So Many Brunch Foods!

Brenda Davis, RD

The word “brunch” is a portmanteau or a blend of words used to make a new word. In this case, it is a blend of two words – breakfast and lunch. So, it is easy to understand that this is a meal that combines breakfast and lunch. Brunch is usually served between about 10:00 am and 11:30 am – a late breakfast and an early lunch.

The word originated in England in the late 19th century and made its way to North America in the 1930s.

Brunch foods tend to lean towards breakfast items such as waffles, pancakes, eggs, sausages, pastries, fruit, and salads, but can also feature lunch favorites such as casseroles, soups, and salads as well. Plant-based eaters have done a marvelous job of making traditional brunch fare without any animal products. Today, you will see firsthand just how creative and delicious animal-free brunch foods can be!

Brunch is not an everyday thing for most people. It is something to indulge in on weekends or for special occasions. Often, brunches are enjoyed the morning after a wedding, for Easter, Valentine’s Day, or Mother’s Day. Many restaurants serve brunch buffets with dozens of fancy dishes.

Brunch Around the World

There are many different types of brunches around the world. Here are some examples:

China

China has a unique and popular brunch called Dim Sum. If you have never been to a restaurant for Dim Sum, it is a memorable experience. Servers bring carts to your table with different offerings of steamed buns and dumplings, and you select those that appeal to you.

Ethiopia

Ethiopian food is such fun, and very veg-friendly! While traditional brunch dishes often include eggs and yogurt, it is easy to make plant-based versions of Ethiopian favorites. The cuisine relies heavily on beans, lentils, vegetables, and flatbreads, so it is naturally plant-based. One of the stars of the Ethiopian brunch is a dish called Ful – a fava bean-based delight.

India

If you have never tried an Indian brunch, be prepared to be wowed. Indian cuisine is masterfully seasoned, and brunch features many Indian classics such as paratha (flatbread), poha (rice dish), sambhar (lentil-vegetable stew), uttapam (savory pancake) with coconut chutney, and dosas (lentil and rice pancake).

Mexico

In Mexico, brunch foods are loaded with salsa, guacamole, and chili peppers. Mexican brunches are often stacked with tortillas, burritos, enchiladas, and refried beans. Mexican-inspired breakfast bowls featuring black beans, sweet potatoes and avocado also make a fun addition to brunch.

Turkey

The food in Turkey is quite simply incredible, and brunch is no exception. Many small plates are served, with olives, roasted vegetables, hummus, Simit (Turkish bagel), breads, waffles, and many traditional Mediterranean dishes. While Turkish brunches tend to be meat and cheese heavy, there are so many plant-based options, it is easy to avoid them.

This recipe and its accompaniments were family favorites as my kids were growing up.

The main dish is cashew French toast.

You can top it with fresh berries, sliced bananas or peaches, apple, or berry sauce. For a special finishing touch, add a dollop of pear cream. Pear cream is the perfect substitute for whipping cream.

Don’t forget to include a colorful fruit tray or fruit salad with your brunch!

Cashew French Toast

Makes 5-6 slices of French toast.

French toast is a great addition to any brunch. Whether you serve French toast, waffles, or pancakes, set up a little buffet with a variety of toppings such as berries or sliced fruit (mango, peaches, nectarines, bananas, and strawberries work well), cooked fruit sauce, nut butter, maple syrup and pear cream or similar whipping cream substitute. You can use any flax or chia, but golden flax or white chia are less noticeable.

1 cup unsweetened soy milk (or other nondairy milk)

1/2 cup cashews, soaked 2-4 hours and drained

1 tablespoon ground golden flax or white chia seeds

1 Medjool date (or 2-3 Deglet Noor dates)

1 teaspoon cinnamon (or to taste)

½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Pinch of salt (optional)

6-8 slices of thick whole grain rustic bread

1. Place soy milk, cashews, ground flax or chia seeds, date, cinnamon, vanilla, and salt in a blender. Blend on high speed until silky smooth.
2. Preheat griddle or nonstick skillet to medium heat. If necessary, spray skillet to prevent sticking.
3. Dip a slice of bread in the batter for about 10 seconds and flip to cover with batter on both sides.
4. Place bread on a hot griddle or skillet. Repeat with as many pieces of bread as you can fit on the skillet while allowing space between slices.
5. Cook until golden brown – about 4-5 minutes. Flip and cook on the other side for another 4-5 minutes.
6. Serve hot with your favorite toppings.

Pear Cream (whipping cream substitute)

This is a healthy, delicious replacement for whipping cream. It is a perfect topping for French toast, pancakes, or waffles. It is delicious in a breakfast bowl, on fruit salad, pudding, pie, crisps, and other desserts. While cashews can simply be rinsed, the cream will be smoother if they are soaked.

1 x 15 oz can or jar* of pears in water or juice

1 cup raw cashews (soaked for 2-4 hours and drained)

1 tsp vanilla

1. Place pears, cashews, and vanilla in a blender. Blend at high speed until very smooth.

2. Pour into a jar and refrigerate. For a thicker cream, use 1 1/4 cup cashews.

*If you do not have canned pears, use 2 small to medium pears, cored, sectioned, and steamed for about 10 minutes. No need to remove skin!

Very Berry Sauce

Makes 2 cups (500 ml)

Pour this delicious sauce over French toast, pancakes, waffles, puddings, or frozen banana ice cream.

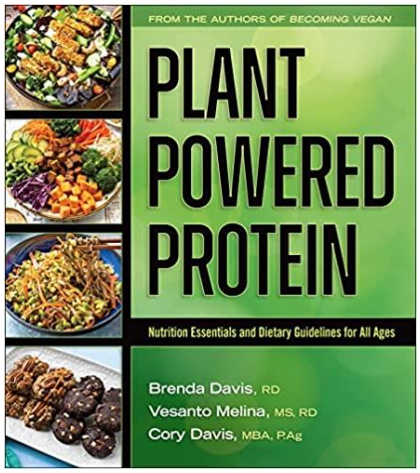
2 cups (500 ml) fresh or frozen blueberries, raspberries, strawberries or mixed berries

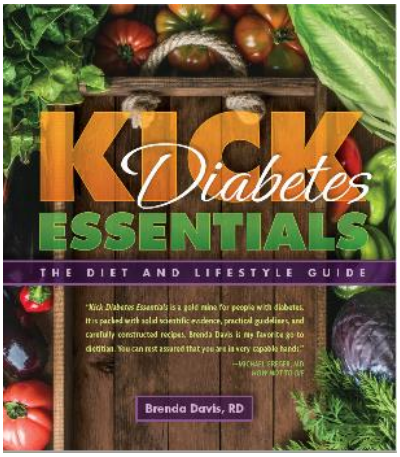
¼ cup (60 ml) water

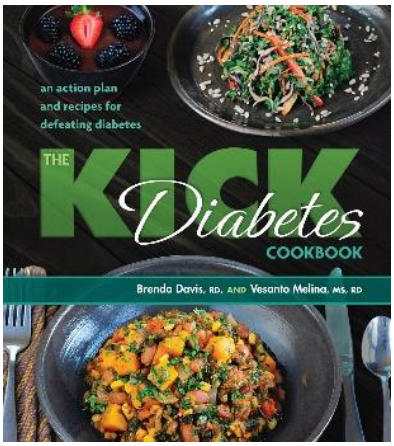
2 teaspoons (10 ml) cornstarch or arrowroot starch

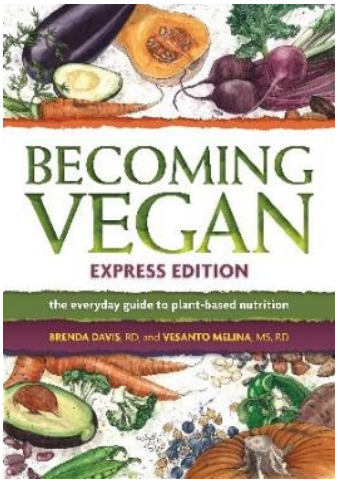
2 tablespoons (30 ml) water

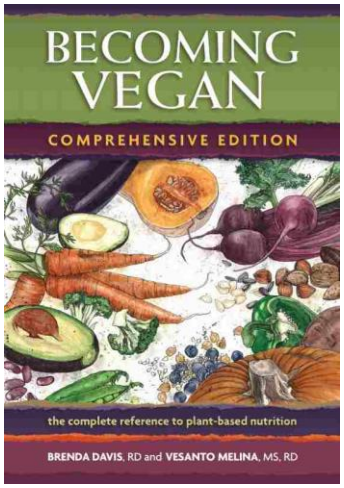
Put the berries and ¼ cup water in a small saucepan and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally until berries come to a simmer. In a small bowl, mix the cornstarch and 2 tablespoons of water, then stir it into the simmering berries. Cook, stirring constantly, until the sauce thickens, about 1 minute. Serve warm or cold.

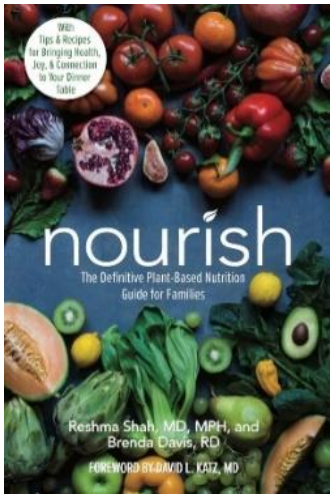












This article was originally written for So Many Cooks in the Kitchen.

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