. This type of yeast is grown from hops (a by-product of brewing beer), and has been around since beer making began. It can be consumed by humans, used to fortify other products, or even given to pets.

Pure nutritional yeast. This is usually grown from sugar cane, beet molasses, or wood pulp. And it's grown specifically for the purpose of human food consumption.

> *Nutritional yeast, which is not to be confused with Active Dry Yeast or Brewer's Yeast, is a deactivated form of the microorganism Saccharomyces cerevisiae. The yeast is pasteurized and placed in a dryer to deactivate the yeast and bring out its nutritional properties. The yeast, which is*

> *gluten free, has a flavor reminiscent of cheese and is rich in amino acids, B-complex vitamins, niacin, folic acid, zinc, selenium and thiamine. Bob's Red Mill's nutritional yeast has been fortified with vitamin B-12, as well. Nutritional yeast is popular with vegetarians and vegans whose diets can be deplete of B-complex vitamins, especially B-12." – Bob's Red Mill*

Quinoa

A species of the goosefoot grain, quinoa is typically known for its edible seeds and complete amino acid profile. It tips the scales at 24 grams per uncooked cup and also boasts high levels of manganese, copper, and magnesium.

Quinoa can be whipped up in around 15 minutes and contains double the amount of fiber compared to most grains. If you enjoy heartier grains with a nutty texture, quinoa is the perfect choice for you.

Buckwheat

Buckwheat is another rice alternative that actually comes from a fruit seed derivative. If a person does not tolerate gluten well, buckwheat is an excellent alternative.

There is actually research showing that those who consume (on average) 4 ounces of buckwheat a day actually improved their LDL to HDL ratio and reduce their serum cholesterol levels.

Beans

Beans are a vegetarian's dream food – high in protein and antioxidants, low in cost, and plentiful in fiber, vitamins, and minerals. What's not to love?

Not only that, research has shown that a moderate bean intake

can be linked to lower incidences of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain forms of cancer.

Lentils and beans can offer anywhere from 8-22 grams of protein per cup depending on the type of bean consumed.

Just remember to soak beans and lentils prior to cooking to release health damaging enzyme inhibitors.

Plant Based Protein Powders

The plant-based protein market has exploded lately. There are isolate variations ranging from soy, hemp, wheat, rice, and even pea to fulfill any amino acid deficiencies you might have through your nutrition. A few companies offer complete proteins with all of the essential amino acids. Do your research and choose carefully to make sure that your supplementation choice is rightly based upon your current nutritional intake. Protein isolates are more easily digested, and are often used by those who have a hard time assimilating protein, but isolates tend to be acidic and can damage the body for various reasons (especially whey isolates) if taken for long periods of time.

Mastering a Healthy Nutrition

Don’t fall into the trap of believing there’s a “one size fits all” approach when it comes to reaching your goals. When it comes to your health and fitness goals, protein is certainly essential, but you don’t always have to choose a meat-based option. With a little knowledge and personal research, you can easily reach your daily minimums and still eat foods that you enjoy.

Recommended Reading:

- *Total Nutrition – Make your own Homemade Multivitamin and Mineral Formula* (great source of vegan protein!)

- *10 Vegan-Friendly Sources Of Protein*
- *Buckwheat Granola w/ Stevia* – Sketch Free Eating (featured image, see recipe)

Sources:

- *Vegetarian Recipes* – M & S
- *The Cancer, Diabetes, and Heart Disease Link* – Today's Dietitian
- *Optimization of bioactive compounds in buckwheat sprouts and their effect on blood cholesterol in hamsters.* – NCBI, Pub Med