

Feeding a Vegetarian on Thanksgiving

As Thanksgiving approaches, we are inundated with recipes for how to dress and season a turkey, the main dish and delicious centerpiece for our holiday tables. But what if you have a vegetarian coming to dinner? Preparing for a vegetarian can be a simple task, once you have some basic knowledge about vegetarians, and a few simple tips for feeding a vegetarian on Thanksgiving.

All vegetarians abstain from eating animal meat, eating a mostly or entirely plant-based diet. Yet not all vegetarians follow the same dietary guidelines. There are five main types of vegetarians:

1. Lacto-ovo-vegetarians eat animal-produced foods such as dairy (i.e. milk, cheese) and eggs.
2. Lacto-vegetarians eat dairy products, but do not eat eggs.
3. Ovo-vegetarians eat eggs but do not eat dairy products.
4. Pesca-vegetarians add fish to their diet, but avoid all other animal flesh.
5. Vegans eat nothing from animals, including honey (produced by bees).

If you're not sure what type of diet your guest is following, make vegan-friendly dishes to err on the side of caution. Here are a few ideas for your menu:

1. Substitute quinoa for rice to provide a protein source. Cook quinoa according to the package's directions, using vegetable broth or water, and then add sautéed onions and peas (or whatever you would normally add to a rice dish).

2. Instead of serving candied yams, why not try a sweet potato and black bean salad? Toss everything with a balsamic vinaigrette and serve over arugula.
3. When preparing your dressing (the stuffing that does not actually stuff the bird), use vegetable broth in place of gravy to provide moisture to the dish. Gravy is made from the turkey drippings (a.k.a. the fat and juices that escape during cooking) and it will leave the dish inedible for your vegetarian guests.
4. All guests can benefit from a dinner menu filled with fruits and vegetables. Serving roasted vegetables at dinner and fruit salad with dessert will be welcome options for all of your guests who are mindful of their health.

Although these tips are aimed to please your vegetarian guests, everyone will be able to indulge in your family's favorite dishes during the holiday feast. With a few small adjustments, all of your guests will be thankful for your effort to create a delicious and vegetarian-friendly meal.

By Beth Rosen, MS, RD, CDN



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