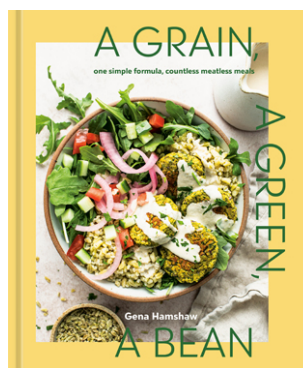


A Grain, a Green, a Bean: Gena Hamshaw's Budget-Friendly Formula for Nourishing Vegan Meals

By Aurelia d'Andrea
2025-04-08 09:53:15



If you've ever found yourself staring blankly into your refrigerator at the end of a long day, hoping for a flash of culinary inspiration, you're in good company.

Gena Hamshaw, a registered dietitian and cookbook author best known for her popular plant-based food blog, *The Full Helping*, often found herself grappling with the "What can I make for dinner that's nourishing and tastes good?" question, and not for a lack of recipes or a dearth of ingredients.

The missing link? A framework to streamline the meal-preparation process. Enter *A Grain, A Green, A Bean*, Hamshaw's new cookbook, built around a simple formula designed to help home cooks create palate-pleasing, nutritionally balanced meals without stress or decision fatigue.

Hamshaw drew on her educational background (she holds a master's in nutrition from Columbia) and her love of food to develop more than 80 pared-down, grain-green-bean recipes, livened up with flavors from Japan, Mexico, Korea, and beyond. Readers will also discover a helpful grain-cooking primer and an everything-you-ever-wanted-to-know-about-soybeans section in the introductory chapter of this vegan cookbook. (A note for our oil-free readers: Many recipes in *A Grain, A Green, a Bean* call for a small amount of oil; in most cases, you could easily adapt these recipes using classic [no-oil sauté and roasting methods](#).)

In anticipation of the book's April 15 launch, we spoke with Hamshaw about big-picture eating, cooking affordably, and her number-one tip for saving time in the kitchen. Read on for the full conversation, and be sure to check out the [Maple Mustard Lentils, Sweet Potatoes, and Herbs](#) recipe from the new book!



This is your fifth cookbook, and you've also got a popular blog, *The Full Helping*. How did your passion for food and cooking begin?

Gena Hamshaw: I got interested in cooking at around the same time I became vegan. I live in New York, but back then, it just wasn't easy to go into any restaurant and get a great vegan entree. And there were fewer products available, too. And so as I became vegan, I really felt like it was time for me to teach myself how to cook a little more capably.

A Grain, a Green, a Bean: Gena Hamshaw's Budget-Friendly Formula for Nourishing Vegan Meals

By Aurelia d'Andrea
April 08 2025

What are some global cuisines that lend themselves particularly well to the grains-greens-beans formula?

GH: It's not specific to a culture. This is a way of thinking about building a plate of food that can be mapped onto almost any cuisine that comes to my mind. There are certainly culinary traditions around the world that have relied more on legumes and grains than others. I'm thinking about many Southeast Asian and South American cuisines, where beans and grains have always played a prominent role in people's diets. But I wanted to present this principle of a grain, a green, a bean as something that people can adapt to their own culinary life, their own culinary traditions, their family cooking traditions, and also their culture of origin.

You can't help but embrace the bean after reading this book. Have you discovered any ways to minimize the flatulence they're known to cause?

GH: I think it's about adjusting expectations, meaning, when you eat beans—and the same goes for crucifers and really big portions of vegetables—it's a lot of fiber. And the fiber in beans is particularly tricky for us to break down. That will create some gas and some flatulence. It's not inherently harmful. It's just uncomfortable. And you can make a decision about the right portion size and frequency that works for you. And just know that they're giving your body great nutrition, whether they make you a little gassy or not.

Readers might be surprised to discover that bread, including wraps, tortillas, and pita, counts as a grain in this book. Are some breads healthier than others?

GH: I think that "healthy" is really a matter of overall dietary patterns, and this is something I feel pretty strongly about. I think you can have conversations about which breads are higher in fiber, which breads have more protein. If you are eating a diet that's rich in plant proteins, rich in fiber overall, because you're getting a lot of fiber-rich foods, there's space for you to eat some baguette, which might have a little less fiber than a piece of whole grain bread.

What are some ways we can save money by

eating the plant-based foods you include in the book?

GH: [Frozen vegetables] are a great way to save money, because they're often inexpensive. There's no risk of them spoiling, which is fantastic. You keep a bag of frozen broccoli florets or green beans in the freezer and you can always dip in when you need them. And of course, they're as nutritious as fresh vegetables, sometimes more so. And beans and grains are still a good bang for your buck. A bag of lentils is still pretty inexpensive.

Do you have any favorite time-saving tips for home cooks?

GH: Meal prep is the number one, and batch-cooking. There is never a time midweek where I'm not grateful to have [already] done some of the work. And one thing I've learned is to be less ambitious about my batch-cooking and my meal prep. It's great if I have time to make lasagna over the weekend, but it's also fine if I roast some sweet potatoes, cook a couple batches of rice, maybe make a quick stir-fry with some seitan or some tofu, and just leave it there. If you have a couple of great sauces in your fridge, you can dress up very simple meals and have them still taste great.