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Countdown to Mealtime: Why Low Carb Vegetarian Meals Will Make Your Day

By Sylvie Charrier

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Do you know what you're cooking for dinner tonight?

If you're like 75% of all Americans, you don't have a clue what's for dinner. When you figure it out, you'll spend the good part of your evening preparing that meal—and that's not counting any shopping that you might have to do. According to a recent national survey, Americans spend up to an hour every day cooking. Wouldn't you rather spend that time with your family, relaxing, reading, watching TV—doing anything other than slaving over a hot stove? In this fast-paced day and age, what is the answer to saving time in the kitchen?

Your answer to quicker cooking might just come from a surprising place. No, not your local fast food joint—unless, of course, you're okay with gaining weight! If you want to quickly prepare healthy meals for you and your family at home, low carb vegetarian meals are the only way to go! If you're wondering why, check this out.

Low carb vegetarian meals actually cook up to 3 times more quickly than your traditional meat-based menus. It's true. Because many vegetarian foods, especially meat substitutes, come pre-cooked, you'll never have to wait for that steak to slowly make its way to medium well. Simply heat through and then dish it out. In addition, since many vegetarian foods are entirely plant-based, they will keep for longer periods of time. This means that your veggie loaf made on Monday will still taste great on Friday!

To save you needless hours slaving over your stove, here are some extra easy quick tips to make the most of your time in the kitchen:

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Think Big!
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If you've got a favorite recipe, double it up. Do you have the time to do? How much more time does it take to cut two onions instead of one! Then, you'll eating delicious leftovers whenever you want that take a fraction of the time to reheat. If you're going to freeze your leftovers, make sure to plop them in a pot or pan that you can put right in the oven or microwave to save time on washing extra dishes.

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Let Leftovers Work for You
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If you have leftovers, but not enough to make a full meal—get creative! Figure out what you can combine your leftovers to make a masterpiece of a meal. Be sure to write down any combinations that tickled your taste buds and you might just want to make them the main dish next time around!

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Make `em Frozen
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Frozen fresh vegetables may just be the perfect time-saving food. They've already been washed, peeled, and cut, so all you have to do is reheat. It almost seems too easy. Plus, if you've bought fresh frozen, you'll still get all the nutritional benefits in the bag.

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Keep a Lid On It!
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To quicken your cooking time, make sure your pots and pans are sealed with lid. Lids keep the steam and heat in so you'll be able to enjoy your delectable dishes sooner. In fact, keeping a lid on it not only speeds up the cooking process, it will help keep seal the tasty flavor and nutrients.

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Mix It Up!
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Does anyone really know what a "dash" of seasoning is? How many recipes have you found that call for a dash of salt, a pinch of pepper, and cayenne to taste? Probably too many to remember, right? Why not create your own mixed seasoning. You can come up with a creative name, like salpepcay. Rather than wasting your time finding each spice every time you cook, shake things up by mixing together your most used spices in their own container.

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Write It Down
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How many times have your meal plans gotten derailed when you find out that you're missing the key ingredient? Tomato soup isn't so great without the tomatoes! Put a magnetic memo pad on your frig

and write down the names of ingredients as they run out. Bring the list with you to the store each time you shop and you'll never experience a food wreck again!

Sylvie Charrier is the author of the revolutionary new book "Living La Vida Low Carb: The Vegetarian Way". As a busy work-at-home mom, she discovered simple ways to get more results from her low carb diet. She shares her recipe makeovers and health tips on her website <http://www.VegetarianLowCarb.com/Countdown.html>

Low Carb Dieters: Want a Break from the Meat? Make It Veggie!

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At first, your low carb diet seemed like the best dream you'd ever had. A dietary expert was actually telling you to eat as much meat, eggs, and cheese as you possibly wanted. You could go to any restaurant, order the biggest slab of beef on the menu and—since you weren't eating bread or potatoes with meat—you could still claim you were watching your waistline when offered dessert. But, now that the low carb honeymoon is over, you might be finding that the thought of another pork chop, omelet, or hunk of cheese makes you sick to your stomach. If you fit this description, there is a way to keep your carbs low, but your spirits high. Instead of a steak for your next breakfast, lunch, and dinner, why don't you try a low carb vegetarian dish?

Don't worry—you don't need a special ID card to eat vegetarian foods, nor do you need to wear sandals and burn incense. In fact, with nuts, fruits, and vegetables, you eat vegetarian foods all the time! But, if you're ready to skip steak once in a while, it's time to replace some of your meat entrees with vegetarian options. And, believe it or not, it's easier than you might think to whip up a low carb vegetarian dish.

"I can't believe it's not vegetarian!"

The easiest way to take your low carb diet on a vegetarian trip is by using meat substitutes. Meat substitutes taste, feel, and even smell like the real deal. When you simply substitute these faux meats in any of your meat-based recipes, you'll have to check the package twice to make sure it really says "Vegetarian" on the label. From tofu to tempeh, seitan to TVP, there are just about as many meat substitutes as actual meats on the market today. You can have vegetarian ribs, shrimp, steak, chicken, turkey, salmon, and just about any other meat you can think of. But, if you really want a break from meat, the real thing or even fakes, vegetarian dishes can serve you up right.

If you want to take a break every now and then from meat, faux or otherwise, stir fries, grilled veggies, and low carb pastas top the vegetarian list.

Stir fry your favorite low starch, cruciferous vegetables, including broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, daikon, radishes, chard, turnips, and watercress. For protein, add in seasoned tofu.

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Grill up asparagus, peppers, zucchini, summer squash, or any of the veggies above. Marinade your healthy delights in a little olive oil, salt, and pepper. For an extra zip, add cayenne pepper.

Go Italian with a low carb pasta topped with your choice of garlic, herbs, and tomatoes. Add a light sprinkle of Romano or Parmesan cheese for the perfect touch.

Your low carb world has just gotten a bit brighter—there are so many vegetarian options that you can add to your diet. You don't have to give up meat, but if you want to add variety to your menu, grab something vegetarian today. And, you might just like the way those sandals feel after all!

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