



... It's Worth the Trip!



THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Veggie Burrito Bowl

In recent years, there has been a greater emphasis on the benefits of consuming more protein to meet fitness and weight goals. Often, when people aim to increase their protein, they believe the best way to do so is through consuming more meat. They want to keep their fat intake in check and frequently rely on boneless skinless chicken breast. There is truly nothing wrong with this choice, but how many times have you heard someone on a diet say, "I am sick of chicken?" One way to overcome this dietary boredom, while keeping saturated fat in check, is by using more plant-based foods.

One reason animal products such as meat, fish, eggs, dairy, etc., are the immediate go-to food for proteins is because they provide all the essential amino acids the body needs. They are "complete proteins." For the most part, plant proteins don't contain all the essential amino acids. For example some plant foods, like grains, may not contain or be extremely low in one essential amino acid like lysine, while other foods, such as legumes, may be a great source of lysine but be low in another. However, there are a few plant-foods, such as soy and quinoa that, like animal products, are considered complete proteins.

There's a common misconception on using plant-based foods to meet your protein needs where you need to mix them during meals and snacks to assure that you consumed all essential amino acids in order for your body to be able to build protein. For example, eating legumes, like kidney beans, with rice or whole wheat bread with peanut butter. Using such combinations is actually termed complimentary proteins. The fact is you don't need to eat complementary proteins together at every meal. As long as you get a variety of foods (grains, legumes, and nuts along with plenty of vegetables) throughout the day you'll get ample amounts of each amino acid. Further there is truly no need to worry, if your diet also includes animal-based proteins.

With this information, you don't need to fear going a day without meat, or feeling that the only way you can meet your protein needs is by consuming animal products. In fact, one key strategy to up the nutrition quality of your overall diet, is to consider having a meatless day; using plant-based proteins to meet your needs. Plants have a greater vitamin and mineral profile and are better sources of fiber than animal proteins. Further, this may be a great strategy to save money on your grocery bill because plant-based proteins tend to be less expensive than animal proteins.

This meal features plant-based proteins and offers a wonderful, quick way to have the taste of a burrito in a bowl.



Ingredients: 4 Servings

- 1 ½ cups instant brown rice
- 1 - 14 - 15 oz. can of low sodium kidney beans or black beans (drained and rinsed)
- 1 - 14 oz. can of low sodium or no added salt whole kernel corn
- ½ of a red, diced onion
- ½ packet taco seasoning
- 1 English cucumber (cut into bite sized pieces)
- 12 - 14 oz. dark leafy greens (baby spinach, baby kale, or spring mix)
- 3 tbsp. fresh cilantro (chopped)
- 1/3 cup salsa

Directions:

1. Begin preparing the instant brown rice according to package instructions.
2. While the rice is cooking, add to a very large bowl all of the remaining ingredients and then toss gently to mix all the ingredients.
3. Evenly distribute the rice between 4 bowls. Top each bowl of rice with ¼ of the bean mixture and serve.

TIPS:

- For a fresh citrus flavor, top each bowl with a sprinkle of lime zest.
- Add a bit of variety by adding your favorite cooked, lean meat, and a sprinkle of cheese.
- This is a great way to use up extra produce. Have fun making your own combos!

DISCLAIMER:

THIS RECIPE DOES NOT CONSTITUTE AN ENDORSEMENT BY DOD OF ANY INDIVIDUAL VENDOR. ANY PRODUCT OF SIMILAR SPECIFICATION MAY BE USED TO MAKE THIS HEALTHY CHOICE MEAL.

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