



Citrus Couscous: Image by pixel1 from Pixabay

10 MEAT-FREE PROTEIN ALTERNATIVES

By Jane Leonhardt

If you follow a vegan or vegetarian diet, I'm sure you've been asked "Where do you get your protein??" one too many times.

Sure, plant-based diets might have to work a bit harder to get the right amounts of protein in their diets to stay healthy, but the work is not very hard. Protein is in a lot of foods that you might not expect, and not only that, but the protein content is probably higher than you think.

It is very important to have the right amount of protein in your diet whether you are a vegan, vegetarian or omnivore.

Protein deficiency can manifest in many ways: hair, skin and nail problems, decreased muscle mass, weakened bones, weakened immune systems, and more.

Not only body builders and gym-goers need high amounts of protein in their diets. Perhaps they need more than the average person because they are trying to build muscle mass, not just maintain it, but getting the proper amount of protein is important for *everybody*.

As a rule of thumb, you should aim to have about 50g of protein in your daily diet to maintain a healthy body. If you are looking to gain muscle mass, you should aim to consume about 1g of protein per 1lb of body weight.

Here are 10 excellent, plant-based sources of protein:

1. SOY

Soybeans and products made from soy are an excellent source of protein. Tofu contains about 10g of protein per $\frac{1}{2}$ cup.

Immature soybeans (edamame) contain about 8.5g of protein per $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

Tempeh contains about 15g of protein per $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

2. RED & GREEN LENTILS

Lentils are super packed with protein. There is about 18g of protein per 1 cup of cooked lentils! Some grocery stores carry *lentil pasta*. Not only is it protein-packed, it's gluten free, too.

3. PEANUTS

Peanuts contain a whopping 38g of protein in each cup. Peanuts, though, are high in fat and calories so they are certainly better to be eaten as a protein-packed snack rather than something to be too heavily relied on.

4. CHICKPEAS

Chickpeas are extremely versatile and packed with protein. Ringing in at 40g of protein per cup, they are a great supplement to any diet. Make them into a hummus, add them to a salad, or toss them in a soup. Chickpeas are an easy way to up your protein intake.

5. SEITAN

Seitan, made from wheat gluten is a partial protein on its own, as well as soy sauce, which contains the amino acid lysine. When seitan is cooked in soy sauce, it can contain about 21g of protein per $\frac{1}{3}$ cup

6. BEANS & RICE

Beans and rice are a dish in which a complete protein source is created when the two parts are combined. With 7g per cup, it can be eaten as a side dish, a whole dinner, or mashed with chickpeas and spread on toast for breakfast.

7. EZEKIEL BREAD

After you make that beans, rice and chickpea spread, you might want to eat it on a slice of Ezekiel toast. Ezekiel bread has 4g of protein per slice on its own which can be bumped up to over 20g of protein when topped with the spread.

8. PEAS

Peas might be small, but they are mighty. One cup of peas contains about 9g of protein. Eaten as a side dish, in a pasta dish, or tossed into a salad, they are a great way to add a little protein punch to your meal.

9. ASPARAGUS

Each asparagus stem contains about half a gram of protein. A healthy serving of asparagus can provide you with upwards of 5g of protein.

10. AVOCADO

Avocados, perhaps the most versatile fruit, contain about 4g of protein, per avocado. Mash and spread one on toast for breakfast, add slices to a sandwich for lunch, or make an avocado pesto pasta sauce for dinner (*lentil* pasta, of course).

Get those protein levels up and watch your energy change and body start to shine!

SOURCES:

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