

Living vegetarian on the budget

by Ashley Bursey

It's called tryptophan, and it's the stuff in a lot of poultry that makes you feel dozy after the big holiday feed. But I haven't touched it in over half a decade.

Being vegetarian at the big family feast – which, for me, consists of a whole lot of carrots, mashed potato, and stovetop-only dressing – is daunting at first. But once everyone else has crashed out on the couch and you're the only one still up to enjoy seconds (and perhaps thirds) of your grandma's cherry cheesecake, sometimes it's a little bit gleeful, too.

It all started when I was in sixth grade. I found a book, something about kids saving animals, and I discovered vegetarianism for the first time. Not eating animals? Saving the world? Defi-

nately up my probably-too-pretentious-for-elementary-school alley.

So I devoured the book and stopped devouring flesh. I went, and please ignore the pun, completely cold turkey; thought about it one day, and cut it out the next. I remember one relapse at a friend's house: a piece of pepperoni as she and her sister munched on cold cuts. I snuck it, ate it, and spit it right out.

I haven't touched red meat since.

It was tough, growing up. I learned how to cook pretty fast (I make a mean tofu stir fry or broccoli quiche) and eventually, after a French speaking competition in tenth grade (about, of course, being 'une végétarienne') I left seafood, chicken, and turkey behind, too.

Which means I've been a full-blown lacto-ovo (read: drink milk and eat eggs)

vegetarian for about five years, and I haven't touched a burger in almost 11.

And contrary to popular belief, my hair is totally healthy (aside from the bleach job), my nails haven't fallen off (but I do bite them), and my skin couldn't be better.

It's like Alicia Silverstone says in that half-naked PETA commercial: "I've never felt healthier, and my body is thanking me for it."

That said, it's damn expensive to try and live as a vegetarian, especially in a smaller city like Fredericton. There are limited options at supermarkets, and only a couple real places you can go to get the good stuff.

But I'm going to help you out a bit. I'm going to teach you how to live vegetarian on a budget; how to save the

chickens and keep fish as friends, not food, despite not being able to afford all the luxe fake-meat items that are so delicious.

(And, side note: I eat 'fake meat'. A coworker once said, "Mock chicken? What's that? Like mach one, mach two, mach chicken?" Yes, I eat it. I gave up eating meat because I felt bad, not because I hated the taste. And no, it's not defeating the purpose. I saved a life. 'Nuff said.)

So here it is. The quick and the dirty. Clip this article and paste it on your newly-vegetarian fridge, because this is definitely something you're not going to want to lose.

(And a quick hint: buy in bulk. It's way, way cheaper.)



Staples chickpeas

1. Chickpeas: These can be mashed up, cooked in stew, or used in a zillion different recipes. They have tons of protein and they're dirt cheap.

soymilk

2. Soymilk: I'm not the biggest fan, but it's an acquired taste. Thing is, it's pretty expensive, so don't chug.

fake eggs

3. Those fake eggs: They come in different flavours, like vegetable or onions and chives, and they don't contain eggs, but they make a sweet omelet.

salsa

4. Salsa: Goes on anything. It's great and low-fat.

pitas

5. Pitas: Great for a sandwich.

fake meat

6. I have to say it... fake meat: You can get deli 'meats' (turkey or bologna slices), 'chicken breast' as a strip or the full 'breast', veggie burgers (a ton of different kinds), fake chicken burgers (I love the Au Naturel kind, everything from that line is ridiculously delicious) or fake 'meatballs'/'ground beef'. It's pricey, but it makes for the meal you might have been missing.

TVP

7. TVP: Textured vegetable protein can be used to simulate ground beef. It can also be bought in bulk.

tofu

8. Tofu: I can't stress this enough. Softer tofu can go in milkshakes to boost your protein; harder stuff can be sliced, diced, put in a marinade, stir-fried, stewed, anything.

soup

9. Soup: I love a good cup of soup, with lots of veggies and beans and all kinds of good stuff. You can make this yourself, too; easy recipes can be found online, and they're cheap (I have friends who enjoy 'garbage soup', which is a big pot of whatever was left over from that week – any aging carrots, potatoes, whatever, tossed together. I say this one might be hit and miss.)

condiments & spices

10. Condiments and spices: These are a must on any level. Spices can turn your stir fry into a five-star delicacy, and condiments are just plain delicious on anything (you should see my sandwiches). Some great spices to keep on hand are cayenne pepper, cumin, savory, garlic, and a great curry mix – but experiment, and you'll find your own.

Really easy meals

These are my favorite simple meals. Find the recipes online or just make it the same way you'd make the 'meatier' counterpart.

Chili, tacos or fajitas, with TVP or 'fake' ground beef or chicken

Barbecued veggie burgers and hot dogs with corn on the cob

Pasta with 'meat' sauce (we like tortellini, but a good spaghetti never goes wrong – and, in the words of 'Knocked Up', it's pretty cheap to eat a lot of spaghetti)

Poutine (you can buy meatless gravy and dairy-free cheese!)

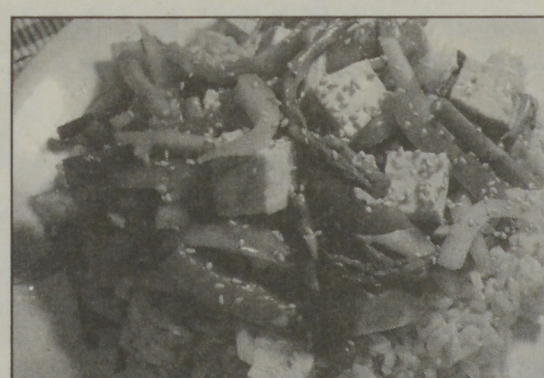
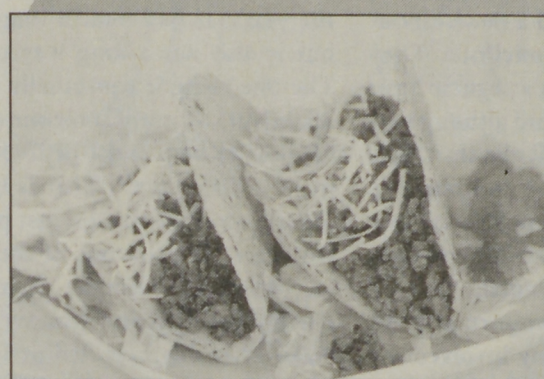
Couscous or rice (I fry rice with soya sauce, eggs, and tofu: very good!)

Stew you can make and freeze, so it will last even longer. There are a lot of good online recipes and just toss in all the veggies you can eat!

Anything East Indian. You can buy the mix in the supermarket, and just substitute tofu for chicken or beef. Quite often, these dishes are completely vegetarian.

Omelets. Use egg whites or fake eggs, salsa, peppers, mushrooms, and onions make this an anytime-of-the-day meal with a solid punch.

Quiche. You'll need a pie crust, fake or real eggs, and whatever veggies you want to toss in. Top with artificial cheese and you've got a yummy dish.



Want a challenge?

Just Google these guys and you'll be in for a real treat!

Apple Burgers (tart, this mixes apples with onions, green pepper, ginger, and bread crumbs.)

Chop suey. Tofu, bok choy, and veggies make a yummy meal.

Hummus or tzatziki sauces. Great with pita slices.

Lettuce soup. Served cold, this is an easy make, but a longer list of ingredients.

Seitan Cheese Steak sandwich. Meatless and delicious.



Valuable Education Valued Degree



Discover outstanding graduate programs, including interdisciplinary degrees in oceans, health, environment, management and health informatics. Experience a dynamic prestigious university enriched by \$100 million in funded research annually.



Graduate Studies

Check out ...

UNBeatable U

February Wellness Month!

www.unbf.ca/wellness

For schedule and info.

