



Eco-friendly food

Week Four Challenge

The challenge this week is to find, make and try two new legume recipes during the week.



Why eat plant based protein?

The average Australian eats more meat than recommended for their health. Australians' daily mean consumption of meat, poultry and game is 200g for men and 120g for women despite a recommendation of 65g/day or 445g/week for good health in the new (draft) Australian Dietary Guidelines consultation document.

The Heart Foundation suggests adults eat at least two legume meals each week, however, overall legume intake in Australia is very low, with a mean intake of less than

10g a day by adults.

Legumes such as chickpeas, beans, peas, lentils, soybeans and peanuts are plant based protein sources grown in Australia. Legumes add important nutrients (particularly nitrogen) back into the soil as they grow. This improves the yield and protein content of subsequent crops and reduces the need for nitrogen based fertilizers which are a source of agricultural greenhouse gases. Increasing consumption of legumes is also good for your health as they are low in saturated fat and good sources of protein, fibre and many important vitamins and minerals. Organically grown legumes are even better for the environment because petro-chemical based farm chemicals are not used, less fossil fuel is used for cultivating the land and more carbon is stored in the soil.

How to complete the challenge

Step 1: Become familiar with the different sources of plant based proteins. This can be done by reviewing the information in the *Protein Bites* webpage (under "what can I do?" tab)

Step 2: Browse the web for legume recipes. You may want to check out our *Beans around the World Cookbook* at <http://www.ecofriendlyfood.org.au/recipes>. There are many cuisines that include legume



dishes so include a country if you have a favourite cuisine (e.g. search for 'Greek legume recipes' or 'Greek bean recipes'). Decide on two recipes that you would like to try. Decide on the days when you'll make the two recipes.

Step 3: Source the ingredients for each of your chosen recipes. Some legumes can be found in supermarkets. Often Indian grocers and health food shops have a larger variety of plant based protein sources. Legumes may be hard to source locally, so consider whether other ingredients in your recipes can be locally sourced and are in season.

Step 4: Try making and eating two of the legume recipes within the week. If you have friends that are also taking the challenge, why not make a recipe each and share. If you are unable to cook, then you can take part in the challenge by choosing two appropriate dishes in the supermarket or at a restaurant or take away outlet. Indian cuisine is full of legume dishes. Asian food outlets sell tofu dishes, and supermarkets often sell tofu (plain and flavoured), lentil and tofu patties, bean salads or refried beans, all of which are based on legumes.

After the challenge to try legume recipes, my kids are demanding more legume-based meals like the interesting African dish we tried. It's amazing, as that was the fussy eater.

Elizabeth

Cans vs dried legumes – one more thing to consider

There isn't great evidence on which is better for the environment. It depends on the packaging of your dried beans, how long you cook them for (this can be much less efficient than the canned version) and how much water you use. You need to compare this with the transport of the extra water in the cans and the greenhouses gasses required to produce the cans and the labels – and of course, whether you recycle your cans!

In practical terms canned beans are quick and easy. While dried beans are cheap and you get to control the ingredients e.g. salt, preservatives. Depending on your local suppliers, dried organic beans can be more easily purchased than the canned version.

If you want to know more about preparing dried beans go to <http://www.vegancoach.com/how-to-cook-beans.html>. I like the picture titled 'Admire your soaked beans'.