

Catering for Vegetarian and Vegan Diets at School

Food Smart Schools • an naq nutrition program

For more information visit www.foodsmartschools.org or email info@foodsmartschools.org

Adequate nutrition in childhood is essential for growth and development. Children and teenagers may choose to follow a vegetarian or vegan diet for spiritual, religious or personal reasons. It is important that vegetarian or vegan diets are carefully planned and considered to ensure they provide the essential nutrients for growth and development during childhood and adolescence.

If balanced correctly, a vegetarian or vegan diet can be healthy and in line with *Smart Choices Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Schools*. Smart Choices is a Queensland Government initiative aimed at improving the nutritional value of foods and drinks supplied to students in Queensland schools. Smart Choices is based on the *Australian Guide to Healthy Eating* and classifies foods and drinks into three categories according to their nutritional value.



GREEN	Have Plenty- encourage and promote these choices
AMBER	Select Carefully- do not let these foods and drinks dominate the choices and avoid large serving sizes
RED	Occasionally- not to be supplied on more than two occasions per term

What is a vegetarian diet?

A vegetarian diet is plant based and does not include animal flesh. This means that meat, poultry, fish and seafood products are eliminated. High protein meat substitutes such as legumes, nuts and tofu are required to ensure a balanced diet is maintained. Vegetarians often continue to include dairy products and eggs in their diet which can provide them with high quality protein and calcium (from dairy).



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What is the difference between being vegetarian and vegan?

A vegan diet is a more strict form of vegetarianism where no animal products are consumed at all. This means that eggs and dairy products are also eliminated from the diet. Other products that come from animals such as honey, gelatine and certain food colourings are avoided.

Important Things to Consider When Catering For Vegetarian/Vegan Students

- Variety is the key to maintaining a healthy diet – offer a selection of meat-free options for all students not just those who follow a vegetarian diet
- Vegetarians, and especially vegans, need to make sure they are getting enough protein, iron, calcium, zinc and vitamin B12 as this can be challenging if not carefully considered
- Choose fortified products (soy milk enriched with calcium, tofu with added iron)
- Ensure every meal has a protein source (e.g. vegetable curry with tofu and rice or stir-fry vegetables with cashews and noodles)
- Frequent healthy and varied meals and snacks can allow vegetarian students to meet their energy and nutrient needs. It is particularly important that vegan children have energy and nutrient-dense foods regularly (such as full-fat soy drink, tofu, mashed avocado, tahini spread and vegetables cooked with oil).

Food Groups	Vegetarian	Vegan
Protein	Eggs, milk, cheese, yoghurt, tofu, tempeh, legumes (baked beans, lentils, kidney beans), nuts*, seeds, breads and cereals	As per vegetarian without eggs and dairy products (milk, cheese, yoghurt)
Iron	Fortified breakfast cereals and bread, legumes, dark leafy vegetables, fortified tofu, nuts	
Calcium	Dairy products such as milk and cheese, fortified milk alternative such as soy and rice milk, fortified tofu	As per vegetarian without dairy and eggs
Zinc	Plant sources of zinc are legumes, nuts, seeds, oats and soy (natural and fortified) Animal sources include dairy products and eggs	As per vegetarian without dairy and eggs
Vitamin B12	Dairy products and eggs, fortified soy products	It is very difficult for a vegan diet to provide vitamin B12 as it comes from animal sources. Fortified soy products and supplements are generally needed

*If your school has a nut free policy, this would not be a suitable vegetarian alternative



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A joint Australian, State and Territory Government initiative under the National Partnership Agreement on Preventative Health. Developed by NAQ Nutrition with funding received from the Smart Choices Initiative.

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Healthy Vegetarian and Vegan Lunch Ideas for Tuckshops and Canteens

Aim to include at least one high quality vegetarian option on your menu each day.

(v) Symbol indicates meal ideas that are vegan or can be easily converted to vegan by removing egg or dairy component

- Vegetable curry with tofu/legumes and rice (v)
- Stir fried noodles with tofu and vegetables (v) served in noodle boxes
- Rainbow noodle slice – vegetable quiche made with grated vegetables and cheese (See Recipe)
- Spinach and cheese filo parcels
- Vegetarian pasta bake with kidney beans (See Recipe – Jewish Section)
- Spaghetti vegonaise – tomato based paste sauce with lentils and cheese on top (v)
- Vegetarian lasagna
- Vegetarian fried rice (v) (See Recipe – Allergy Section)
- Sandwich and wraps with vegetarian fillings (v)
- Baked bean toasted sandwiches (v)
- Sushi – cucumber and avocado, tofu and salad (v)
- Veggie burgers – chickpea or lentil patty with salad fillings (v) (See Recipe – Vegetarian Section)
- Burrito with rice, black eyed beans, guacamole and salads (v)



The content of this fact sheet has been developed as a general guide for schools only. Any additional dietary needs and requirements of students, parents, teachers and other school community members should be addressed at the school's discretion and where relevant, at an individual level.

This resource has been developed by Nutrition Australia Qld's Food Smart Schools program with the generous support of the Queensland Independent Schools Parent Council (QISPC) with funding received through the National Partnership for Preventive Health, Healthy Children, Smart Choices initiative. For more information on the Food Smart Schools Program, visit www.foodsmartschools.org



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Rainbow Noodle Slice

Ingredients (serves 25)

- 500g dried rice vermicelli noodles
- 200g carrots (peeled), grated
- 200g zucchini, grated
- 150g reduced fat grated cheese
- 150g capsicum, finely chopped
- 100g spring onions, finely chopped
- 10 eggs
- 250g cherry tomatoes (halved)

Method

1. Place noodles in a heatproof bowl.
2. Cover with boiling water. Allow to soften for about 5 minutes. Drain noodles and return to the bowl.
3. Using kitchen scissors roughly cut noodles and set aside to cool.
4. Add grated carrot, zucchini and cheese to the bowl of noodles with finely chopped capsicum and spring onions.
5. Whisk eggs in a separate bowl and add to the noodles mixture.
6. Mix well and pour into a greased baking tray.
7. Arrange cherry tomato halves on top of slice as a garnish.
8. Bake for 30 minutes at 180 °C until the egg has set and the slice is golden.

Note: This recipe is nut free and can become gluten free if gluten free noodles are used.

Chickpea and Vegetable Patties

Ingredients (makes 20 hamburger size patties)

- 800g of canned chickpeas (rinsed and drained)
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1tsp ground cumin
- 150g onion
- 200g zucchini
- 1 bunch fresh parsley
- 400g tinned corn (drained)
- 400g tinned lentils (drained)
- 150g breadcrumbs
- Spray oil

Method

1. Place chickpeas, garlic and cumin in a food processor and blend until almost smooth.
2. Finely chop onion, zucchini and parsley and add this to the chickpea mix.
3. Add corn, lentils and breadcrumbs* combining the mixture well.
4. Shape mixture into patties with the size depending on how you will be using them. (¼ cup of mixture would make a hamburger size patty).
5. Heat oil in a non-stick frypan and cook for 2-3 minutes or until lightly browned and cooked through.

* Adjustments to the amount of breadcrumbs required may be needed depending on how wet the mixture is

Tips: Ideal for vegetarian burgers. Add bite size patties to salad boxes.