



PLANT-BASED PROTEINS FOR PEOPLE & PLANET

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If you haven't heard already, maximizing protein isn't just for the gym bros anymore. There has been a strong educational push to encourage both men and women across the lifespan to increase their protein intake for multiple reasons. While resistance training is also being encouraged for all, research has shown that increased protein intake in the absence of a prescribed exercise routine still aids in body recomposition, meaning a decrease in body fat and an increase in lean muscle mass.

Seniors are encouraged to increase their protein intake even more because our bodies become less efficient at assimilating it as we age, and therefore we need to eat more to help preserve muscle mass. There are various opinions and metrics out there regarding how much protein one should consume based on body weight and activity levels. I personally like to aim for 90 grams per day, but revisiting the recent article Protein: What It Is and Why It Matters by Katy Wallace gives a wonderful breakdown for variables to keep in mind.

So you've taken this advice to heart and you've ramped up your protein intake. If you're an omnivore like myself, increasing your animal protein can start to feel like you're not getting enough variety and you may not be making the best choice for your heart health or the health of Mother Earth. I'm not going to make the claim that "you won't even know it's not real meat!" But rather I'm going to provide a list of high-protein options that are satisfying meat substitutes with minimal ingredients that you can actually identify by name. So in honor of Earth Month and clean eating, let's explore plant-based protein sources that we can feel good about adding to the rotation.

TOFU

There has been a lot of controversy whether or not the isoflavones in soy interfere with our hormonal health by

increasing estrogen levels, but research has not found this to be true. I found adding tofu back into my diet to be a game changer and it's a complete protein with the nine essential amino acids our bodies do not make. I love throwing it in the air fryer before adding it to a dish because it creates crispy edges and makes for a satisfying chewy texture. Try marinating it first if you're not adding it to something saucy. Another great tofu application is using it as an egg substitute, either as a hot scramble or eggless tofu salad. There are varying levels of firmness and protein content, but my favorite is the Wildwood High Protein Tofu which is super firm and has 70g of protein in one block! Besides being a nod to our hearts and Mother Earth, it's not filled with a bunch of preservatives and is very affordable compared to animal protein sources.

QUORN MEATLESS DICED CHIQUIN PIECES

Quorn makes a wide selection of mushroom-based meatless products and their Mycoprotein is also a complete protein. I find their Meatless Diced ChiQin Pieces to have the shortest ingredient list and have the highest protein content per serving. While these two products are not fully plant-based because they include egg whites, 94% of the volume is made from their mushroom-based protein. They still require being cooked to

an appropriate temperature for a certain amount of time and that's best achieved by adding to something saucy or a soup or stew. Sautéing in a skillet is possible, but I find they tend to dry out and get stuck to the pan. Quorn is also on a mission to reduce their carbon footprint, both via energy consumption and via reduced meat production for the planet. Since 2012, they've reduced their carbon emissions from energy by 84%, are third-party verified by the Carbon Trust, and have done their own research to show that Quorn Meatless Grounds have a 90% lower carbon footprint when compared to ground beef. For more information go to quorn.us. Look for their prod-



ucts in the frozen section at all stores.

DARING PLANT CHICKEN PIECES

This is a soy-based product I'm pretty jazzed about! It has a really satisfying texture, great flavor, and a minimal ingredient list with familiar names. I would consider it



to be a little on the salty side on its own, but that is easily diluted when adding other ingredients to create a meal. Visit daring.com to learn more and look for it in the frozen section at our East and North locations.

LOUISVILLE JERKY CO JERKY

This soy-based plant jerky is a great alternative to the real thing. No, it's not quite the same texture as meat jerky, but it does have a satisfying texture and a tasty variety of flavors. You can find the Smoked Black Pepper, Maple Bacon, and Smokey Carolina BBQ at all three stores.



UPTON'S NATURALS SEITAN

Seitan is made from vital wheat gluten and is not a complete protein on its own. To make it a complete protein you should eat it with beans, quinoa, amaranth, or soy sauce. The Upton's Naturals brand, which is based in Chicago, has soy sauce as an ingredient in all products, so it might be safe to say their seitan is formulated to be a complete protein (though they don't make that claim). Seitan already has a pretty chewy texture, so it will appeal to those that



prefer that texture and want to make something quick. Look for it in our refrigerated section at all three stores.

GARDEIN PLANT-BASED GROUND BE'F

This soy-based ground beef substitute makes for a very easy switch for so many meals. It can go in pasta sauce, chili, tacos, shepherd's pie, you name it. I think nearly every meat-eater has a few quick and easy recipes they use ground beef for where this swap to plant-based grounds would take zero forethought. I will say the grounds are pre-salted, so adding spices



or spice mixes that don't have salt is probably the best option. I recently used these grounds for taco salad and I was pleased with the results. Again, they don't taste just like beef, but when mixed in with a bunch of other ingredients the difference seems minimal. For more information go to gardein.com and look for them in the frozen section in all three stores.

BANDUNG TEMPEH

Tempeh is made from fermented soybeans that are pressed into a block-shaped cake. It is minimally processed and the fermentation process makes it easier to digest than unfermented forms of soy. I have to admit that I'd tried tempeh a couple times before and was never thrilled with the flavor or texture, but I recently tried the tempeh made by Bandung, a local Indonesian restaurant, and I am surprisingly a convert. Truly! The texture, flavor and freshness were far superior to other brands I've tried. It's also extremely affordable. I cut it into slices and pan-fried it in an iron skillet until golden brown on either side. It is not pre-seasoned, so adding your favorite sauce or to one of your favorite dishes makes an easy meal.



I enjoyed it with both Mango Man Salsa and Bachan's Japanese Barbecue Sauce. Bandung Tempeh is one of our top tempeh sellers, which implies many of our customers give it their stamp of approval as well. Look for it in our refrigerated section at all three stores.

With the desire for less processed plant-based protein options, there are actually more products than I can write about in length, which is encouraging since that means our healthy offerings are expanding! So I'd love to give honorable mention to even more products for you all to check out: Primal Spirit Vegan Jerky, Foodies Pumfu (East & North Only), Barbecue Smokehouse Pulled BVQ (North Only), Lightlife Gimme

Lean Plant Based Sausage, Hodo Veggie Burger, Hodo Curry Nuggets, and Wildwood Baked Tofu in Savory and Teriyaki flavors. I hope you find a few items that are game changers for you as well!