

**SIMNETT NUTRITION**

# **EASY VEGAN** *Meal Planner*

The ultimate meal planning formula to create  
nourishing & balanced plant-based meals

BY DEREK SIMNETT, CNP

2018



**SIMNETT**NUTRITION

**EASY VEGAN**  
*Meal Planner*

By **Derek Simnett, CNP**

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The Easy Vegan Muscle Meals is designed for generally healthy individuals. As with any nutritional program, you should consult your licensed healthcare practitioner before beginning.

Nothing in the Easy Vegan Muscle Meals should be misconstrued as medical treatment or advice. The participant understands that undertaking this program is the sole responsibility of themselves and not that of the provider of the recipes.

Be advised that the recipes are not intended as a prescription for any illness or any disease. Not all foods are tolerated by everyone equally. If difficulties or discomfort arise due to your inability to digest, tolerate or utilize any foods suggested, discontinue use until the reason for the difficulty can be addressed - if necessary seek appropriate medical care.



## ***TABLE OF CONTENTS***

<b><i>EASY VEGAN MEAL BUILDER</i></b>	<b><i>5</i></b>
<b><i>EXAMPLE MEAL USING THE MEAL BUILDER</i></b>	<b><i>11</i></b>
<b><i>SIMNETT NUTRITION PRO-TIPS</i></b>	<b><i>15</i></b>
<b><i>THE MEAL BUILDER WITH THE 5 COMPONENTS OF A VEGAN MEAL</i></b>	<b><i>17</i></b>
<b><i>THREE FREE RECIPES FROM THE EASY VEGAN MUSCLE EBOOK</i></b>	<b><i>20</i></b>

# INTRODUCTION

I created the The Easy Vegan Meal Builder to help explain what goes on in my head when I step into the kitchen to make a meal!

Cooking and making delicious, wholesome food comes naturally to me now, but it wasn't always like that. In order to help make the time you spend in your kitchen more effortless, I have come up with an easy to follow vegan meal planner template that will help you create nourishing & balanced meals for you and your loved ones.

I know a lot of the people who watch my youtube videos think *"I love copying Derek's meals but I just can't branch out or figure out how to formulate these meals on my own."* So today I am going to explain to you the thought process behind the meals I make. It really isn't that difficult! My Meal Builder will help you become more confident in the kitchen and and save you time! Cooking should be fun, stress free and most of all delicious!

## BIO

Derek is a Certified Nutritional Practitioner who loves inspiring others to live healthier lives. His simple and motivating approach to body movement and vegan nutrition have produced amazing results for him and his many supporters.

"Food is only the fuel, where will you let it take you?" is a quote that Derek often repeats. He wants his supporters to understand that while eating well is important for maximum vitality, it's how you serve the world and others around you that really matters. It all starts with what is on our plate.



**Derek Simnett**  
CNP & SN FOUNDER

# MY VEGAN MEAL FORMULA

I find that many people struggle with what to make for lunch and dinner, so for this reason my vegan meal builder will mainly focus on lunches and dinners. Breakfast seems to be easy for most people and there are a lot of different options. You can make oatmeal or overnight oats, buckwheat with fruit and berries, smoothies & smoothie bowls (my personal favourite) or just a big bowl of fruit!

For lunch and dinner, this is the template I follow to help me create easy and delicious vegan meals on the go.



## **Step 1** *Clean the kitchen!*

The first thing I do before I even think of cooking is making sure I have a clean kitchen space. A clean cutting board, knife and clean pots and pans makes a world of difference. Cooking in a dirty work space is not only uninspiring but also unsanitary!



## **Step 2** *Deciding what to make*

How do I decide what to make? I ask myself two things: “what do I feel like eating?” & “What do I have on hand?”

When I think back to my younger years, I would always center my main meals around some type of protein rich food (at that time it was meat). For example, if I was cooking some type of meat, I would make that the main part of my meal and have sides like sauteed vegetables, maybe a side salad or some rice or potatoes.

We can take that same principle of having a protein rich food as the main part of the dish and apply it to vegan meals, too. Yes, it's that easy! Protein rich plant based foods include: lentils, tempeh, tofu, beans and rice, chickpeas, and quinoa. Lately, I've been cooking quinoa, red lentils and split mung beans together in one pot with added spices. It is a great combination!

You can also base your meal around higher protein vegan products like veggie burgers and mock meats, but in this guide I will be using a whole foods approach because I really want everyone to gain the benefits of incorporating whole foods into their diet. Whole foods are much healthier and come packed with so many nutrients. Mock meats are okay when you are in a pinch but should not be relied on for everyday nutrition needs.

Now, you may be thinking "that all sounds great, but I don't want to always center my meals around beans!" Well, I have some good news for you - You don't have to! If you don't have a 'protein' source on hand or you aren't feeling having legumes, you can make starchy plant foods the main part of your meal. Like protein rich foods, starchy plant foods like whole grains and vegetables are a great source of calories and are also very satiating, keeping you full for a long time. They are full of fiber and great fuel for anyone who enjoys exercising. Think sweet potatoes/yams, white potatoes, whole grains (oats, barley, buckwheat, rice of all different varieties, bulgur, millet), corn, bean/lentil/rice pasta, squash (butternut, acorn, hubbard) and peas (split peas or whole green peas).

As you can see, whether you choose a protein rich food or a starchy food (or both), there is so much variety and plenty to choose from for the base of your meals.

After deciding what I want to center my meal around, I then decide how I want to

cook it. For example, do I want to bake or steam my potatoes? Stir-fry or bake the tofu? Of course, what you decide can depend on time and taste. Stir fries and steaming vegetables takes less time than baking or roasting them.

Great in stir fries: Tempeh & tofu. Canned or prepared beans, lentils & chickpeas, frozen/fresh corn & peas

Great for baking: Tempeh, tofu, chickpeas, potatoes, yams, squash.

Great for steaming: Any kind of potato.

Cooked on stove top (from dry) can be added to dishes after cooking: rice, lentils, quinoa, dry beans/chickpeas, whole grains, pasta.



### **Step 3** *Make it delicious*

The biggest thing I have learned when cooking my meals is that seasoning goes a long way. I'm sure you know this by now, but freshly chopped garlic and onion are your best friends when sautéing something. If you don't have any on hand, garlic and onion powder will work too. When I first started to cook, I added garlic and onion to everything but now I get more creative with flavours. It is easy to add spice to food you saute. Cook in a large pan or boil (like rice) but adding spice to steamed vegetables does not work well. I recommend in those instances making a sauce or dressing (see step 6!). Dressings are easy and fun to make and you can get very creative with them. My favourite things to add to my meals or dressings are: cumin, curry spice, paprika, chilli seasoning, hot sauce, and salsa. It is crazy how a few pinches of spice or a dressing made with different spices can really turn a dish into something amazing. Having good spices on hand is a game changer.





## **Step 4**

### ***Add veggies or make a salad***

Now that we have the base of our meal figured out, we want to add some vegetables and leafy greens. Veggies and greens are amazing for adding more 'bulk' to a meal allowing you to flood your body with nutrients without over eating.

Great for stir frys: Corn, frozen green peas, broccoli, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, zucchini, grated carrot, bell peppers, green beans, dark leafy greens (kale and swiss chard), spinach, red cabbage.

Great for baking: cauliflower, brussels sprouts, carrots.

Great for streaming: cauliflower, brussels sprouts, broccoli, carrots.

Great raw: cucumber, jicama, zucchini, tomatoes, romaine lettuce, arugula, baby kale, spinach.

I try to always incorporate some form of greens and raw veggies with my meals. Chopped cucumber, tomato and greens are my go to. If you don't like raw greens then adding them to your stir frys and wilting them down is a great way to eat them. Plus you are likely to eat much more that way too!

Grating is a great way to add harder to chew veggies to a salad. Try grating raw beets and carrot on top of your salad for a mouth watering pop of colour and nutrition. Grated beets are so good on there I'll sometimes have that instead of a dressing.



## **Step 5** *Add healthy fat*

One thing I have noticed with healthy eating is the fear of healthy fats. Healthy fats are essential for many bodily processes. Adding some healthy fat to your meal can not only help you absorb the fat soluble vitamins, but also help you feel more satisfied and full. With this being said, I suggest avoiding the use of any kind of oil. Oils are highly processed, have little nutrition compared to caloric content and have zero fibre. For the same reasons we don't want to eat sugar, we don't want to consume oils. Nutrient void, calorie dense. I suggest instead including healthy whole food fats such as avocado, walnuts, ground flax, ground chia, hemp, pumpkin and sunflower seeds. These healthier options can be added/sprinkled on to your meals or put into dressings. Dressings and sauces are my favourite way to incorporate healthy fats into my diet.



## **Step 6** *Make a dressing*

One of my favourite things to add to my meals is a dressing. This is not needed but can make a huge difference when it comes to how your meal tastes. It can be a great way to incorporate healthy fats into your meal (non fat dressings are great too!). If you don't want to make a dressing you could easily add some salsa, hot sauce or a splash of tamari to your meals instead.

I try and create dressings that hit 3 main flavours. These flavours are sweet, salty, and tangy. For example, to make sauces sweet, I use pitted dates or a touch of maple syrup. A splash of bragg's liquid aminos, tamari or sea salt are my go tos to make my sauces 'salty' (but not too salty) and mustard or apple cider vinegar is great to add for the 'tangy' flavour. Mustard is also a great emulsifier helping ingredients (especially fats and liquids) to stay mixed and not separate. Many dressings are made in a base of oil, but as we discussed, I prefer to use whole food healthy fat sources instead. These include: tahini, avocados, hemp or flax seeds. Avocados are absolutely brilliant for thickening sauces.

### ***Dressing template*** (pick one from each category & have fun experimenting!)

- **Healthy fat source:** ¼ - ½ avocado, 1-2 tbsp tahini, 1-2 tbsp ground flax & hemp seeds.
- **Sweeteners:** 1-2 pitted dates, 1 tbsp maple syrup, orange juice.
- **Salty additions:** pinch of sea salt, 1-2 tsp bragg's liquid aminos or tamari
- **Tangy additions:** 1-2 tsp mustard, 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar, fresh lemon juice (½ lemon)
- **Other additions (optional):** ¼ red onion, 1 fresh garlic clove, 1 tsp ginger, spices (measurements vary for each): cumin, dill, thyme, smoked paprika, chipotle, cajun spice, italian spice, onion/garlic powder.

\* add ¼-½ cup of water to dressings, blend and add more liquid as needed.

### ***Using my dressing guide above, let's make a sauce!***

- **Healthy fat:** 1 tbsp tahini
  - **Sweet:** 1 large medjool date (or two smaller dates)
  - **Salty:** a splash of tamari
  - **Tangy:** 1.5 tsp mustard
  - **Other:** 1 tsp garlic powder, 1 tsp onion powder, 1 tsp cumin.
- Throw everything in the blender with ¼ cup of water. Blend it up and see how it tastes!

# EXAMPLE MEAL

## *Chickpea & Broccoli Bowl with avocado dressing*



### **Step 1** *Clean the kitchen!*

Is your kitchen clean? Do you have a sharp knife and clean cooking wear? If not, time to get cleaning! If so, let's proceed.



### **Step 2** *Deciding what to make*

This is usually my thought process:

I have some canned chickpeas I can base my meal around. I have some broccoli in the fridge I need to use up, same with some arugula. I also have a ripe avocado which I'll likely use for a nice creamy dressing. Then I will add some colour and chop some veggies up (red bell pepper, cucumber, carrot) and add them to the arugula.



### **Step 3**

#### *Make it delicious*

Since the chickpeas are already cooked, I don't have to worry about cooking them but I don't want to eat them cold either so I am going to pop them into a fry pan to heat them up. Because they aren't seasoned, I'm going to add 2 tsp of cajun spice to them. I am also going to add chopped broccoli to the pan and add a splash of water. This will only take about 5-10 mins to saute and be ready to add to my dish.



### **Step 4**

#### *Add veggies or make a salad*

For the salad, I am going to chop up some cucumber, red pepper and grate some carrot on top. I will place this on the raw arugula I have on hand and put it in a large bowl.



## **Step 5** *Add healthy fat*

I will be adding my healthy fat (avocado!) in my dressing, see step 6!



## **Step 6** *Make a dressing*

Today I want the dressing to work for everything. Since this meal is lower in calories, I'm going to make a delicious sauce to help bump up the calories of the meal.

Using my dressing template I am going to use:

**Healthy fat:** ½ avocado

**Sweet:** 2 pitted dates

**Salty:** a splash of tamari


**Tangy:** mustard & apple cider vinegar

**Spices:** Garlic powder, onion powder, cumin, black pepper.

I then throw everything in a blender with a splash of water, blend it up and taste it!

**Remember.** All good chefs taste their food as they go. It's all about building up and layering the flavours, so taste often and adjust as needed.

I will then add the freshly cooked chickpeas and broccoli to the salad and pour the dressing on top! That easy! It's time to eat!



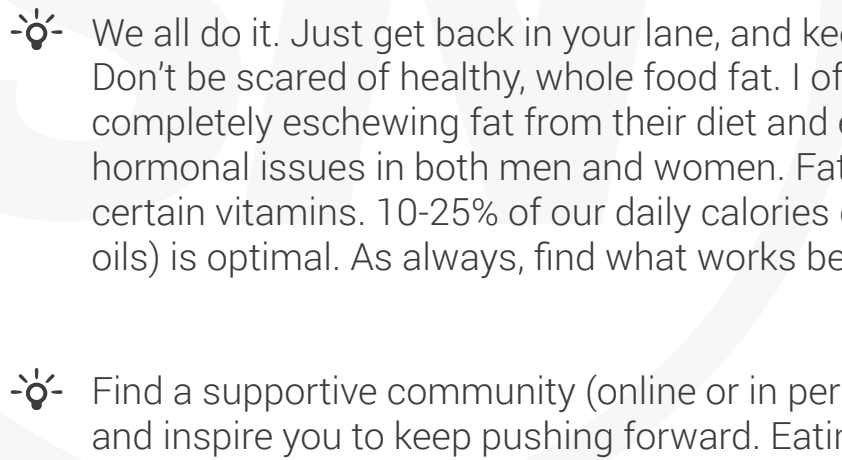
I hope that this simple guide gives you some insight and simple principles you can follow to formulate and create your own meals. It truly does become second nature after a while, trust me! The more you cook the better you will get!

Please tag on Instagram **@SimnettNutrition** so I can see the meals you create and enjoy! I love seeing what everyone else is making and eating and I would love to see what you guys come up with!

# **SIMNETT NUTRITION PRO TIPS**

- 💡- Having a variety of different spices is a great addition to every pantry and can really help to make meals delicious and satisfying!
- 💡- If you are new to eating a plant based diet and are transitioning to healthy eating, I suggest checking out [www.chronometer.com](http://www.chronometer.com) to track your calories for a few days to see how many calories are in your meals and what your micro nutrients (vitamins/mineral) intake is like.
- 💡- Rather than cutting big chunks of vegetables (example: carrot, beets, red cabbage) into your salad, use a grater! Grated vegetables are easier to chew and a great addition to any meal. There will also be more surface area for spices and sauces to stick to.
- 💡- To thicken dressings or sauces, add 1 tbsp of ground flaxseed or ¼-½ of an avocado. Chia seeds will also work to thicken.
- 💡- In general, I find that if I have any sweet cravings at night, it is because I did not eat enough calories during my day. Of course, cravings are different for everyone but I find if I eat satiating meals during the day (a balance of protein, healthy fat and complex carbs), I am much less likely to crave sweet things at night.
- 💡- I don't believe in cheat meals. I think it can be damaging to deprive ourselves of things we enjoy. Deprivation can lead to bingeing and other unhealthy habits. Be kind to yourself. Eat healthy but don't be too hard on yourself if you eat something that might not be Simnett Nutrition Approved.



- 
- 💡- We all do it. Just get back in your lane, and keep driving!  
Don't be scared of healthy, whole food fat. I often see people avoiding or completely eschewing fat from their diet and eating too low in fat can cause hormonal issues in both men and women. Fat is essential for metabolizing certain vitamins. 10-25% of our daily calories coming from healthy fat (no oils) is optimal. As always, find what works best for you.
  - 💡- Find a supportive community (online or in person) that helps encourage you and inspire you to keep pushing forward. Eating plant based or adopting a vegan lifestyle is not about perfection or about 'how clean you can eat', it is about honouring our compassion and eating in a health conscious way. It's about treating other beings and our own bodies with respect. You may find the people in your life are not on board with you making changes to your life because it may go 'against' what they believe or have been conditioned to think is correct. Remember to stay true to yourself and don't compromise what you feel is important because of convenience or lack of conviction. Connect with other people who help inspire, encourage and motivate will help you do this.

# ***THE 5 KEY COMPONENTS TO FORMULATE A VEGAN MEAL***

*(Turn the 5 Components until Simnett Meal Planner Template)*



## ***Component #1 The Bulk of the Meal***

This is the main thing that you are going to base your meal around. This includes: lentils, tempeh, tofu, beans and rice, chickpeas, and quinoa, sweet potatoes/yams, white potatoes, whole grains (oats, barley, buckwheat, rice of all different varieties, bulgur, millet), corn, bean/lentil/rice pasta, squash (butternut, acorn, hubbard) and peas (split peas or whole green peas).

Choose one or two for your meal.



## ***Component #2 Seasoning***

You can add extra flavour to your dish by adding herbs and spices. Black pepper, cajun spice, onion/garlic powder, cumin, smoked paprika, chipotle spice, oregano, thyme, cayenne are great options. Sauteeing garlic and onion with your

food (in a stir fry for example) is another great option to add more flavour. You can also add apple cider vinegar, dijon mustard, hot sauce, salsa and bragg's liquid aminos to your dish while cooking or after cooking to kick up the flavour too.



### ***Component #3*** ***Veggies & Salad***

The bulk of your meal should be vegetables. Chop up a variety of different raw vegetables and make a salad with two handfuls of greens. Veggies are great raw but another great option is to stir fry them and add some spice or different flavours to them.

Great veggies to have raw or cooked: red pepper, cucumber, broccoli, brussels sprouts, purple cabbage, carrots, peas, corn, asparagus, sprouts, green beans, tomato, white cabbage or any other of your favourite veggies.

For the greens you can use spinach, kale, lettuce, arugula, chard.



### ***Component #4*** ***Add some healthy fat***

Healthy fats help your body absorb the nutrients you are eating and help keep you fuller for longer. Great additions include avocado, seeds (ground flax, hemp, sunflower, pumpkin) and nut butters like tahini. An easy way I incorporate healthy fat into my meals is by making a dressing (see next step)



## **Component #5** *Create a Dressing/Sauce*

Dressings are game changing. They are easy to make and a great way to add healthy fat to your meals. (They can also be made low/no fat if you do not want to add any fats to your meal).



## **Example Meal** *Cajun Black Bean Bowl*

**Component #1** - Beans & Rice

**Component #2** - Garlic, white onion, cumin, cajun

**Component #3** - Avocado

**Component #4** - Red Pepper, corn, red cabbage, tomato, arugula.

**Component #5** - Salsa

## **THREE FREE RECIPES** *from the Easy Vegan Muscle eBook*

- **Mango Quinoa Salad**
- **Cajun Black Bean Bowl**
- **Easy one pot red lentil curry**



**FREE RECIPE**

SN

## Mango Quinoa Salad

This salad is great served cold or put in a wrap! I started bringing this salad to family dinners and now it's requested with every invite I receive.

- 1 cup dry quinoa (3 cups cooked)
- 1 cup green peas
- 1 mango, diced
- ½ cup red cabbage, chopped
- ½ cup red bell pepper, chopped
- ½ cup zucchini, chopped
- ½ cup red onion, chopped

### **DRESSING** (BLEND TOGETHER)

- 2 red bell peppers (seeds removed)
- 2 tbsp Tahini
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 1 tsp onion powder
- 1 tbsp Apple Cider Vinegar
- 1 medjool date, pitted
- 1 tsp cumin
- salt/pepper to taste

### **METHOD**

**1.** Mix all ingredients in large bowl and pour dressing on top.

**2.** Mix thoroughly and enjoy over a green salad or as a side dish!

Mango Quinoa salad will keep for 3 days in the fridge when stored in airtight container.

**Makes 2 servings**

**Macros per serving: 15.5 g Protein /  
86 g Carbohydrates / 5 g Fat**

*Tips: It's great cold, or try it in a wrap!*

**FREE RECIPE**



# Cajun Black Bean Bowl

This is my version of the classic 'buddha bowl'!

- 1 can black beans
- ¼ cup diced onion
- 1/3 cup corn

## SEASONING MIX

- ¼ tsp cumin
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1 tsp cajun seasoning
- ¼ tsp garlic powder
- ¼ cup salsa

## BUILD YOUR BOWL (OPTIONAL)

- ½ cup brown rice
- ½ avocado tossed with fresh cut parsley
- ¼ cup sliced red cabbage
- ¼ cup chopped tomato
- 1 cup greens of your choice (arugula, spinach, kale)
- ¼ cup sliced red bell pepper
- ¼ cup salsa

**Makes 1 serving**  
**Calories for Black Bean mix ONLY: 450 cals**  
**Macros: 24.5g Protein / 88g Carbohydrates / 2g Fat**

## METHOD

- 1.** On medium heat, saute onion until tender. Add small amount of water if onion sticks to pan.
- 2.** Add black beans and corn and saute until cooked through. (3-5 minutes)
- 3.** Mix together seasonings and salsa in a small bowl. Add seasoning mix to black beans, onion and corn. Mix together and remove from heat.
- 4.** Build your bowl! Enjoy the seasoned black beans with all or a few of the optional ingredients listed at the end of the recipe. I enjoyed it with all of them, but have fun and add more veggies or switch them for your favourites!

**FREE RECIPE**

**SN**

## **Easy One pot Red Lentil Curry**

This is not a traditional curry, but a delicious curry inspired lentil dish. This recipe works great for meal prepping and you can add in any vegetables you have on hand!

- 1 package (450g) of split red lentils, rinsed and drained (no soaking needed)
- 1 tbsp red curry paste
- 1/2 diced onion
- 4 large carrots, chopped
- 1/2 head of cauliflower, chopped
- 1-2 cups frozen peas
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- Chopped cilantro (optional)

**Makes 4 servings**

**335 Calories per serving**

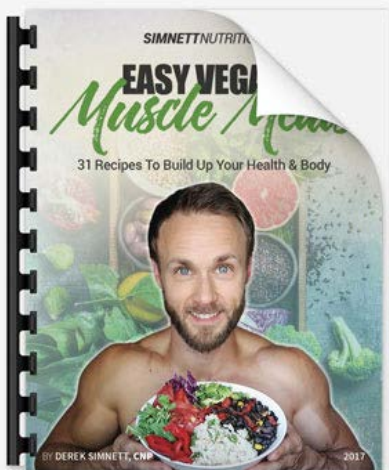
**Macros: 23g Protein / 61g**

**Carbohydrates / 1g Fat**

**This meal is low in fat and high in vitamins and minerals!**

### **METHOD**

- 1.** Place lentils in a large pot and add red curry paste, chopped carrots and cauliflower. Add water to cover and place on medium high heat.
- 2.** Allow to boil and reduce to medium heat. Cook for approx 10-15 minutes. Periodically check and stir pot to make sure everything is cooking evenly. The lentils are cooked when soft.
- 3.** Reduce heat to simmer and add the frozen peas, chopped bell pepper and cilantro. Turn off heat when there is no water left in the pot and serve! You can also add in other vegetables or substitute in other vegetables you have on hand (for example: mushrooms, broccoli, zucchini, frozen corn). Leftovers are best kept in fridge in an airtight container for 4-5 days.



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