



1-Week Vegan Meal Plan: How to Eat Plant-Based on a Budget for \$3 a Meal

By Darshana Thacker Wendel
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breakfast: In a container combine 1 cup rolled oats, 1 cup plant-based milk, 4 chopped pitted dates, 2 tablespoons raisins, and ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

Day 1

- Buy in bulk (grains, beans, oats) to cut costs.
- Stick to whole foods over packaged vegan items.
- Frozen produce is cheaper and longer-lasting than fresh.
- Plan meals and shop sales to avoid food waste.

Read on for a full week of meals that cost around \$3 each.

A whole-food, plant-based diet is *not* expensive. In fact, plant-based staples such as brown rice, potatoes, and beans are some of the cheapest—and healthiest—ingredients in the supermarket. To prove that you can eat plant-based on a budget, this one-week vegan meal plan shows you how to build a week's worth of delicious meals and snacks for one person for just \$9 a day. To keep things easy, you'll often be lunching on leftovers from the night before. Check out our day-by-day meal prep guide and shopping list below!

Forks Meal Planner subscribers: This menu is also available as a meal plan on Forks Meal Planner! [Access the special plan here.](#)

DAY 0 (Advance Prep for Day 1)

1. First things first: Go shopping. We've created a handy [shopping list](#) to fill up your fridge so you'll have everything you need for this week of meals.
2. Cook 1 lb. dry brown lentils according to package directions. Store cooked lentils in the refrigerator so they're ready to go on Day 1.
3. Soak 1 lb. dry chickpeas overnight so they're ready to cook on Day 1.
4. Prep Overnight Oats with Apple for your Day 1

Day 1 is your biggest cooking day, so we recommend starting on a Sunday. You'll be making three recipes, including a Hearty Lentil Ragu that will also serve as lunch tomorrow and a Parsley-Lemon Hummus you'll enjoy throughout the week. Get your chickpeas cooking while you heat up your breakfast.

BREAKFAST: Overnight Oats with Apple Heat
prepped oats in a pan (or in the microwave) with a splash of plant milk or water. Serve topped with ½ apple, diced. Sprinkle with ground cinnamon.

LUNCH: Chickpea Pasta Salad with Walnut Dressing
In a bowl combine 2 cups shredded romaine lettuce; 1 cup cooked penne pasta; 1 cup cooked chickpeas; ½ cup each diced carrot, celery, tomato, and red bell pepper (save remaining red bell pepper); and 2 tablespoons minced onion. For dressing, in a blender combine 2 tablespoons walnuts, 1½ teaspoons finely chopped fresh parsley, 1½ teaspoons white wine vinegar or apple cider vinegar, ¼ teaspoon garlic powder, ⅓ teaspoon sea salt, and freshly ground black pepper to taste. Blend until smooth. Toss salad with dressing.

DINNER: [Hearty Lentil Ragu with Penne](#)

SNACK: Parsley-Lemon Hummus
In a blender or food processor combine 3 cups cooked chickpeas, ½ cup packed fresh parsley, 3 tablespoons lemon juice, ½ teaspoon garlic powder, and sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste. Blend to a smooth paste. Add 1 to 2 tablespoons of water if needed to reach desired consistency. Serve with celery sticks (3 stalks sliced in half). Refrigerate leftover hummus in an airtight container.

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PREP FOR TOMORROW: Cook the entire bag of brown rice according to package directions. Soak black beans overnight.

Day 2

You'll get a lot of mileage out of today's toasted Homemade Muesli, enjoying it twice as a breakfast, once as a topping. For dinner, you'll be whipping up a robust casserole using some pantry staples.

BREAKFAST: Homemade Muesli In a nonstick skillet over low toast 3 cups rolled oats, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup chopped walnuts, and $\frac{1}{3}$ cup chopped raisins 5 to 7 minutes. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon pure vanilla extract (optional) and 2 pinches ground cinnamon. Mix well. Transfer to a tray to cool. Serve with a handful of blueberries, 1 sliced banana, and plant milk. Store leftover muesli in an airtight container.

LUNCH (leftover): [Hearty Lentil Ragu with Penne](#)

DINNER: [Broccoli and Brown Rice Casserole with Chickpeas](#)

SNACK: Cinnamon Apple Salad In a medium bowl combine 1 cup diced apple, 4 chopped pitted dates, 1 tablespoon raisins, 1 tablespoon chopped walnuts, 1 tablespoon lemon juice, and 2 pinches ground cinnamon. Mix well. Serve right away or chill before serving.

PREP FOR TOMORROW: Cook the entire bag of black beans according to package directions. Store in an airtight container and refrigerate overnight.

Day 3

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When it comes to eating plant-based on a tight budget, potatoes are your best friend. You'll be prepping an extra Potato Burrito Bowl for an easy grab-and-go lunch tomorrow. You'll also be making extra Oatmeal-Date Pancakes to enjoy throughout the week, as pancakes can maintain their flavor and texture for five days when stored properly.

BREAKFAST: Oatmeal-Date Pancakes In a blender or food processor combine 1½ cups rolled oats; 12 chopped pitted dates, 1 cup plant milk, and 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon. Blend to a coarse batter. Heat a nonstick skillet over low. Pour ¼ cup batter per pancake onto the skillet. Cook for 5 minutes or until the pancakes start to release from the pan. Flip; cook 3 minutes more. Repeat with remaining batter. Serve a few alone or with sliced banana and a handful of fresh blueberries. Allow leftover pancakes to cool, then refrigerate in an airtight container for use later this week.

LUNCH (leftover): Broccoli and Brown Rice Casserole with Chickpeas

DINNER: Potato Burrito Bowl

SNACK (leftover): Parsley-Lemon Hummus

Day 4

You've reached the midweek stretch! Breakfast and lunch are both in the bag today, thanks to your efforts earlier this week! Enjoy Sweet Potato Fries as a snack or as a side to dinner.

BREAKFAST (leftover): Homemade Muesli

LUNCH (leftover): Potato Burrito Bowls

DINNER: Lentil Burgers

SNACK: Sweet Potato Fries Preheat oven to 425°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Cut 1 large sweet potato into wedges and place them in a single layer on a baking sheet. Bake 25 to 30 minutes or until just tender and slightly browned on the edges. Serve warm with ketchup.

Day 5



On order today is a slew of satisfying meals. You'll be cooking up a storm, but the payoff will be well worth it. Look forward to enjoying leftover [Chickpea Curry Stew with Kale](#) for lunch tomorrow.

BREAKFAST: Savory Polenta Porridge with Broccoli In a pan bring 1 cup water to boiling. Add ¼ cup finely chopped onion, ¼ cup diced red bell pepper (save what's left for Day Seven), and ½ teaspoon each onion powder, garlic powder, and dried oregano. Cook for 5 to 7 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Roughly chop half of an 18-oz. tube precooked polenta, reserving remaining polenta for tomorrow's snack. Add chopped polenta to the pan. Cook over low 10 minutes more or

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until polenta softens. Mash polenta to a porridge using a fork. Add 1 tablespoon each lemon juice and finely chopped fresh cilantro. Add sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste. Top with 1 cup steamed broccoli.

LUNCH: Tex-Mex Pasta Salad Cook 1 cup dry penne according to package directions. Two minutes before pasta is done, add 2 cups chopped kale. When pasta finishes cooking, drain and transfer to a large bowl. Add 1½ cups cooked black beans, 1 cup thawed frozen corn, ¼ cup lemon juice, 2 tablespoons finely chopped onion, and ½ teaspoon each garlic powder, dried oregano, and ground cumin. Toss to combine. Add sea salt and cayenne pepper to taste. Garnish with fresh cilantro.

DINNER: Chickpea Curry Stew with Kale

SNACK: Oatmeal with Bananas In a small saucepan bring 2 cups of water to boiling. Add 1 cup rolled oats. Reduce heat to medium-low. Cook for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat; let stand for 2 minutes. Serve topped with 1 sliced banana.

Day 6



Warm up the rest of your Oatmeal-Date Pancakes for breakfast this morning; then heat up the extras from last night's [Chickpea Curry Stew with Kale](#) for a quick and hearty lunch. Shepherd's Pie will be the final dinner you cook this week, and you'll be making enough to eat tomorrow night, too.

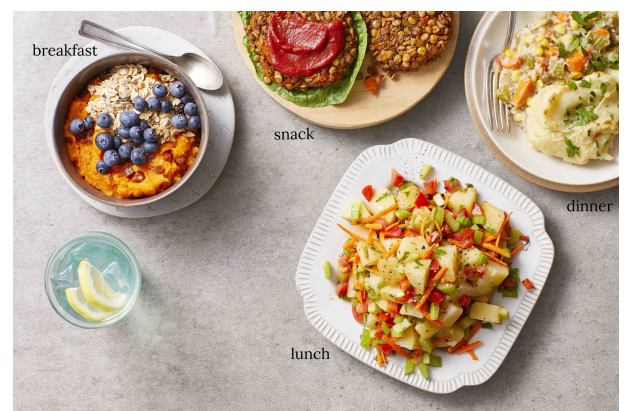
BREAKFAST (leftover): Oatmeal-Date Pancakes with Fresh Blueberries

LUNCH (leftover): Chickpea Curry Stew with Kale

DINNER: Budget-Friendly Shepherd's Pie

SNACK: Polenta Bruschetta Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Slice half of an 18-oz. tube precooked polenta into six ½-inch-thick disks. Place on a baking sheet and bake for 20 minutes. Slice half a tomato into six wedges (save the rest for later). Top each polenta disk with 1 tablespoon Parsley-Lemon Hummus and a tomato wedge. Serve right away.

Day 7



Congratulations! For just \$63.21, you've nourished yourself for seven days. Now that you've got down the basic formulas for eating plant-based on a budget, you can get creative with leftovers to come up with nourishing vegan meals on the cheap.

BREAKFAST: Sweet Potato Breakfast Bowl Preheat oven to 425°F. Bake a sweet potato 30 to 40 minutes or until tender. Let the potato cool slightly. Remove skin. Mash potato in a bowl with 2 pitted dates, finely chopped. Sprinkle with ¼ cup Homemade Muesli and a handful of fresh blueberries.

LUNCH: Potato Salad Scrub 2 medium-size Yukon gold potatoes and cut into 1-inch cubes. Place potatoes in a steamer basket in a large saucepan. Add water to just below basket. Bring to boiling. Steam, covered, about 15 minutes or until tender. Transfer to a large bowl to cool. Add 1 cup diced celery, ½ cup grated carrot, ½ cup diced tomato, ¼ cup diced red bell pepper, 2 tablespoons finely chopped onion, 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley, 1 tablespoon white wine vinegar, 1 teaspoon yellow mustard, and sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste. Mix well. Enjoy chilled or at room temperature.

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DINNER (leftover): [Budget-Friendly Shepherd's Pie](#)

SNACK (leftover): [Lentil Burgers](#)

1-Week Vegan Meal Plan Shopping List

Let's go shopping! With this list, you'll be set for the week. We've listed ingredients "From Your Pantry" that are likely already in your kitchen and not factored into the budget. Note that some produce will be split across recipes and days, so store any leftover pieces in the fridge.

To make it all work, head to stores where you get the most bang for your buck. We shopped at Trader Joe's, Smart & Final, Walmart, and 99 Cents Only Stores in Los Angeles while developing this menu.

Fresh Produce

- 3 apples\$2.31
- 3 bananas.....\$0.81
- 8 oz. fresh blueberries.....\$3.30
- 1 head broccoli (¾ lb.).....\$1.77
- 7 carrots (32 oz.).....\$1.96
- 1 lb. celery (about 13 stalks)\$2.08
- 1 bunch fresh cilantro..... \$0.88
- 8 oz. dates..... \$3.24
- 1 bunch kale.....\$1.48
- 3 lemons\$1.74
- 7 medium yellow onions\$2.18
- 1 bunch parsley.....\$0.98
- 1 large red bell pepper\$1.48
- 5 lb. Yukon gold potatoes\$5.98
- 2 medium sweet potatoes.....\$2.94
- 3 heads romaine lettuce \$2.74
- 4 tomatoes.....\$1.28

Packaged Goods/Bulk Bins

- 1 lb. dry black beans.....\$1.56
- 1 lb. dry brown rice.....\$0.92
- 1 lb. dry brown lentils.....\$1.42
- 1 lb. dry chickpeas \$1.46
- 6¾ cups rolled oats..... \$5.02
- 1 lb. penne pasta.....\$2.30
- 1 18-oz. tube precooked polenta.....\$3.72
- ½ cup raisins \$0.99
- 2 15-oz. cans diced tomatoes.....\$1.76

- ½ cup chopped walnuts\$1.84

Refrigerator/Freezer Aisles

- 1 16-oz. package frozen corn.....\$1.96
- ½ gallon unsweetened, unflavored plant-based milk...\$2.44

TOTAL:\$63.21

From Your Pantry

- Cayenne pepper
- Mild chili powder
- Crushed red pepper flakes
- Curry powder
- Dried oregano
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Garlic powder
- Ground cinnamon
- Ground cumin
- Dried Italian seasoning
- Ketchup
- Mustard
- Pure vanilla extract
- Sea salt
- Smoked paprika
- Taco seasoning
- White wine vinegar or cider vinegar

To receive affordable, healthy, customizable vegan meal plans straight to your inbox every week, check out [Forks Meal Planner](#), FOK's easy weekly meal-planning tool. To learn more about a whole-food, plant-based diet, visit our [Plant-Based Primer](#).