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# Plant-Based Diet

FOR  
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A Wiley Brand

## **Learn to:**

- Choose foods that boost your energy, lower your cholesterol, and protect your cells
- Prepare meals that provide balanced nutrition from plant-based foods
- Maintain a plant-based diet at any stage of life

**Marni Wasserman**

*Plant-based culinary nutritionist and  
co-author of Fermenting For Dummies*



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**by Marni Wasserman**

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## **Plant-Based Diet For Dummies®**

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# Introduction

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You're intrigued about plant-based eating. You've been hearing about it, and you may be wondering, "How is this different from vegetarianism or veganism? Is this something I can do? How do I do it?" Maybe you've been thinking about how it can benefit your health. This book gives you the road map for a plant-based way of living.

Don't fret and think you have to immediately give up everything you're eating. This book uses a step-by-step approach to transitioning to a plant-based diet by gradually adding more veggies into your diet — not suddenly taking away everything you eat now. That doesn't sound all that bad, does it?

Maybe you're already mostly plant-based but are running out of ideas or don't have the resources, tools, and concepts you need to keep going. Maybe you're feeling undernourished. Whatever your reason for reading this book, I promise that you'll get countless ideas on how to get to know your fruits, veggies, whole grains, beans, nuts, and seeds a whole lot better. These foods will become your friends, not your enemies.

These foods help you succeed at any stage or age in life. Whether you're looking to stay healthy and prevent disease, going through pregnancy, raising plant-based children, wondering how to stay plant-based in your golden years, or balancing your needs as an athlete, this book gives you a comprehensive look at these phases and provides guidance on how to master them by adopting the most nutritious way of eating.

One of the biggest challenges that people face when deciding to take up a plant-based diet is mental

resistance. In fact, maybe you're thinking that it's too difficult or that it's just another diet that won't last or yield the results you're looking for. Eating a plant-based diet isn't a fad or something you do just to lose weight or gain short-term results. This book is about leading a more healthful lifestyle with plants as your fuel. At the end of the day, you need to eat, so why not make your meals and snacks fibrous, delicious, and loaded with plants?

I truly believe that with the knowledge found in this book, along with a keen interest in living healthfully, you can discover that eating a plant-based diet isn't difficult and that anyone at any stage can implement a plant-based diet — even you!

## ***About This Book***

Part of leading a healthy life is setting general expectations about how you're going to approach and achieve it. This book helps you do exactly that. It provides you with the what, when, where, why, and how to start eating more plant-based foods today.

Of course, as you immerse yourself in this world and learn the basics and beyond of eating plant-based foods, you'll probably start to feel more confident. As you journey through these pages and learn about the ins and outs of eating this way, you'll discover just how easy it is.

This book gives you tools, techniques, tips, and ideas on how to fill your plate every day with plant-based foods to reach your health goals. It gives you an idea of how a plant-based diet benefits your health and what it consists of. It breaks down how much of which foods to eat and where to get your protein. It even explains how to dine

out and make healthy choices in unique situations like parties and special events.

The great thing about this book is that I let you know exactly what information is vital and what's nonessential. I've packed the main body with all of the stuff I think you really need to know, but you can skip things like sidebars (text in shaded boxes). To tell you the truth, you don't have to read *anything* you don't want to read, because this book is designed to make every section accessible, regardless of whether you read anything else.

I also include some plant-based recipes that you can start incorporating into your diet as soon as you're ready. I use a few conventions in the recipes:

- ✓ All temperatures are Fahrenheit. To convert a temperature to Celsius, type "temperature conversion" into Google. A box will appear at the top of the screen; simply type the Fahrenheit number into the box labeled "Fahrenheit," and Google will display the Celsius equivalent.
- ✓ All pepper is freshly ground black pepper unless otherwise noted, and it's always optional.
- ✓ All lemon juice should be fresh and not from a bottle.
- ✓ Where water is called for, filtered water is ideal.

## ***Foolish Assumptions***

I make a few assumptions in this book about you as a reader:

- ✓ You know how to be resourceful to find new information about healthy eating.
- ✓ You're not afraid to try new plant-based foods.

- ✓ You're willing to increase your knowledge about nutrition.
- ✓ You aren't too afraid of what others think about your eating habits.
- ✓ You're eager to try new recipes.
- ✓ You want to take control of your health and are looking for a new solution that is based on lifestyle, not just diet.

## *Icons Used in This Book*

Look for these familiar *For Dummies* icons to offer visual clues about the kinds of information you're about to read.



This icon indicates some quick, good advice that is relevant to the topic at hand. Skimming these gives you some seriously good information that can help you implement this new diet and make your life just a little easier.



When you change your diet and lifestyle, there's a lot of information to retain. To make sure you notice the big stuff, I call it out with this icon. Consider these the "extra-important" paragraphs you want to remember.





Read these sections to avoid pitfalls and mistakes that could result in poor health, or ostracizing yourself or others. Learning how to eat well involves a lot of detective work to make sure you don't get tricked by confusing labels and powerful marketing. When you see this icon, it means there's something that may lead you to veer off the plant-based path — or endanger your health.

## ***Beyond the Book***

In addition to the material in the print or e-book you're reading right now, this product also comes with some access-anywhere goodies on the web. When you want some quick pointers about plant-based eating, check out the free Cheat Sheet at

[www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/plantbaseddiet](http://www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/plantbaseddiet). There you'll find a list of plant-based foods to keep on hand, suggestions for eating plant-based foods at each meal, and a pep talk about how to maintain your new lifestyle.

You can find additional information about plant-based eating in articles that supplement this book. Head to [www.dummies.com/extras/plantbaseddiet](http://www.dummies.com/extras/plantbaseddiet) for more information about using sea vegetables, starting your day with a beneficial smoothie, throwing a plant-based holiday gathering, and creating kid-friendly plant-based meals.

## ***Where to Go from Here***

Each chapter in this book is self-contained, meaning you don't have to read one chapter to understand the next one. If there's a specific word you hear or read online or

in another cookbook, or a new technique you see on TV, you can use the index or table of contents as your guide and skip right to the appropriate chapter to read about it.

I've organized this book so you can jump in wherever you want, so if you want to skip to the end and read the Part of Tens first, go right ahead. There, you can find lots of good information presented in easy-to-digest nuggets.

Suppose you just want to find out about celebrating holidays while on a plant-based diet. If so, head to Chapter [16](#). Start with Chapter [3](#) if you want to learn about the macro and micro essential nutrients of a plant-based diet. If you want to cut right to the chase and try some new recipes, head to Chapters [10](#) through [15](#). If you're totally new to a plant-based way of eating, start in Part [I](#), Chapter [1](#).

The easiest way to use the book, though, is just to start turning pages and reading the content. Because the true value is in how you apply this information to real life, don't be shy about making notes in the chapters, highlighting information, and putting flags on the pages.

# Part I

## **Getting Started with a Plant-Based Diet**



Visit [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com) for free access to great Dummies content online.

## *In this part ...*

- ✓ Discover what eating a plant-based diet means and how to start transforming your diet today.
- ✓ Find out how eating a plant-based diet can help you manage your weight, boost your energy, and aid in the fight against diseases like cancer, diabetes, and heart disease.
- ✓ Get familiar with the different nutrients in a plant-based diet, from protein, carbs, and fats to vitamins and minerals.
- ✓ Check out the new foods you'll add to your diet, including superfoods and sea vegetables.

# Chapter 1

## What Is a Plant-Based Diet?

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### ***In This Chapter***

- ▶ Getting familiar with the core of a plant-based diet
  - ▶ Understanding that this is more than a diet; it's a lifestyle
  - ▶ Using simple ideas to start your plant-based diet today
- 

The goal of a plant-based diet is to eat more plants. Sounds simple enough — or maybe it doesn't. Eating nothing but plant-based foods is intimidating for a lot of people. Most of us are comfortable with our current way of eating and are unsure about what to do with plants: Which ones should you eat and when? Can you get full on plants alone? All kinds of questions and concerns come up, and I address some of the common questions in this chapter.

In this chapter, I also give you an overview of life on a plant-based diet. I outline what you will and won't eat. I explain how eating this way can benefit so many aspects of your life — mainly your health. At the end of the day, it's all about feeling better, looking better, and just being better, and this way of eating can do just that.

# ***What Does Plant-Based Mean?***

Eating a plant-based diet simply means eating more plants. No matter where you are, or what you eat right now, you can eat more plants (everyone can). Of course, my goal and the goal of this book is to get you to eat predominantly (and, ideally, exclusively) plant-based all the time, but you'll likely have a transitional phase, and it starts with eating more of the stuff that the Earth has so deliciously and naturally provided us.

I get to the “meat” of eating plant-based later in this chapter and explain what this really looks like on your plate on a day-to-day basis, but first I want to compare this approach to some other popular veggie-minded trends.

A few terms that are floating around represent a similar style of eating, yet they're all distinct. That doesn't mean you have to label yourself and stick with only that way of eating; these terms describe different ways of eating and help you understand what kinds of food choices fall within a certain category. Also, this breakdown can help you understand how a plant-based diet fits into the bigger picture.

- ✓ **Plant-based:** This way of eating is based on fruits, vegetables, grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds with few or no animal products. Ideally, the plant-based diet is a vegan diet with a bit of flexibility in the transitional phases, with the goal of becoming 100 percent plant-based over time.
- ✓ **Vegan:** This describes someone who doesn't eat anything that comes from an animal, be it fish, fowl,

mammal, or insect. Vegans refrain not only from animal meats but also from any foods made by animals (such as dairy milk and honey). They often also abstain from purchasing, wearing, or using animal products of any kind (for example, leather).

- ✓ **Fruitarian:** This describes a vegan diet that consists mainly of fruit.
- ✓ **Raw vegan:** This is a vegan diet that is uncooked and often includes dehydrated foods.
- ✓ **Vegetarian:** This plant-based diet sometimes includes dairy and eggs.
- ✓ **Flexitarian:** This plant-based diet includes the occasional consumption of meat or fish. I like to refer to it as “a little bit of this and a little bit of that” — said with no judgment, of course!

## *Getting to the Root of a Plant-Based Diet*

A core of foods makes up a plant-based diet. Making sure that you really understand them is key for a strong foundational knowledge that you can continuously build upon. You'll find so many wonderful foods to explore and try, but for now I introduce you to the basics and tell you what foods to avoid.

### *What's included*

The big question is, “If I’m not eating anything from an animal, what is there to eat?” I begin by exploring the wonderful plants that I hope you get to know quite well on this journey. You'll find all sorts of diverse foods to enjoy (if you're new to this, prepare to be pleasantly surprised by what you find).

## ***Valuable vegetables***

You'll discover a whole array of veggies that you'll likely get to know quite well while eating plant-based. If you're new to this, you'll probably stick to tried-and-true, familiar veggies in the beginning because they'll feel safe — and that is A-okay! But over time, I encourage you to expand into new areas and pick up that funny-looking squash over there or try that wild, leafy bunch of something over here. You can flip ahead to Chapter [7](#) for an extensive list and full explanation of the vibrant world of valuable vegetables, but for now, here's my starter kit:

- ✓ Beets
- ✓ Carrots
- ✓ Kale
- ✓ Parsley, basil, and other herbs
- ✓ Spinach
- ✓ Squash
- ✓ Sweet potatoes

## ***Fantastic fruits***

Ahhh, the sweet juiciness of fresh fruit. We all love it! If you don't, you need to get on this train, because fruits are delicious; sweet; full of fiber, color, and wonderful vitamins; and so, *so* good for you. Throughout this book, I encourage you to try new ones, but here are some of my top picks to start with:

- ✓ Apples
- ✓ Avocado
- ✓ Bananas
- ✓ Blueberries



- ✓ Coconut
- ✓ Mango
- ✓ Pears
- ✓ Pineapple
- ✓ Raspberries
- ✓ Strawberries

### ***Wonderful whole grains***

Consuming good-quality whole grains is a healthy part of a plant-based diet. Don't worry; you can still have your breads and pastas, but "whole" is the key word here. You don't want refined or processed — you want the real thing. When you buy these items, make sure the grain itself is the only ingredient. Although it's possible to buy proper whole grains off the shelf in packaging, make sure you double-check the label to confirm that it is, indeed, a whole grain (and only a whole grain). Here are some of my favorites (more in [Chapter 3](#)):

- ✓ Brown rice
- ✓ Brown-rice pasta
- ✓ Quinoa
- ✓ Rolled oats
- ✓ Sprouted-grain spelt bread

### ***Lovable legumes***

Learning to love beans on a plant-based diet is key, as they're a great source of sustenance, protein, and fuel. It may take you and your body a little while to get used to them, but soon enough they'll be your friends — especially when you discover how great it is to eat them in soups, salads, burgers, and other creative mediums. Here are some of the best to start with:

- ✓ Black beans
- ✓ Chickpeas
- ✓ Kidney beans
- ✓ Lentils
- ✓ Split peas

### ***Notable nuts and seeds***

Most people love a good handful of nuts! But the thing about eating them on a plant-based diet is making sure that they're unsalted, un-oiled, and raw. As long as you enjoy them in their natural state, you can feel free to eat them in moderation alongside your other wonderful plant-based foods. Here are the best ones to start with:

- ✓ Almonds
- ✓ Cashews
- ✓ Chia seeds
- ✓ Flaxseeds
- ✓ Hempseeds
- ✓ Pumpkin seeds
- ✓ Sunflower seeds
- ✓ Walnuts



Try munching on a few nuts or seeds straight up or adding them to salads or other recipes. And if you can't decide which one you have a taste for, toss them all in a trail mix!

### ***The extras***

This is the category of foods that isn't really a category, per se, but these foods are still part of the plant-based

diet. This includes such things as exotic superfoods, sea vegetables (see Chapter [4](#)), condiments, and natural sweeteners (more on sweeteners in Chapter [13](#)). Here are some specific examples:

- ✓ **Cacao:** The pure form of chocolate
- ✓ **Coconut oil:** Raw, virgin unprocessed oil (and the perfect butter substitute)
- ✓ **Honey:** The raw stuff, not the kind in bear-shaped plastic bottles
- ✓ **Maple syrup:** Again, the real stuff — no corn syrup here!
- ✓ **Nori:** A delicious and nutritious sea vegetable
- ✓ **Tamari:** A versatile fermented soy sauce

## *What's off limits*

As you can imagine, all things that aren't plants are off limits; however, as I mention earlier, you may need or want a transitional period during which you wean yourself off these foods one at a time (more on that in Chapter [5](#)) until you can avoid all things from the animal world — including meat, poultry, fish, eggs, milk, and other dairy products. In addition, because this is a clean way of living, you may cut out most processed and fried foods that don't serve your body and your health on a nutritional level.



Of course, this is the ideal — you have to find your own place on the spectrum of plant-based eating and do what works for you. Often, making something off limits just makes you want it more, so you have to strike the balance between being tough on yourself and being practical.

# ***It's Not a Diet, It's a Lifestyle***

The plant-based diet isn't the new fad or the latest thing that makes you lose a certain amount of weight in a certain amount of time. This is about changing your habits to the core. This is more than just a decision to change your food choices; it's a decision to change everything that comes with it.

How are you eating, when are you eating, and what else are you doing that can enhance, help, and sustain this lifestyle? Who else is on board with you? Do you have support? I address all these points in this book because, when you make a commitment to eat well, that commitment has to extend into all areas of your life. Eating is one of the main daily concerns we have as human beings. We need to tend to our diet in order to survive. Without food, we don't live. But also, without food there is no pleasure, no taste, and no health. A plant-based diet ensures that you get all of those needs met.

I'm excited for you to empower yourself! Any decision you make can positively impact you for the rest of your life. And as passionate as I am about that, the truth isn't in my words; it's in the results you get when you sleep better, have more energy, notice better hair and skin, and improve your vitality. Heck, you may even lose (or gain) that weight along the way.

In the following sections, I explain some of the benefits and general principles that may become part of your new lifestyle, from eating more greens to coping with your body's reaction to the additional fiber you'll consume.

## ***Appreciating the power of greens***

The earth isn't half green for no reason! We were meant to eat greens. In fact, half of your plate at mealtime and at least half of what you eat daily from the plant world should be green (see Chapter [6](#) for more on this).

Greens are the life force of the vegetable kingdom. Green leafy vegetables like kale, collards, Swiss chard, and spinach carry with them all the nutrients you need to thrive. They have everything from protein to trace minerals to calcium, and so much more — and guess what? They're low in calories! You can eat as many of them as you want, and they only help you get healthier. How is that for a deal? Did I forget to mention that there are ways to make them taste good, too? You don't have to chomp through them in their plain state like a horse — no! In Part [III](#), I show you that you can get these guys into your body in myriad ways, from juices and smoothies to soups, sandwiches, salads, and more.

These powerful vegetables are the key to health. They help enliven and enrich your cells from the inside out. As long as they're kept in their prime and not overcooked (meaning, staying green and not grey or brown), they can give you all the goodness they have.

Here are the best greens to start with, from sweetest to most bitter:

- ✓ Lettuce
- ✓ Spinach
- ✓ Broccoli
- ✓ Kale
- ✓ Swiss chard
- ✓ Bok choy

- ✓ Collards
- ✓ Arugula
- ✓ Dandelion greens
- ✓ Mustard greens

And here are some ideas of where you can add greens:

- ✓ **Green juices:** Go to a store where they make fresh juices and test the waters. If you have a juicer at home, give it a go — soon, you'll be adding greens to every juice!
- ✓ **Smoothies:** Add a handful of spinach or kale to your next fruit smoothie. You won't taste them, but you still get all the beneficial nutrients.
- ✓ **Salads:** You don't have to use just lettuce. Try chopping kale and chard into bite-size pieces and adding them to your next salad. A salad allows you to get all the enzymes and nutrients greens have to offer in their raw state.
- ✓ **Sandwiches:** Dress a sandwich with any green you'd like to add a little crunch.
- ✓ **Soups and stews:** You can chop up greens and add them to your soup to give it a little texture. For those picky eaters, puree the leafy greens into a soup ... they'll never know!
- ✓ **Stir-fries:** Slice greens really thin and sauté them with olive oil and garlic, and then drop them into different recipes or serve them alongside other dishes.
- ✓ **Pastas:** Add fresh greens at the end of the cook time for your pasta or sauce. Warm them up a bit to wilt them so they combine more easily with the pasta. (And the greens add a fun dose of color as well as nutrients.)