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Nutritious & Delicious Vegetarian-Vegan Cooking

Raw vs Cooked Foods: This is a question that arises quite frequently in regards to healthy eating, vegetarian food, etc. Raw foods are cleansing, cooked foods are nourishing. As in all things, balance is key. If we lived in the tropics, ie: warm climate, raw food all the time would make more sense. Raw foods in the middle of the winter, when it is 20 below, does not make sense. The body needs warming foods for the climate we live in. Think about how people eat who are in tune with their surroundings; we automatically eat more raw, locally, seasonally grown produce in the summer and cook up warming soups and stews in the cooler fall and winter weather.

Balancing a Vegetarian Diet: Whether you eat meat and animal products or not, the diet needs to be a whole food diet. Any eating style based on refined, processed, packaged foods is going to be unhealthy and physically, mentally & emotionally degenerative in nature.

Create meals around 100% whole foods: make plant foods the main stay of your meals, eat plenty of beans/ nuts/seeds, eat only whole grains, change your diet with the seasons so you are eating what grows locally and is in season (strawberries or salad greens in January is not seasonal in Northern NY state!). Discover what works for you to maintain a healthy weight and an energetic, healing lifestyle.

Some people thrive eating very small quantities of whole grains while other people tolerate more whole grains in their daily diet without an unhealthy weight gain. Discover your balance: eat it, live it.

Nutritional intake should rhythmically change with the seasons of the year and our lives. We need heavier, more grounding foods that are higher in protein and fats in the cooler months and lighter more energetic foods in the warmer months. This same principle works in the season of our lives.

Example: nuts and seeds are wonderful cool & cold season foods. In warmer months, eat less of them. Nature gives them to us to harvest in the late summer and fall to store for winter use. When spring arrives we are blessed with green stuff popping from the earth. Our diet changes with the

Dry vs Fresh Herbs: In season, nothing beats fresh herbs. You will use larger quantities of fresh herbs in cooking and creating raw salads. Dried herbs are concentrated and you need to use smaller amounts. Herbs are power houses of nutrition. Enjoy them as a healthy addition to your daily diet.

When I use dried herbs, I simply pour the amount I want to use into my hand. I then firmly rub my palms together, to "grind" the herbs, over the food I am creating to crush the herbs and release their aromatic, essential oils. This saves space in my kitchen, no mortar and pestle needed!

Honey: Honey is a wonderful sweetener (not for vegans). I recommend it in raw foods only. I do not recommend it for baking treats or in cooked food. Using a bit of honey in tea or coffee is fine as you are not actually cooking it. Honey is heavy and sticky when used in baking and according to Ayurvedic traditional healing is mucous forming in the body when cooked.

Cooking Onions: Onions contain mustard oil which is toxic in large quantities. Mustard oil is metabolized into thiocyanate which decreases thyroxine production in the thyroid gland. Thyroxine

and the thyroid are important in many bodily functions. Cooking onions first and well apparently gets rid of this toxin. When eating raw onions, eat in small quantities.

Eggs: Eggs are considered a “complete” protein. With that said, you can certainly get plenty of good protein from plant sources (beans, nuts & seeds) if you choose not to eat eggs. Whole foods, again, is the key to healthy bodies. Eggs, if eaten, should be from truly free range birds who are outside finding their own food. Grocery store eggs are an unhealthy choice. They are from totally confined birds who are fed poor quality food. The birds are unhealthy because of this lifestyle. Their eggs can not possibly be healthy if they are not. Know your food sources. Healthy, whole foods creates healthy, whole human bodies.

Whole Grains: The human body was not meant to eat refined foods. When grains are refined into white, unbleached, cake, all purpose and enriched flours they are now seriously depleted in nutrition. If the nutrition is not in the food you eat, your body will pay the consequences. This is one of the factors that creates degenerative diseases in our bodies.

Whole food = whole bodies = whole health!

Eating your grains whole or ground into whole flours to make breads, pastas, noodles, treats, etc. is nourishing to the body and prevents degenerative disease.

Bean Burger Recipe: (yes, bean burgers & they are very yummy, unlike most of the bean burgers you buy in restaurants and frozen in boxes!)

1 medium onion, minced
2 cloves garlic, minced
3 cups cooked beans: black, kidney, pinto, chickpea...
½ cup natural peanut butter (no hydrogenated oils or sugars please, PB should be ground peanuts!)
1/3 cup organic ketchup, there is not corn syrup in organic
1 ½ tsp each: cumin, coriander, turmeric, chili powder (add more or less to your taste)*
¾ cup whole grain flour (or grind hazelnuts, Brazil nuts or almonds to “flour” and use instead of flour if you avoid grains in your diet)

Saute onion & garlic in butter or olive oil. Mash the beans well. Add in all other ingredients & mix well. Let sit for 15 minutes to test consistency. If too wet / mushy, add a bit more flour at a time until good burger consistency: forms well & holds together. Fry in burger form in butter or olive oil. Dress, serve & eat as you would a meat burger.

*if you are not fond of middle east curry type spices, add your own blend of spices, use oregano, parsley, basil, thyme & rosemary for fun Italian bean burgers, Chili powder makes them Tex-Mex.... Be creative, play in the kitchen, make food your art form, have fun with food & life!

As I will say with any recipe, play with it! Change the nut butters and beans you use, change the spices. Make your creations uniquely yours!

Questions? Contact me and I will be happy to chat.

Thanks for joining us for creative cooking fun!! Paula

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