

So Many Breakfasts!

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Do you look forward to breakfast each day? Do you have a standard breakfast you adore? I LOVE breakfast – always have. When I transitioned to a plant-exclusive diet about 35 years ago, the plant-based dairy alternatives were nothing to write home about. Today, the options are endless and incredibly delicious. If you are a plant-based enthusiast but are still searching for your perfect breakfast meal, this article is for you. The options provided today are some of our favorites, and we are delighted to share them with you. How about trying one new recipe per week? Enjoy your breakfast adventure!



The word breakfast quite literally means “break the fast”. Ideally, when we eat breakfast, we have given our bodies a 12-hour (or more) break from food. I am a morning person, and my body is primed for fuel in the morning. Perhaps you can relate. On the other hand, if you are more of a night owl, you might be uninterested in food first thing in the morning. It is perfectly OK to delay breakfast. Do a few chores, get some fresh air, or fit in some exercise before chowing down. On the other hand, if you are not hungry until lunchtime, you may want to try reducing the size of your evening meal, eating earlier, or avoiding snacks a few hours before bed. You may have heard the saying “Eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince, and dinner like a pauper”. The message is that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. While some might argue this point, there is no question that a healthy breakfast is important. So, what makes breakfast such a good idea?

1. Breakfast provides fuel for the body and provides an energy boost.

When you have gone without food for an extended time (often 12-14 hours), your glycogen stores get depleted. If you don't provide glucose to restore your glycogen levels, you can end up in a bit of a slump. Breakfast replenishes your body's energy stores and provides the necessary fuel to kickstart your day. Eating a hearty breakfast can set a positive tone for your energy levels and productivity all day long.

2. Breakfast can help boost metabolism.

Consuming breakfast revs up your metabolism. After fasting overnight, your body needs nutrients to get going. Eating breakfast signals to your body that it's time to start burning calories efficiently.

3. Breakfast helps with weight control.

People who eat breakfast are at lower risk for overweight or obesity. Eating breakfast helps stabilize blood glucose levels, regulate appetite hormones, and control appetite. If you skip breakfast, you may get really

hungry and be more apt to indulge in less healthful foods and overeat later in the day.

4. Breakfast helps us meet our needs for many essential nutrients.

Breakfast meals can be a great source of fiber and key nutrients such as calcium, iron, B vitamins, vitamin D, vitamin E, and essential fatty acids. Using fortified nondairy milk is a simple way of ensuring we meet recommended intakes for calcium, vitamin D, and vitamin B12. Adding nuts and seeds to the meal adds essential fatty acids and vitamin E.

5. It helps boost brain power and concentration.

When you skip breakfast, it can deprive the brain of the glucose it needs for optimal functioning. Studies suggest that skipping breakfast negatively affects mental performance, including attention span, concentration, and memory.

6. It helps us reduce the risk of disease.

Studies show that eating breakfast reduces the risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.

7. It builds healthy eating habits.

Making breakfast a priority sets a positive tone for the rest of the day's meals. It cultivates healthy eating habits and encourages mindful choices throughout the day, improving overall nutrition and well-being.

Many common breakfast choices like Pop-Tarts, presweetened ready-to-eat cereals, and fast-food breakfast sandwiches are ultra-processed foods that erode health over the short and long term. So, what does a healthy breakfast look like? How can you be sure your breakfast is a complete and nourishing meal?

A healthy breakfast features at least 4 of the 5 food groups – vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, and nuts or seeds. In the table below, you can see how 5 plant-based breakfast favorites can be taken up a notch, both from an enjoyment and nutrition perspective.

Making the Most of Plant-based Breakfast Favorites

Breakfast	Standard fare	Take it up a notch
Steel-cut oats	Steel-cut oats, sliced bananas, almond milk	Steel-cut oats, sliced bananas, blueberries, fortified soy milk, walnuts, seed mix (ground flax, chia, and hempseeds)
Green smoothie	Greens, frozen bananas, frozen berries, almond milk	Greens, celery, cucumber, frozen bananas, frozen berries, frozen peas, fortified soy milk, hempseeds
Avocado toast	Whole grain toast, mashed avocado	Whole grain toast, mashed avocado, sliced baked tofu, tomato slices, sprouts, fresh orange slices
Scrambled tofu	Scrambled tofu, whole grain toast	Scrambled tofu with peppers, mushrooms, spinach, or other greens, whole grain toast, and grapefruit
Chia pudding	Chia pudding made with almond milk and berries	Chia pudding made with almond milk blended with hempseeds, fresh berries, and other fruit, homemade seedy granola

Recipes

Sweet Breakfast Bowl

This is my favorite breakfast. It is delicious, filling (intact grains keep you full until lunchtime), and jam-packed with nutrition. It may seem a bit overwhelming at first, but ingredients are prepared ahead of time to last several days, so it comes together in minutes. For a take-out breakfast, layer ingredients in a mason jar. I add about ¼ cup of small brown lentils per cup of grains when cooking them to boost protein and overall nutrition.

Ingredients:

Cooked Intact Whole Grains (1/2-1 cup)(cooking instructions below)

- Kamut or spelt berries, barley, or other intact grains

Fruit (1 cup or more)

- Fresh berries, chopped fresh fruit

Chai Pudding or Nondairy Yogurt (1/3-1/2 cup)

- Chia pudding (see recipe below)
- Nondairy yogurt – select plain unsweetened nondairy yogurt

Stewed fruit (unsweetened), blueberries, or Italian prune plums (1/4 cup)

Nut/seed mix (2 tablespoons)

- Omega-3-rich seeds (hemp, chia, flax)
- Other seeds (pumpkin, sunflower)
- Chopped walnuts, Brazil nuts, pecans, hazelnuts, or almonds

Granola (2-4 tablespoons)(optional)

- Homemade is recommended (see recipe below)

Fortified Unsweetened Non-dairy Milk (1/2-1 cup)

Spices (optional ¼ teaspoon in total)

- Cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, cardamom, allspice, or pumpkin pie spice

Directions

1. Cook grain kernels. Bring 4 cups of water to a boil (lightly salt, if desired). Add 1 cup rinsed grains. If you would like to add lentils use ¼ cup lentils and increase water to 5 cups. Cook for an hour or more until grains are soft. Double the amount of grains (and lentils), if desired. Drain any excess liquid. Grains can be kept in the refrigerator for 5 days.
2. Prepare the chia pudding (if using). See the recipe below.
3. Prepare the granola. See the recipe below.
4. Chop fruit and place 1-2 cups of fruit in your bowl.
5. Add cooked grains and chia pudding or yogurt. Gently stir together.
6. Top with stewed fruit, nut and seed mix, and granola.
7. Sprinkle with spices, as desired. Enjoy with your favorite nondairy milk.



Creamy Chia Pudding

Makes 4 cups (1 L)

Chia puddings can serve as an everyday dessert or a creamy addition to a breakfast bowl. This version gets a substantial protein boost with hemp seeds and protein-rich nondairy milk. Blending the hempseeds with the milk adds creaminess and nutrients to the pudding. Feel free to vary the number of dates to suit your palate. To make a mason jar parfait, alternate layers of chia pudding with berries or chopped fruit (fresh, stewed, or both), and nuts, seeds, coconut, and/or granola. Repeat layers two or three times.

Ingredients

3 cups protein-rich non-dairy milk (e.g., soy or pea)

1/3 cup hemp seeds

2 medjool dates (or 6 soft Deglet Noor dates)

1 teaspoon vanilla

1/3 cup chia seeds



Directions

- Put the milk, hemp seeds, dates, and vanilla in a blender and process on high speed until smooth.
- Add the chia seeds and pulse once or twice, just to distribute chia seeds through the liquid. Pour into a large mason jar or bowl, cover and refrigerate.
- After the pudding has been refrigerated for 30 to 60 minutes, remove the jar, and stir or whisk the pudding to remove any lumps and to distribute the seeds evenly. Refrigerate for another 4 hours or longer.
- Serve with a breakfast bowl or as a dessert with fresh fruit, berries, stewed fruit, nuts, and other toppings of your choice. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

Wholly Granola

Makes about 12 cups

Traditional granola uses oil and sugar as the liquid ingredients. In this healthy version, fresh and dried fruits replace the sugar, and nut or seed butter replace the oil. The seeds and nuts add protein and trace minerals. Granola adds a wonderful crunch to a breakfast bowl and is also a delicious topping for desserts such as pumpkin pudding, chia pudding, and nondairy yogurt. The best way to retain the crispiness of this granola is to store it in the freezer. It is delicious right from the freezer!

Wet ingredients

- 1 fresh orange, peeled and seeded
- 1 large banana
- 1 apple, cored and coarsely chopped
- 1/2 cup soft pitted dates or prunes, steam if hard
- 1/2 cup nut or seed butter
- 2 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 teaspoons (10 ml) cinnamon



Dry Ingredients

- 6 cups rolled oats
- 1½ cups sunflower seeds
- ½ cup pumpkin seeds
- ½ cup chia
- ½ cup whole flaxseeds or hempseeds (not ground)
- 1 cup nuts (e.g., almonds, pecans)
- 1/2 cup shredded, unsweetened coconut
- 3/4 cup currants, raisins, dried cranberries, or dried cherries



Directions

1. Preheat oven to 250 degrees F. Spray one or two cookie sheets with oil spray or line the cookie sheets with silicone mats or parchment paper.
2. Place orange, banana, apple, dates, nut or seed butter, vanilla, and cinnamon in a blender or food processor and process to form a smooth paste.
3. In a large bowl, combine oats, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, chia seeds, flaxseeds, nuts, and coconut.
4. Add the liquid ingredients and mix well.
5. Spread the granola onto cookie sheet(s) and bake for 1 hour or until dry.
6. Remove from oven and add the currants, raisins, or other dried fruit (if using). Store in the freezer in airtight containers, mason jars, or zip-lock bags. Use directly from the freezer.



Banana Walnut Pancakes

Makes 10 to 12 small pancakes.

These hearty pancakes have a fabulous flavor and are fun and easy to prepare. They rise best when spread thin. They are super simple and are delicious topped with some combination of fruit, nut butter, and blueberry or raspberry sauce.

Ingredients

1½ cups rolled oats
3 tablespoons ground flaxseeds
1½ teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/8 teaspoon cloves or nutmeg (optional)
¼ teaspoon salt
2 ripe bananas, broken into pieces
1 cup non-dairy milk
1/3 cup coarsely chopped walnuts



Directions

1. Place the oats, flaxseeds, baking powder, cinnamon, optional cloves or nutmeg, and salt in a food processor or blender and pulse to a flour-like consistency.
2. Add the banana and non-dairy milk and pulse until the batter is smooth. Add the walnuts and pulse until just mixed into the batter.
3. Place a large non-stick skillet on medium heat. Make sure the pan is hot enough that drops of water dance when a few are dropped on the surface. If your pan is not non-stick, you may need a little cooking spray to prevent sticking – use as little as possible. Make small pancakes, using about 1/4 cup of the batter per pancake. (About 3 pancakes will fit in one large pan). Spread the pancake dough with a spatula so the

pancakes are not too thick. Cook about 2 to 3 minutes or until pancake is browned. Flip and cook about 2 minutes on the other side.

4. Serve hot with berry sauce (see recipe below).



Very Berry Sauce

Makes 2 cups

This basic fruit sauce is great in a breakfast bowl, on pudding, pancakes, waffles, or French toast. Add a little maple syrup or other sweetener if a sweeter sauce is desired. Use chopped Italian prune plums instead of berries, if desired.

Ingredients

2 cups fresh or frozen blueberries or raspberries

¼ cup water

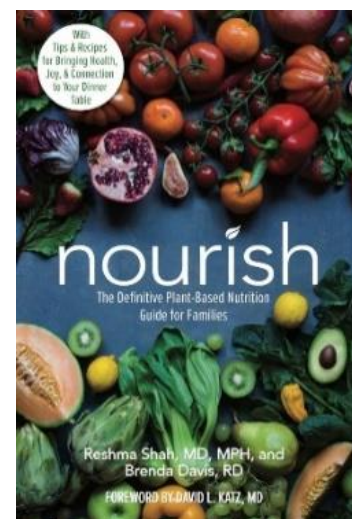
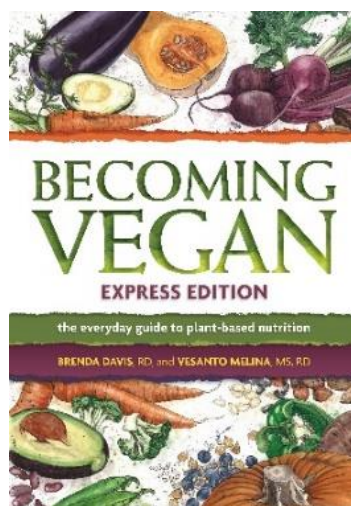
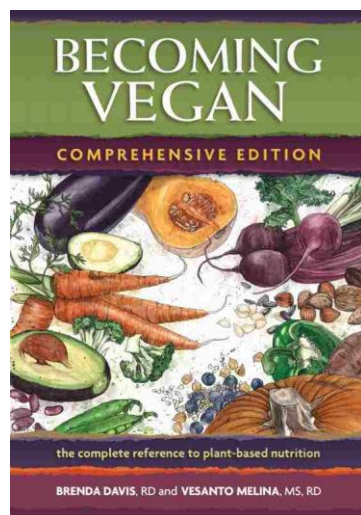
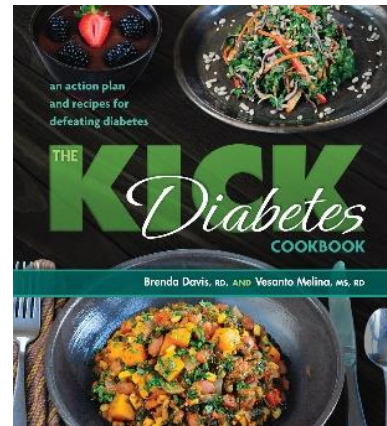
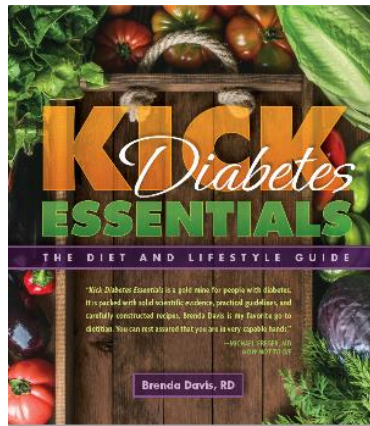
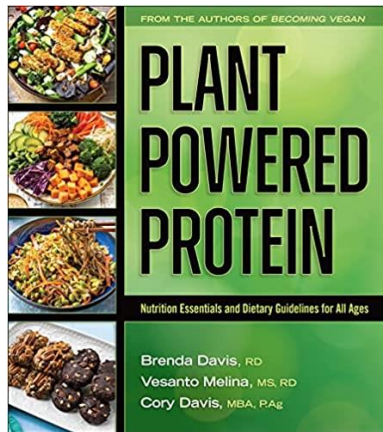
2 teaspoons cornstarch or arrowroot starch

2 tablespoons water

Directions

1. Put the berries and ¼ cup water in a small saucepan and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally until the berries come to a simmer.
2. In a small bowl, mix the cornstarch and 2 tablespoons of water, then stir it into the simmering berries.
3. 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. Brenda Davis, RD is a plant-based pioneer and author/co-author of 13 books on plantbased diets. She is co-Author of Nourish: the definitive plant-based nutrition guide for families, Becoming Vegan: Comprehensive and Express Editions and Kick Diabetes Essentials. www.brendadavisrd.com