



## Try something new... VEGAN FEASTS

You don't need to forego taste and indulgence with animal-free cuisine – everyone can benefit from incorporating some vegan food into their weekly diet. Nasreen El-Mariesh explains

Cast aside whatever notions you may have of vegan food being bland and unexciting. Whilst it may have had some truth 30 years ago where a diet without meat, dairy or eggs meant choosing between nut roast or lentil rissoles, plant-based cuisine today is far more mouth-watering. Thanks to an explosion of global food trends and new ingredients, nutritious, delicious and dare I say it, gastronomic, vegan food has well and truly arrived. The success of *Vegan Eats World* (£22.50 Da Capo Lifelong Books) a collection of 300 international vegan recipes by Terry Hope Romero is proof of its growing popularity.

The benefits of eating less meat and dairy, both for our health and the planet's resources, are numerous. Not least of all cutting it from our diet means a natural increase in our intake of vegetables, fruit, pulses, wholegrains and nuts; all the foods nutritionists are telling us to eat more of. So whether you decide to join in the #MeatfreeMonday initiative or are entertaining a vegan for dinner, here are some ideas to get you started in the kitchen:

Main Photo: Choc Cherry Truffles  
Photo: The Vegan Society. Recipe - thekindcook.com

“Whatever your reasons, experimenting with plant-based food is now easier than ever and there are a whole host of recipes and ideas at your fingertips.”

**Indian Cuisine** - long been hailed as foodie Nirvana for vegans and vegetarians alike, much of Indian cooking is naturally plant-based anyway so you can find plenty of recipes which don't need adapting. Thanks to fragrant and colourful spices there's no need to compromise on flavour and humble ingredients like lentils and potatoes are given the star treatment. Homemade crispy onion bhajis, a smoky dhal and a rich coconut based curry served with a vegetable pilaf will knock the socks off any takeaway. Anjuna Anjum's *Indian Vegetarian Feast* (£18.99 Quadrille Publishing) will show you how to make everything. For complete vegan Indian cookery try Anup Singh's *Vegan Indian Cooking: 140 Simple and Healthy Vegan Recipes* (available on Amazon).

**'Plenty' of Veg** - take a leaf out of Yotam Ottolenghi's bestselling vegetarian cookbooks *Plenty* (£26 Ebury Press) which truly celebrates vegetables; although not all recipes are suitable for vegans. Ottolenghi uses seriously interesting ingredients from across the globe to create wonderfully textured and moreish salads that are well worth the effort; his quinoa with dried Iranian lime (omit the feta) and mango and coconut rice salad are fantastic. Whatever you fancy, make a selection of warm and cold dishes for a vegan buffet and allow your guests to serve themselves.

**Mock meats** - if you're not quite ready to forego the comforting richness you get from meat dishes then meat substitutes can disguise vegan food as your favourite home classics. Linda McCartney's vegemince™ or Fry's Meat Free Mince can be used to create vegan versions of chilli con carne, shepherd's pie or spaghetti Bolognese. Fry's also produce vegan Chicken Style Strips ideal in a green Thai curry and if you are feeling inspired you can even make

your own meat substitute from scratch using tofu and seitan (wheat gluten). Don't expect to be fooled into thinking it's the real deal but you can still make tasty dishes that happen to be healthier and kinder than their meaty originals.

**Pies** - how does winter pie of wild mushrooms and chestnuts tempt you? Inventing vegan pie fillings is within the capabilities of most decent home cooks but creating light and flaky pastry without dairy is tricky. One technique is to make an olive oil and a plain dough separately, then combine before rolling out. The result is non-greasy and perfect for sweet and savoury pie lids.

**Sweet stuff** - surprisingly, with a little bit of knowledge, there's not much you cannot create in the way of vegan desserts. By using dairy substitutes such as Vegg (the vegan egg) almond milk and soya margarine; cakes, 'cheesecakes', brownies, ice-cream and even trifle are all possible... and just as indulgent! If you have a special occasion, or you feel like cheating, then Hannah Banana Bakery is an award winning vegan bakers in Southampton offering an impressive array of celebration cakes and sweet treats [www.hannahbananabakery.co.uk](http://www.hannahbananabakery.co.uk)

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For information. [www.vegansociety.com](http://www.vegansociety.com)

Bottom Left:  
Sweet Potatoe, Sage and Onion Tart –  
Home Economist: Emma Kaye  
Photography: Sue Hiscoe

Bottom Right:  
Golden Rice Loaf.  
Photo © Miriam Sorrell  
[mouthwateringvegan.com](http://mouthwateringvegan.com)  
Recipe - The Vegan Society

