

## HEALTHmatters

### Going Plant-based for Your Health: Ten Ways to Get There

by Karen Pullen



**W**hat We Eat in America is a report prepared by the US Department of Agricultural. It contains pages and pages of data, sliced and diced.

Fascinating for researchers, though leaving most readers cross-eyed.

But one way to boil it down is to look at where our calories come from in the American diet. Sadly, only about 12% of calories come from phytonutrient foods – foods that are essential for a long healthy life, like whole grains, legumes, fruits, and vegetables. The rest of our calories are spent on oils, animal products, and sugar.

So what? What if that 12% were doubled, or tripled? Would we have longer, healthier lives?

The answer is (of course) YES. Most deaths in the US are preventable, and they are related to what we eat. Our diet is the number-one cause of premature death and the number-one cause of disability. In terms of life expectancy, the US is down at thirty-five on the list of the world's countries. People in Slovenia live longer than we do. And any extra years aren't healthy or vibrant.

Why, with all our resources, do we have such a poor diet? Powerful players have vested interests in the status quo. The processed food, agriculture, and pharmaceutical industries spend billions on marketing – to influence us, the consumers – and lobbying – to influence government decisions.

But individuals like you and me can inform ourselves and make good choices. We can increase our phytonutrients with a plant-based diet. The health benefits of a plant-based diet are profound.

Many people cannot eliminate animal products all at once. It seems too drastic.

But what if you were sneaky about it? What if you came at it from a different direction and just incorporated more and more fruits, vegetables, legumes, and grains into your diet? Here are ten ideas for adding more plants to your diet.

**1** Ditch the dairy. Replace cow milk with one of the readily available plant milks: almond, soy, oat, hemp, coconut. Try each one and find your favorite. I like unsweetened soy milk myself.

**2** “Plantify” chili or any sauce where you’re used to using ground beef, by replacing it with a veggie crumble. I like the Gardein products, found in the freezer section of the grocery store. Lentils are also a great substitute.

**3** Add greens to every meal. Spinach smoothie for breakfast, lettuce wraps for lunch, chopped kale salad at dinnertime.

**4** Find a new recipe using my friend Google. “whole-food vegan recipes” results in 340 million hits. Add “easy” to the search term and narrow it down to 264 million. Browse a while, print out the ones that look do-able, and experiment! Or go to McIntyre’s and leaf through the vegan cookbooks.

**5** Expand your whole grains repertoire. Farro, millet, barley, and quinoa are complex carbs and energy powerhouses.

**6** Veggie burgers have come a long way! The Beyond Meat burger and the Impossible Burger promise meat-like flavor and texture. Too close for me, actually! I’ve always liked Morningstar’s Griller myself.

**7** In recipes and soups, replace meat broths with veggie broth. Better Than Bouillon has several kinds: No Chicken, No Beef, Vegetable, and Mushroom. Each is a flavor bomb with less salt than those little cubes.

**8** Put a bowl of fruit on your kitchen counter. Ours contains tangerines and bananas. Harris Teeter often has bags of little organic pears, so sweet and delicious.

**9** Prep and chop carrots, celery, and bell peppers, to keep in the fridge. You’re more likely to add them to salads, soups, and casseroles because they’re so accessible.

**10** Everyone loves soup, and here’s a tip: replace cream with boiled potato. Blend, and no one will know the difference. I make “cream” of broccoli, asparagus, and celery soups that way.

This EXTREMELY delicious soup is packed with vegetables and makes a lot, so you can freeze some for another meal.

### Creamy Golden Vegetable Soup

- 1 large yellow onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 celery stalks, chopped
- 1 tablespoon ground turmeric
- 2 teaspoons smoked paprika
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cayenne
- 4 large carrots, peeled + chopped
- 1 zucchini, chopped
- 1 head broccoli, chopped (about 2 c.)
- 1 large cauliflower, chopped
- 3 med. potatoes, peeled + cubed
- 15 ounces white beans, drained
- 8 cups vegetable stock
- 1 bay leaf
- 1/4 cup nutritional yeast
- fresh chopped chives for garnish

Set a large stock pot over medium heat. Sauté the onions, garlic and celery for 3-5 minutes. Add a bit of vegetable broth if they begin to stick. Stir in the turmeric, paprika, and cayenne, and cook a minute or two longer.

Add in the remaining vegetables, beans, liquids, and bay leaf. Give it a good stir and bring to a simmer for 20 minutes. Mix in the nutritional yeast and simmer for 10 more minutes. Remove from heat and puree soup using an immersion blender. Salt and pepper to taste. Garnish with fresh chopped chives.

Certified in plant-based nutrition and plant-based cooking, Karen Pullen is an instructor of Food for Life courses in healthy eating. Discover new plant-based dishes at her cooking classes, offered the third Saturday of every month! Learn more at her website, [www.everydayplant-based.com](http://www.everydayplant-based.com)

### Give Your Pantry and Refrigerator a Healthy Lifestyle Makeover

by Robin Thomas



**S**pring is the perfect time to clean out your pantry and refrigerator, removing foods that do not serve you and your family's health. I do a major cleanout 4

times a year, with weekly spot checks, especially in my refrigerator.

#### 5 TIPS ON CLEANING OUT YOUR KITCHEN PANTRY

Open up your cabinets and toss away obvious junk food like items like chips, soda, candy bars, and cookies. Then take a look at instant processed foods you might find — things like instant oatmeal, breakfast cereal, macaroni and cheese in a box. These items are convenient, but the way they are overprocessed causes them to lack nutritional density as well as being full of additives and flavorings that your body doesn't chemically recognize. Getting these items out of site, or better yet out of the house, will help you stay committed at times when you're hungry or tired and just want something quick and easy.

Don't forget the Freezer: Those hidden treasures of ice cream and pizza need to go. I know it's hard, but again they are full of ingredients that will only sabotage the progress that you are making.

Now that you've practically emptied your cabinets out, refill them with delicious whole foods. Most of these foods will need to go into your refrigerator. I focus on free local produce that is in season and jars of fermented foods like fermented pickles and sauerkraut. My freezer is filled with frozen berries and

vegetables that have been frozen without a sauce. My pantry has jars of dried beans, nut butters, and whole grains stored in glass jars.

Shop the perimeter of your grocery store. This is where your perishable foods and some of your best choices are usually located, —fruits and vegetables, lean meats, dairy and dairy-substitute products. It will also help you avoid the temptation of the cookie and chip aisles usually found more centrally located in stores.

Spring is coming, so think about planting a small garden or even a few herbs and tomato plants on your deck. Find a local farmer's market for the best local foods. I always try to scout out the ones avoiding the use of pesticides and artificial fertilizers.

Ahhh spring! Spring fruits and vegetables are light, fresh, and crisp! Get ready for plenty of green, crunchy goodness after a winter filled with warm, hearty root veggies. Fresh fruits and vegetables in season contain the most nutrients, and if you're buying them locally, there's less time for those nutrients to degrade as the produce makes its way to your plate. Plus, buying seasonal produce from local growers supports your local economy and can be a more sustainable choice, too.

**Spring is coming, so think about planting a small garden or even a few herbs and tomato plants on your deck.**

Robin Thomas worked for 25 years in Medical Research at UNC studying inflammation in chronic and autoimmune diseases. She left UNC to start her own Wellness Business in 2004 and founded Living Well Connections, a community for people whose passion is healthy living, in 2015. Learn more at <https://robinthomas.biz>

*Local on Main*  
PBO'S FARM & ART DINNER

You're invited to join us to celebrate small family farms, culinary creativity, and visual and performing arts at Local on Main: PBO's Farm & Art Dinner on Sunday, May 17th. Enjoy ingredients from 20+ regional farms, dishes from 10 local chefs, and art from local musicians and creatives.

To purchase your tickets at \$103 each, point your smartphone's camera at this QR code or enter the URL below it into your browser. Proceeds benefit Main Street Pittsboro and will help continue our mission of revitalizing Pittsboro's historic downtown district.

  
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