

How to Build a Meal

When planning a meal, it can be helpful to think in terms of building your plate with three basic groups:

1. **Proteins:** chicken, beef, pork, turkey, lamb, eggs, salmon, shrimp, tuna, sardines, peanut butter, almond butter, tofu, tempeh
2. **Vegetables:** Asparagus, green beans, bell peppers, kale, lettuce, spinach, mushrooms, broccoli, tomatoes, zucchini, eggplant, cabbage, jicama, beets, Brussel's sprouts, cauliflower, radishes, carrots, celery, cucumber, collards
3. **Starches/grains:** brown rice, quinoa, sweet potato, whole grain couscous, whole grain pasta, corn, barley, whole grain bread/roll, wild rice, potato, butternut squash, acorn squash, pumpkin, parsnips, hominy

What about beans, peas, and lentils?

Beans contain a unique combination of nutrients (protein, carbohydrates/starch, fiber, vitamins, and minerals) so they don't neatly fit into one of the above three food groups, but they are a very nutritious item to add to any meal.

What about fruit?

Fruits have similar nutritional properties to vegetables (water, fiber, vitamins, and minerals) but have more natural sugars.

You can add fruit into your diet by making it part of breakfast, part of a snack, and/or by having it for dessert.

What about dairy?

Dairy products have variable nutritional content, depending on how they are sourced and processed. They may contain protein, fats, and/or carbohydrates as well as vitamins and minerals.

They aren't strictly necessary if you don't enjoy or tolerate them well. If you choose not to eat dairy, consume other sources of calcium such as dark leafy greens, oily fish such as sardines, or calcium fortified dairy substitutes.

"Does everything really need to be whole grain?"

No. If you find whole grain foods that you enjoy, eat them. If only refined grain foods are available, or you just prefer them, you can increase the fiber and nutrients in your meal by adding more vegetables instead, along with proteins and healthy fats.

Contact us

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