

May 2011 | www.mindbodygreen.com | Stacy Silvera | Health & Wellness

5 Reasons Why You Should Eat Plant Based Protein



We've heard it before from the hard bodied men and women in fitness magazines, all promoting a regiment of five small meals a day with "clean burning" animal protein. They often think that is key in developing their shapely muscles; it'd be useless to say otherwise as far as they're concerned.

However, as "clean eating" as white turkey breast, egg whites, and chicken without the skin sounds, it can't hold a candle to the top source of amino acids (protein's building blocks) available: those of the plant, non-animal variety!

We are a society obsessed with attaching a numeric value to everything, and as a result, people will often regard the best protein sources as those with the highest number. However, that is simply not the case—there are core differences in the very make-up of plant versus animal protein. Factors such as

the energy spent on digesting these proteins play a huge part in determining its quality as well.

1. Too much of a good thing is no good at all

Some die-hard weightlifters will swear by the massive amounts of protein they consume to help their muscles repair and grow. However, if they took into consideration that human breast milk, the food for the fastest growing humans on earth (our babies), is only about 5% protein, it really isn't necessary! Over-consuming animal protein puts a strain on our bodies, particularly our liver, which has a low tolerance for processing uric acid, a by-product of digesting animal protein. In North America, it is very hard to fall short on our protein needs, given you are consuming enough daily calories.

2. "But animal protein is a complete protein, and therefore better!"

Yes, animal protein is a "complete protein", however, that just means more work for your body! Since these amino acids are already built up into a dizzying, complex array of complete protein strains, your body needs to break it all down into separate amino acids before utilizing them. This significantly slows down digestion, and forces your body to work harder on breaking down protein than it should have to. Green leafy vegetables such as spinach and romaine lettuce, for example, are rich in ready to use, easily absorbed amino acids. When you fuel yourself on foods that are easier to digest, your body can direct more energy into healing the wear-and-tear on your muscles caused by a workout (whether it be weight lifting, running, or yoga). Not only will you heal a lot faster, but by eating a diet of plant food proteins, you will also have more energy for the next day's workout.

"Arguably of even greater importance than the raw materials that foods do or do not supply is the ease at which they are digested, absorbed, assimilated, and eliminated. These choices demand upon our digestive and metabolic capacity, the greater opportunity the body has available for repair and regeneration after our training sessions."

~ Dr. Rick Dina

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"Arguably of even greater importance than the raw materials that foods do or do not supply is the ease at which they are digested, absorbed, assimilated, and eliminated. The less our food choices demand upon our digestive and metabolic capacity, the greater opportunity the body has available for recovery and regeneration after our training sessions."

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3. Cooking food denatures proteins

With the quality of meat produced today and the chance of parasitic infection, meat is usually cooked prior to consumption. However, cooking protein is widely known to denature it, and up to 50% of the protein value is thought to be lost in this process. So you may have started out with a 30g piece of chicken, but after cooking has rendered it to

15g, little remains to be absorbed during the arduous digestive process. Alternatively, vegetable-sourced proteins don't require heat processing in order to be safely consumed, thus maintaining their digestive-enhancing enzymes and protein integrity.

4. Animal Foods are Pro-Inflammatory

Arachidonic acid is a pro-inflammatory fatty acid found in varying concentrations in all meats. Following a workout where the muscle has been torn, whether it is from bench pressing or simply stretching, it is anti-inflammatory foods that should be consumed for optimal healing. Fruits, vegetables, raw nuts, and seeds contain high levels of Omega 3 fatty acids that promote rejuvenation and soothe, rather than aggravate, inflammatory conditions. They are also high in the antioxidant vitamins (like A and C) that further support this healing process.

5. But I need to combine vegetable proteins to get what I need!

Frances Moore Lappe, the creator of the "protein combining" idea, recounted that theory in a later book. "In combating the myth that meat is the only way to get high-quality protein, I reinforced another myth. I gave the impression that in order to get enough protein without meat, considerable care was needed in choosing foods. Actually, it is much easier than I thought." However her retraction is not nearly as publicized as her original, albeit wrong, theory. You can rest assured that eating a wide variety of plant-sourced proteins in your daily diet would be suitable to meeting your nutritional needs!

Tips for getting more plant protein into your life:

1. Enjoy a green smoothie for breakfast, or post-workout snack.
2. Use raw sprouts in sandwiches, omelets, on top of pastas and salads; basically anywhere you can hide them (and tolerate them) – Alfalfa is a favorite among even the most sensitive of taste buds.
3. Chlorella or Spirulina tablets – If you don't mind the taste of the powders, a teaspoon or two in a drink is a fantastic addition to any diet, as it is filled with vitamins and minerals.
4. Toss some chia or hemp seeds over your salads or cereal.

Plant Protein All-Stars

- Green Leafy Vegetables
- Algae (Spirulina, Chlorella)
- Sprouts (particularly sunflower)
- Goji berries
- Hemp Seeds
- Chia Seeds
- Avocados
- Legumes
- Sprouted nuts/seeds
- Broccoli

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