

So Many "Egg" Dishes!

Brenda Davis, RD

It started at a holiday party. As I scanned the beautiful festive spread, my eye caught a tray of perfectly golden mini quiches. They were delicate yet hearty-looking, flecked with vibrant vegetables, nestled in crisp whole-grain crusts. Someone next to me leaned in and said, "You *have* to try those quiches—they're so good." I smiled and replied, "They look delicious, but I'm vegan, so I'll have to pass." To my surprise, she looked at me and said, "Actually... I think they *are* vegan." I paused. Vegan? These looked, and apparently tasted, like traditional egg quiches. Rich, savory, custardy. I approached the host to ask, just to be sure. "Oh yes," she said, "they're made with Just Egg. I used cashew milk and an almond-based cheese, so they're completely vegan." I was stunned. Not only had the flavor and presentation fooled a table full of omnivores, but even I, someone deeply familiar with plant-based innovation, almost walked right past them. That moment reminded me just how far plant-based egg alternatives have come.

The experience didn't just surprise me, it inspired me to explore the full spectrum of plant-based egg alternatives. From silky quiches to savory scrambles, and baked goods to breakfast casseroles, the possibilities are more impressive than ever. While I tend to stick to whole-food options most of the time, it is good to know that high-quality commercial replacements are available. Whether you're baking muffins, binding veggie burgers, or making the perfect frittata, there's a solution that works beautifully.



Why Egg Replacers?

Eggs have long been culinary powerhouses: they emulsify, leaven, bind, thicken, and provide moisture and richness. But they are also associated with health, ethical, and environmental concerns.

Replacing eggs in plant-based cooking is about making more conscious choices, but it's also about embracing creative, wholesome alternatives that serve the same functions without the downsides.

Egg replacers fall into two primary categories:

1. For Traditional Egg Dishes

Dishes like scrambled eggs, omelets, frittatas, and French toast are common breakfast staples. These recipes benefit from replacements that mimic egg flavor and texture.

Great choices include:

- **Tofu:** Ideal for scrambles, frittatas, and quiches, tofu is a protein-rich replacement for eggs. Silken tofu works well in custards, while firm tofu can be crumbled and seasoned to taste like scrambled eggs.
- **Chickpea flour:** Excellent for omelets and savory pancakes.
- **Just Egg:** A commercial liquid egg substitute made from mung beans. It mimics the texture and flavor of cooked eggs remarkably well. Other similar products (such as Simply Eggless) are less widely available.

2. For Baking

Eggs provide structure, lift, and moisture. Depending on the recipe, different substitutions can be more appropriate:

- **Flax or chia eggs** (1 tbsp ground flax/chia + 3 tbsp water): Ideal for cookies, muffins, and pancakes. Acts as a binder.
- **Aquafaba** (liquid from canned chickpeas): Whips like egg whites; perfect for meringues, macaroons, and some cakes.
- **Mashed banana or applesauce:** Adds moisture and natural sweetness to quick breads and cakes.
- **Commercial egg replacers:** Such as Bob's Red Mill or Ener-G. These are convenient and shelf-stable.

Chicken Eggs vs. Plant-Based Alternatives

As demand for plant-based eating grows, so does the interest in adequate substitutes for traditional animal products. The market now offers a range of plant-based alternatives that not only replicate eggs' functional properties but also deliver impressive culinary results. Whether you're building scrambles, binding burgers, or baking muffins, it's important to understand how these alternatives compare to chicken eggs—nutritionally, functionally, and environmentally. The chart below is a great place to start.

	Chicken Eggs	Plant-Based Replacers
Nutrition	Moderate amount of high-quality protein; high in cholesterol and saturated fat	Variable amounts and quality of protein; cholesterol-free and low in saturated fat; often include fiber and phytonutrients
Food Safety	Risk of salmonella; must be cooked thoroughly	Little contamination risk; safe raw or cooked
Allergens	Common allergen	Many options have low allergenic potential
Ethics/Environment	Animal welfare concerns; high environmental impact	More sustainable; cruelty-free
Functionality	Highly versatile; consistent results	Can require some experimentation

Are Plant-Based Egg Replacers Healthy?

For plant-based eaters who gravitate toward whole foods, commercial egg alternatives can raise questions about processing, nutritional value, and long-term use. While these products offer undeniable convenience, not all are created equal from a health perspective.

Starch-based replacers, such as baking blends made from tapioca, potato, or other refined starches, are most often used for structure in muffins, cookies, or pancakes. While effective in baking, they offer little in terms of protein, fiber, or micronutrients, and are best used sparingly in favor of whole-food binding agents like flaxseed or chia.

In contrast, mung bean-based products like Just Egg are designed to mimic the texture and functionality of real eggs in savory applications such as scrambles or quiches.

These typically provide moderate protein (about 5–6 grams per serving) and are cholesterol-free, making them a nutritionally superior option to eggs in that regard. However, they often contain added oils, stabilizers, and emulsifiers, making them more processed than whole-food alternatives like tofu or chickpea flour.

In summary, commercial egg replacers can play a supportive role in a health-conscious plant-based kitchen, but for those following a whole-food plant-based lifestyle, they're best viewed as occasional tools rather than daily staples. Whenever possible, prioritize nutrient-dense, minimally processed alternatives that align with both health goals and culinary needs.

Navigating Plant-Based Eggs: Maximizing Nutrition and Flavor

Incorporating plant-based egg alternatives opens up exciting culinary possibilities, but optimal results depend on more than just swapping ingredients. Understanding how to layer flavour, enhance colour, and build balanced meals ensures that plant-based egg dishes are not only satisfying but also nutritious. The tips below highlight key strategies to help cooks get the most from egg-free cooking, without compromising on taste or texture.

- Add color and flavor: Use turmeric for yellow hue and black salt (kala namak) for an authentic eggy taste.
- Don't skimp on seasoning: Garlic, onion, nutritional yeast, and herbs help to elevate flavor.
- Balance macros: Combine tofu or chickpea flour with vegetables, nuts/seeds, and whole grains or starchy vegetables to create nutritionally balanced dishes.
- Read labels: For commercial products like Just Egg, be mindful of added oils or sodium if those are concerns.



Vegan "Egg" Recipes

Vegan Egg Foo Young

Makes 4 servings

This plant-based take on the beloved Chinese-American classic brings all the crispy edges and savory richness of traditional Egg Foo Young, without the eggs. Traditionally made with beaten eggs, vegetables, and sometimes meat or seafood, then pan-fried and topped with a light gravy, this version uses ingredients like chickpea flour and tofu to replicate the familiar texture and flavor. Packed with fiber-rich vegetables, and anti-inflammatory seasonings like turmeric and black salt, it's a dish that delivers comfort and nutrition. Serve it with Asian greens and black or brown rice for a balanced, high-protein meal.

Ingredients:

Foo Young Batter

- ¾ cup chickpea flour + ¾ cup water
- ½ cup firm silken tofu (or medium firm regular tofu)
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1½ tablespoons nutritional yeast flakes (or 1 tablespoon powder)
- ¼ teaspoon baking powder
- 1 tablespoon reduced-sodium tamari or soy sauce
- ½ teaspoon toasted sesame oil (optional)
- ¼ teaspoon black salt (kala namak) (for eggy flavor)
- ⅛ teaspoon white or black pepper
- Pinch of turmeric (for color)

Vegetable Filling (can be adjusted seasonally):

- 1 cup mung bean sprouts or shredded cabbage
- ⅓ cup grated carrot
- 1 thinly sliced green onion (white and green parts)
- 1 cup chopped mushrooms (shiitake, oyster, or cremini)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons freshly grated ginger

Simple Vegan Gravy (Optional but classic)

- 1 cup vegetable low sodium vegetable broth
- 1 tablespoon tamari or soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch, whisked with 2 tbsp water
- ½ teaspoon grated fresh ginger
- ½ teaspoon sesame oil (optional)

1 teaspoon rice vinegar
Dash of sriracha or other hot sauce (to taste)

Instructions:

Egg Foo Young Patties

1. Blend chickpea flour, tofu, cornstarch, nutritional yeast, baking powder, tamari, sesame oil, black salt, turmeric, and pepper until smooth. The batter should be pourable but thick enough to coat vegetables. Adjust thickness with a tablespoon of water if needed.
2. Fold all chopped and grated vegetables into the batter. Stir gently to distribute.
3. Heat a nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add a small amount of neutral oil or a little oil spray for crisp edges (optional, but helps to prevent sticking).
4. Scoop ~½ cup of the mixture into the pan per patty, shaping gently with the back of a spoon. Cook for 4–5 minutes until golden brown and firm underneath. Flip carefully and cook another 3–4 minutes.
5. Serve patties over steamed rice, topped with a spoonful of gravy. Garnish with sliced scallions and toasted sesame seeds, and enjoy with Asian greens.

Chef's Tip: If making a large batch, keep cooked patties warm in a 250°F (120°C) oven on a wire rack.

Gravy

1. In a small saucepan, heat broth, tamari, and ginger until simmering.
2. Stir in cornstarch slurry and cook until thickened (2–3 minutes).
3. Add a touch of sesame oil or vinegar if desired. Keep warm.



Cashew French Toast

Makes 6 slices

This healthy version of French toast is easy, delicious, and rich in the minerals calcium, iron, magnesium, and zinc as well as protein. Serve it hot with nut butter, fresh fruit, fruit sauce, or maple syrup.

½ cup fortified soymilk or other plant-based milk

¼ cup cashew nuts

¼ teaspoon vanilla

½ tablespoon maple syrup

6 slices whole grain bread or gluten free bread

1. Place soymilk, cashews, vanilla, and maple syrup in a blender and blend on high speed until smooth and creamy.
2. Pour cashew cream into a shallow dish.
3. Lightly oil or spray a non-stick skillet and warm it over medium heat.
4. Dip each slice of bread into the cashew mixture, coating both sides.
5. Place 2 or 3 slices on the skillet, depending on skillet size. Avoid overlapping and leave a little space between slices.
6. Cook on medium heat until golden brown, then flip each slice and cook on the other side.



Golden Scrambled Tofu

Makes 3–4 cups

A hearty, protein-packed alternative to scrambled eggs, this savory dish is both nourishing and satisfying. It's rich in high-quality plant protein, calcium, and iron—key nutrients for supporting muscle strength, bone health, and sustained energy. Feel free to customize with your favorite seasoning blends, herbs, or extra veggies to suit your taste. Serve warm with toast or roasted potatoes, if desired.

⅓ cup unsweetened fortified soy or other plant-based milk

1 tablespoon tahini

1½ tablespoons nutritional yeast

½ teaspoon turmeric powder

1 teaspoon jarred fresh garlic or minced garlic, or ½ teaspoon garlic powder

½ teaspoon onion powder

½ teaspoon salt (or use black salt—Kala Namik—for an eggy flavor)

1-2 cups chopped vegetables (e.g., green onions, mushrooms, peppers, zucchini).

1 block (14 oz) firm tofu, drained

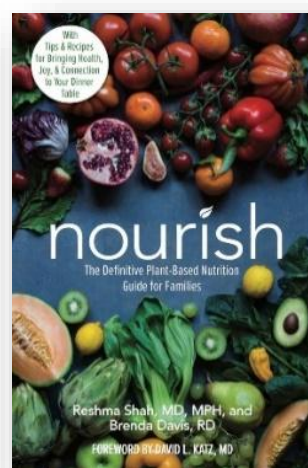
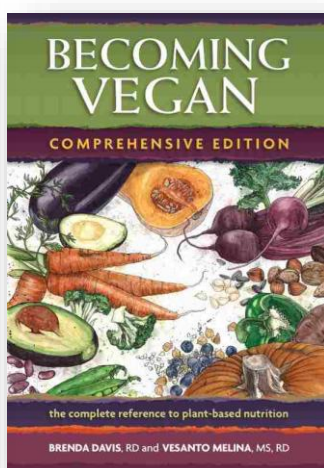
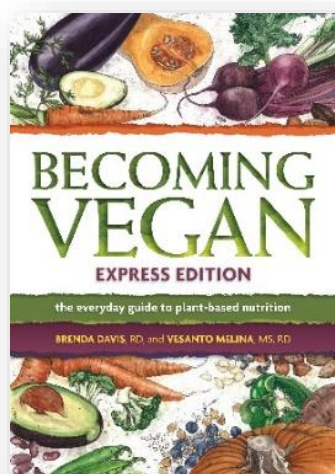
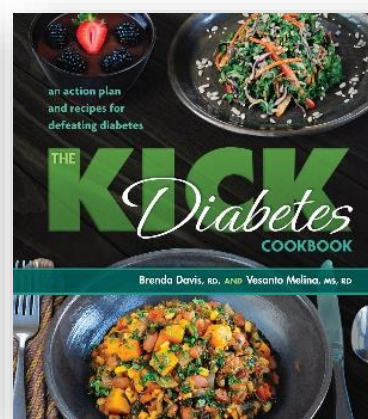
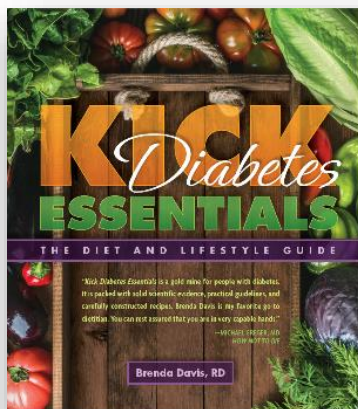
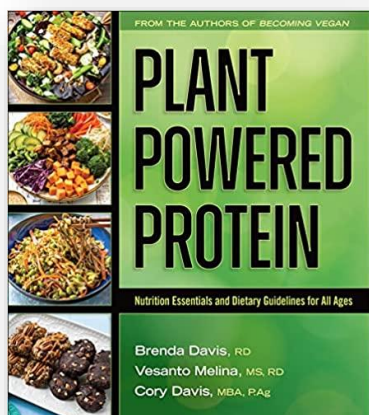
1-2 cups spinach, coarsely chopped

Fresh ground black pepper, to taste

1. In a small bowl, whisk the plant-based milk, tahini, nutritional yeast, turmeric, garlic powder, onion powder, and salt.
2. In a medium-sized bowl, crumble the tofu into bite-sized pieces using your hands or a fork.
3. Heat a large pan over medium heat. Add the chopped vegetables (except spinach) and sauté until just tender, adding a splash of water, broth, or olive oil as needed to prevent sticking.
4. Add the tofu to the vegetables and cook for another 3-4 minutes.
5. Pour the milk mixture over the tofu and stir gently to coat. Cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
6. Add the spinach and cook for a minute or until the spinach is wilted.
7. Finish with black pepper to taste.

*Protein and calcium levels can vary with tofu selected. Check labels.





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 plant-based diets. She is the author/co-author of Plant-Powered Protein, Nourish, Becoming Vegan: Comprehensive and Express Editions, Kick Diabetes Essentials, and The Kick Diabetes Cookbook.

www.brendadavisrd.com