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INFO SHEET: SETTING UP FOR SUCCESS

When transitioning to a whole foods, plant-based (WFPB) diet, it may be difficult to decide where to start and how to start. This Info Sheet is a resource for newcomers who are transitioning to a WFPB diet, and contains a series of tips for restocking your kitchen, grocery shopping, interpreting food labels, and more.

Assess Your Kitchen: Check your kitchen for the foods that will support your optimal health goal. Take note of the foods you'd like to eliminate or replace with alternatives, and the foods you'd like to continue or add to your diet.

- Choose what you would like to add to your kitchen, such as new cookbooks, fruits and veggies you haven't tried before, dried legumes, a set of new kitchen knives, etc.
- Decide what to eliminate or replace. By checking product labels for ingredients such as salt, fat, sugar, dairy, oil, and preservatives, you can assess whether or not an item will support your optimal health. Once you've identified items you want to replace, look for alternatives to try. For example, replace dairy-based salad dressings with balsamic vinegar; replace creamer and dairy milk with an almond or other non-dairy milk; look for a tomato sauce with low sodium and no oil, etc.
- Remove all highly processed foods from your house, such as cookies, crackers, chips, and white flour. This will eliminate temptation and support you in reaching your health goals successfully.

A WFPB Kitchen - Ideas for Your Shopping List

Dry Stores

- Grains - whole grain rice and pastas, quinoa, oats - good base for a meal
- Canned vegetables and fruits (low sodium and no sugar)
- Beans - dry beans (economical) and canned (low sodium)
- Flours - whole grain flours including: wheat, oat, spelt, barley, amaranth, rice, rye
- Spices - onion, garlic, cumin, smoked paprika, oregano, cinnamon
- Nutritional Yeast
- Vinegar - balsamic, red, white

Countertop

- Fruits - bananas, avocados
- Potatoes - white, yellow, red, sweet potatoes





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Refrigerator

- Fruits - apples, peaches, citrus, tomatoes
- Vegetables - carrots, bell peppers
- Leafy greens - lettuce, spinach, kale, collards - wrap them in a damp paper towels
- Non-dairy milk
- Condiments - mustard, ketchup, salsa, hot sauce

Freezer

- Frozen veggies
- Frozen fruits
- Store bought pre-cooked brown rice (or cook it ahead and freeze)
- Leftover cookies
- Nuts, seeds, and flours
- Soups and vegetable broth (in ice cube trays)
- Tofu - frozen tofu has a ground beef consistency and once thawed it's easier to squeeze the water out of it

Navigating the Grocery Store:

- Produce Section - Start out in the healthiest section of the store! Pick up a variety of fruits and vegetables, all of which you can eat in abundance and freely. There are many convenience items as well that are pre-cut, pre-washed, and ready-to-cook.
- Most grocery stores have a health foods or natural foods section. Look there for items that are low in sodium with no added oil, such as pre-made salsas or sauces. Usually there are 100% whole grain and whole wheat products as well as 100% whole grain steel cut oats. It's also the place to find non-dairy milks, which should be a staple in your fridge.
- Pasta Section - Make sure that you are eating 100% whole grain pasta including gluten-free pastas. For the sauces, you need to read labels carefully. There is a lot added salt, sugar, and fat, and a lot of added oil in most pasta sauces. You can either make your own pasta sauce with canned no salt tomatoes, sometimes with flavoring, or there may be a few brands of tomato sauces that have very little added fat and not a lot of added sugar.
- Ethnic or World Section - Here you can find a large variety of canned beans that have low or no salt added and occasionally, you can find some different types of food that you've never heard of or tried before.
- Breakfast Section - There are a lot of cereals that are labeled as natural or healthy that are really not very natural or healthy. Read the labels carefully, and if you are going to have box cereal, make sure it is a low sugar and whole grain cereal. The healthiest item here is oats. You can cook oats with some fruit and raisins to make an easy, fast, and healthy breakfast.
- Canned Vegetable Aisle - Canned veggies can be okay but you have to check the salt content. Most canned vegetables have a very high salt content, so look for the no-salt added or low sodium options.



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- **Spice Section** - As you learn how to eat healthier and start exploring new foods, this is where you're going to shine. Spices are where your tastes are going to expand enormously. Check out natural health food stores, or ethnic markets. They usually have spices in bulk that are much cheaper than your normal grocery store.
- **Frozen Section** - Frozen fruits and vegetables are already washed and chopped, making them extremely convenient. Also, because they are frozen soon after they are harvested, they are full of nutrients. You can find items such as stir fry mixes to use for easy dinners. Make sure to stay away from prepared meals and convenience foods that are loaded with sodium and oil.
- **Bulk Section** - Here you can find nuts that are raw (no added oils) and unsalted, as well as items like unsweetened coconut or dried fruit with no added sugar. Be careful in this section. Many foods that are advertised as healthy here have a lot of added fat and sugar such as oily granola or dried fruits with tons of preservatives and sugar.
- **Stay away from the soda aisle, the potato chips aisle, and the cracker aisle** - these foods are highly processed with loads of fat, salt, and sugar. Also avoid the meat and dairy aisle. Some plant-based milks are located in the dairy section. This is the only item you should grab from this aisle!

Interpreting Food Labels: First, focus on the ingredient list. Ingredients are listed in order of most predominant by weight. Second, consult the box with the nutritional information. Ask yourself the following screening questions:

- Is this a whole food? Is it grown in dirt or in a tree or bush?
- Is this a plant or an animal?
- Is there any oil? If it is anywhere in the list, try to avoid the item.
- Look at fat - calculate the percentage - find foods that are at least under 15% fat
- Look at salt - amount of sodium per serving should be less than calories per serving
- Look at sugar - watch out for added sugars, less than 5% of our total calories a day should be added sugar (no more than 25g/day)

Tools and Utensils: Keep it simple. Stock up on a basic set of pots, skillets, spatula, whisk, wooden spoon, measuring cups, and a mixing bowl.

This information was drawn from the Plant-Based Nutrition Certificate Program with permission from the T. Colin Campbell Center for Nutrition Studies. For more information about the eCornell Plant-Based Nutrition Certificate Program please visit [their website](#).