

TOP 15 BEST

sources of

Plant Based Protein





Hi, I'm Kim!

I'm a Certified Plant-Based Health Coach, the founder of **Simply Plant Based Kitchen**, author of my Amazon best-selling book, **Plant Powered** and I'm so glad you want to eat more plants!

Is one of your biggest concerns about eating plant-based that you won't get enough protein?

Or do you have to do some complicated food combining to get all your amino acids because you heard that plants are incomplete proteins?

Do you know how much protein is recommended daily and what plants contain the most?

If any of these questions have crossed your mind or you have family members worried about you not getting enough protein, then fear not! I'm going to set the record straight in this plant protein guide. I also include my top 15 best plant-based protein sources so you can make sure you are getting all you need every day.

I hope this helps you have confidence in your plant-based lifestyle!

xoxo,
Kim

How to Get Enough Protein on a Plant Based Diet

Without fail, whenever I tell someone that I'm eating a plant-based diet, the first question or comment is something about protein. You have to eat meat to get enough protein, right?

This macronutrient has somehow claimed King of the lands regarding nutrition. Unfortunately, protein doesn't deserve this recognition above many other nutrients.

Protein is just ONE of the three macronutrients – Protein, Carbohydrates, and Fat. Water is a macronutrient as well. Macronutrient means we need more of it. Our food is made up of these three macronutrients in different ratios. Carbohydrates are the preferred fuel for our brains.

How much protein do we need?

According to the World Health Organization and our United States Recommended Daily Allowances, we need 10% protein from calories. Ten percent. Wow.

And most people only need about 6-8% (some estimates as low as 4%), but the agencies round it up to cover 98% of the population just to be safe. So even that 10% may be on the high side for some.

Did you know human breast milk is only about 4% protein?

That's the lowest of all mammals, and that's for a very fast-growing baby.

So, let's do some math and talk about grams because that's how most people discuss protein.

On a 2,000-calorie diet, 10% protein would be only 200 calories. Since there are four calories per gram of protein, **someone eating a 2,000-calorie diet would need 50 grams of protein.**

If you eat a 1,500-calorie diet, 10% protein would be 150 calories, which equals about 38 grams of protein. That's NOT a lot. And that is the recommendation from our RDAs and the WHO. Hmmmm....

Most people consuming animal products are getting MUCH higher protein than this and other unfortunate things that come with those meat products like high fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium.

Did you know that plants have protein?

Where do you think the rhinos, gorillas, horses, and other animals get their protein from and get so big? By eating plants. And green vegetables have a very high protein ratio.

All plants have protein. Even fruit!

Vegetable protein is also the CLEANEST protein you can get.

Even chicken and eggs are not “clean.” They come with other things you don’t want and can’t be separated from – cholesterol, saturated fat, and high sodium.

Chickens are pumped full of sodium (even organic), and eggs are little cholesterol bombs. It always blows my mind when someone says they are eating “clean” but are eating chicken and eggs. Not clean....

Aren't plant proteins incomplete?

It is a MYTH that plant proteins are incomplete. ALL plants contain ALL the essential amino acids in varying amounts.

No, you don’t need to combine proteins at each meal, like beans and rice (although delicious together).

This has been long refuted, and eating a variety of whole plant foods gives you all the essential amino acids your body needs. Our digestive system recycles amino acids and is intelligent about mixing and matching based on what we need.

Is too much animal protein a bad thing?

So isn't more protein better? It seems like everywhere we turn, we are told to eat more and more and more protein. When it comes to protein, the public has been marketed many non-truths as fact. More protein won't make you stronger and is not better for your health. In fact, excess protein is converted to fat in your body.

Excess animal protein is also hard on your kidneys. In fact, you may have kidney disease and not even know it – as many as 1 in 8 people have kidney disease. Yet, plant protein does not stress the kidneys or affect renal function. Animal protein seems to cause an inflammatory-like response in the kidneys, while plant protein does not.

Can athletes get enough protein without eating meat?

Athletes don't necessarily need more protein; they need more of everything because they burn more calories. By consuming more calories to fuel their workouts, they also get more protein to build muscle.

The 10% RDA is all athletes need to protect and build their muscle mass as long as they consume enough calories to fuel their workouts and recovery. They can get plenty of protein by eating green vegetables, beans, nuts/seeds, and whole grains.

Many Professional Athletes are Going Vegan

More and more professional and Olympic athletes are going plant-based to improve their performance.

They get plenty of protein and many other nutrients without all the junk like cholesterol and saturated fat that come with animal products.

Many athletes say they have much more endurance and faster recoveries by eating plant-based.

Watch the fascinating documentary "The Game Changers" on Netflix or Amazon Prime to learn more.

Animal Protein Linked to Cancer Promotion

In the landmark book *The China Study*, Dr. Colin T Campbell discovered a link between increased animal food intake and increased cancer risk.

Through studying what the rural Chinese ate and what diseases they had, he found significant differences in cancer, diabetes, and heart disease rates. Also, through laboratory tests on rats, he was able to duplicate a study showing that he could turn cancer on and off.

Feeding rats 20% animal protein diets (casein from cow's milk) caused cancer cells to grow. Yet, in animals who were fed 10% animal protein diets, cancer did NOT grow.

Strikingly, when the same rats were fed vegetable protein diets, cancer did NOT grow at any level, even the 20% level.

He concluded that animal protein was responsible for making cancer grow in the presence of a carcinogen. Cancer did not grow without animal protein and regressed when the diet was changed.

He was literally turning cancer on and off.

Now think about these high-protein Keto diets focused on eating as much animal protein as possible. What is the long-term impact, and could this be why cancer rates continue to rise? If you have any family history of cancer, then you should seriously consider eating a plant-based diet to protect yourself.

Processed meats are classified as group 1 carcinogens.

Did you know this? When I first read that red meat and processed meats were classified as Group 1 Carcinogen right next to cigarettes and asbestos, I was appalled! Why hadn't I heard this? How come it's not on the evening news everywhere?

No one seems to know this, and we continue to feed our children hotdogs, beef jerky, bacon, and deli meats, thinking we aren't doing them any harm.

Group 1 means there is sufficient evidence that processed meat is carcinogenic to humans.

Red meat is classified as Group 2A, which means it is “probably carcinogenic to humans.”

There are statistics that for every serving of processed meat someone eats each day, their risk of colon cancer goes up by 18%.

Studies even show that just 1/2 a serving daily of processed meats increases breast cancer risk by 21%!

Some people eat processed meats and red meat every single day and multiple times a day.

If this were a chemical, drug, or toxic bacteria, we would all know about it and be lining up to sue someone.

But because it is animal products that we have all been indoctrinated to believe are required by our diet (it's not) and good for us, it doesn't get talked about.

Plus, gag laws now prevent anyone from speaking negatively about the beef industry because it would impact their profits.

Yes, these are real laws passed in Congress after the defamation lawsuit against Oprah (which she won).

So now the truth is hidden because we wouldn't want to defame the beef industry. Follow the money...

What do you think about fish?

Isn't fish supposed to be heart-healthy? Well, it turns out the study about the Okinawan people was misinterpreted. Their diet was only about 1% in calories from fish – most of it was plant-based and came from sweet potatoes (69%)!

So yes, the Okinawans were very heart-healthy, but they were NOT consuming much fish like is suggested in popular media.

Why? Because people like to cherry-pick data to support a specific agenda. (and make money...)

Plus, fish is so polluted with mercury and dioxins that it's recommended not to eat it more than twice a week.

Even wild-caught fish are polluted, and now microplastics are found in fish fillets thanks to the pollution of our waters.

Animal protein is associated with heart disease.

Studies have shown, time and again, that as animal protein intake rises, so does heart disease risk.

Is it the animal protein, cholesterol, saturated fat, or something else?

Maybe it's the TMAOs (Trimethylamine N-Oxide) that are produced in the gut when people eat animal-based products. TMAOs are linked to an increased risk of heart disease.

It may not be clear exactly what part of animal products is the root cause or if it is a combination, but you can't separate the individual parts from the whole.

If you have heart disease, high cholesterol, or high blood pressure, you can prevent or reverse your disease through a plant-based diet.

Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn and Dr. Ornish have shown that a plant-based diet can reverse heart disease without drugs or surgery.

In conclusion, not only do plants have plenty of protein, but they are also the cleanest and safest protein you can consume. We must look at food as a whole, not just their individual parts.

Animal products may contain protein and some vitamins, but they come with many additional problems and junk that can't be separated out. Not only is animal protein problematic, but it is also high in cholesterol, saturated fats, and even pollutants.

Plus, plants have all the vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients, and fiber your body requires. **Most people in the US only get about 10% of their calories from vegetables and 90% from animal and processed foods.**

It's no wonder we are so sick and dying from heart disease, cancer, obesity, diabetes, autoimmune disorders, dementia, and so many more diet-related diseases.

We must flip the script and get at least 90% of calories from PLANTS.

Imagine how healthy our world would be then. We wouldn't have to worry about these chronic diseases ravaging our lives, and we could live like the centenarians in the Blue Zones who were eating just like that – 90% whole food plant-based diets.

Now, on to my top 15 BEST sources of plant-based protein.

#1 Beans & Lentils

Beans, beans, they're good for your heart; the more you eat, the more you....get protein! Haha

And there is so much variety that you don't get bored. Some varieties include black beans, chickpeas, pinto beans, red kidney beans, cannellini beans, and northern white beans.

Lentils are excellent and like little tiny beans. They are also best to start with if you are worried about gas - they are easier to digest than beans.

1 cup beans cooked = about 15 grams of protein

1 cup of lentils cooked = 18 grams of protein

Try my 3 Bean Vegan Chili for a filling dinner!

#2 Tofu, Tempeh, & Edamame

Tofu, tempeh, and edamame are all made from soy and are high in protein and phytoestrogens that protect against cancer and strengthen bones.

1 cup of tofu contains 20 grams of protein

1 cup of edamame contains 17 grams of protein

Tempeh is fermented soybeans, so it's also good for a healthy gut microbiome. It comes in at 31 grams of protein for 1 cup!

Tofu is excellent marinated and baked or air-fried.

Try my **Crispy Air Fryer Tofu Nuggets** - they taste like Chick-fil-A nuggets!

#3 Whole Grain or Bean Pasta

Pasta gets a bad wrap, but it's because most people are using white pasta, which has had its fiber and nutrients removed, making it processed.

But WHOLE wheat pasta is high in fiber and....protein!

If you are gluten-free, bean and chickpea pasta are great substitutes and double the protein.

1 serving whole wheat pasta = 7 grams of protein

1 serving chickpea pasta = 14 grams of protein

Try my Creamy Vegan Fettuccine Alfredo that comes in at a whopping 17 grams of protein per serving!

#4 Quinoa

Quinoa (keen-wa) is sometimes called a whole grain, but it's actually a very high-protein seed.

It's super easy to cook and has a mild flavor. Make sure to rinse your quinoa well before cooking to remove the "saponin" so it doesn't taste bitter.

It's a perfect sub for rice to boost your protein content.

1 cup of cooked quinoa = 8 grams of protein

Try my Zesty Mango Quinoa Salad

#5 Broccoli

Did you know that broccoli has protein?

Yup, along with lots of cancer-fighting phytonutrients!

As a cruciferous vegetable, broccoli has 2X the cancer-fighting power as regular vegetables.

Bring on the broccoli! (but don't smother it in cheese...)

1 cup of cooked broccoli = 5 grams of protein

Tip: Add steamed broccoli to your whole wheat pasta and marinara sauce for more protein and nutrient density.

#6 Spinach

Remember Popeye the Sailor Man?

Even I used to watch those cartoon reruns as a kid. He would eat his cans of spinach and grow big muscles!

Guess what? Spinach CAN grow big muscles because it's packed with protein!

1 cup cooked spinach = 7 grams of protein

For a protein-packed meal, try my Black Bean & Spinach Enchiladas!

#7 Soy Milk

So many plant-based milks are out there, but soy milk is one of the highest protein.

Just be sure to choose unsweetened so you don't get a lot of added sugar.

Use soy milk in your smoothies, overnight oats, or baked treats to add more protein!

1 cup of soy milk = 7 grams of protein

Try this Fruit & Greens Smoothie with Soy Milk for a high protein start to your day.

#8 Nuts & Seeds

Nuts and seeds are a great source of protein! Even simple nut butter can add protein to a smoothie or sandwich.

Ground sesame seeds are also known as tahini and are hummus ingredients.

2 tablespoons peanut butter = 8 grams of protein

2 tablespoons ground flax seed = 4 grams of protein

2 tablespoons chia seed = 3 grams of protein

2 tablespoons tahini = 5 grams of protein

1/4 cup almonds = 8 grams of protein

[Try my Tangy Dill Pickle Hummus for a creamy dip](#)

#9 Green Peas

Green peas are actually in the legume family, the same as beans and lentils, so they are a protein powerhouse.

1 cup of green peas = 8 grams of protein

I love to eat steamed green peas (I buy the microwavable steam bags) by themselves or add them to soups and stews.

#10 Potatoes

What? Potatoes are high in protein?

Heck yeah!

Sweet potatoes and purple potatoes were 65% of the Okinawan's diet.

Potatoes are also a good source of potassium, folate, vitamin C, vitamin B6, and fiber.

1 large potato = 7 grams of protein

1 large sweet potato = 4 grams of protein

Love fries? **Then try my Easy Oil Free Roasted Potato Wedges.**

#11 Sprouted Grains

Sprouted grains are whole grains that have been allowed to germinate, increasing their nutrients, including protein.

Like the Ezekiel brand, sprouted grain breads are high in protein, so they're much better to use than white bread.

2 slices of Ezekiel bread = 10 grams of protein!

I love to make Everything Bagel Avocado Toast in the morning and top it with a handful of greens like spinach or arugula.

[Try my Everything Bagel Avocado Toast HERE.](#)

#12 Oats

Oats are one that many people don't realize are high in protein.

Steel-cut or old-fashioned (rolled) oats are the best because they are the least processed and digest much slower, keeping your blood sugar steady.

1/4 cup dry steel cut oats = 5 grams of protein

1/2 cup Old Fashioned oats = 5 grams of protein

Try my Easy Homemade Muesli for a quick cold cereal in the morning. Add some soy milk for even more protein!

#13 Mushrooms

Mushrooms have protein, too!

And any variety you like - white, button, portobello, cremini, shiitake, reishi, lion's mane, and more!

You should always cook your mushrooms because some varieties have toxic properties if eaten raw. Better safe than sorry!

1 cup mushrooms = 3 grams of protein

If you love burgers, then how about Portobello Mushroom Burgers? These have a great meaty and flavorful texture.

#14 Wild Rice

Wild rice is a semi-aquatic grass that grows in the Great Lakes region of North America.

It's got lots of nutrients, including, you guessed it, protein!

Wild rice takes much longer to cook than brown rice, so having an Instant Pot can speed up the process. It can take about 45 minutes on the stove.

1 cup cooked wild rice = 7 grams of protein

One of my favorite soups is the Instant Pot Wild Rice Mushroom Soup

#15 Nutritional Yeast

You may have heard that Nutritional Yeast is packed with many vitamins like B vitamins, including B12, but did you know it's also high in protein?

It shocked me, too, when I first learned!

2 tablespoons of Nutritional Yeast = 8 grams of protein

We love to sprinkle Nutritional Yeast over our pasta marinara like parmesan cheese in our house.

Nutritional Yeast is also excellent for making cheese sauces, like my Easy Vegan Nacho Cheese Sauce.



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