



5 Dietitian-Approved Store-Bought Sauces for Quick, Healthy Meals

By Cynthia Sass, MPH, MA, RDN, CSSD
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As a registered dietitian who is also a certified plant-based cook, I delight in whipping up delectable sauces from scratch. But leisurely preparing a meal with multiple steps and ingredients just isn't realistic every night. Ready-to-use sauces are my time-saving solution, but I'm picky about store-bought products. I look for options with simple, recognizable whole-food ingredients. My preference is no oil, although I make an exception for extra-virgin olive oil when it really enhances the flavor of a sauce. I also look for sauces with no more than 360 mg of sodium per serving (a reasonable limit, especially since these sauces are flavorful enough that you won't need to add extra salt) and no more than 4 grams of added sugar. Oh, and they have to be downright delicious! Here are five of my favorite sauces, why each makes my list, and simple, healthful ways to use them when meal prep requires a shortcut.



Yellowbird Sriracha (oil-free)

Organic red jalapeños give this sauce its kick, balanced with organic distilled vinegar and garlic, a touch of salt, and sweetness from organic dates, raisins, and citrus juice concentrates. A 1-teaspoon serving (a little goes a long way) provides zero calories and just 70 mg of sodium (3% of the Daily Value). Use it to jazz up air-fried tofu served over a bed of massaged kale or collards, brown rice, and avocado. It's also amazing drizzled on grilled corn on the cob or swirled into hummus.

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Noble Made Less-Sugar Original BBQ Sauce (oil-free)

The natural hickory smoke flavor is what makes this BBQ sauce my current go-to. It's made from a tomato puree base combined with apple cider vinegar, apple juice concentrate, and an array of spices, including garlic, ginger, and cayenne. With just 2 grams of added sugar per 2 tablespoons, it deserves the less-sugar callout in its name. (In contrast, one popular BBQ sauce [brand](#) packs a whopping 16 grams of added sugar for the same-sized portion.) Use it to flavor plain beans or tempeh paired with a citrusy slaw and roasted sweet potatoes. It's also a one-step tactic to transform veggies such as roasted cauliflower and grilled Portobello mushrooms.



Sunny Original Tahini Dip, Sauce & Spread (oil-free)

This top-quality sauce made simply from ground sesame seeds, filtered water, lemon juice, garlic, sea salt, and spices, is incredibly versatile and quite nutritious. A 2-tablespoon portion contains just 1 gram of saturated fat and 112 mg of sodium (5% of the Daily Value), 3 grams of protein, and 6% of the daily target for iron. In addition, sesame products, including tahini, are a source of [antioxidants and anti-inflammatory](#) compounds. Enjoy it as a creamy salad dressing, dipping sauce for raw or leftover roasted veggies, or as a baked potato topping. For a quick balanced meal, toss tahini sauce with sautéed cremini mushrooms, a generous handful of greens, and a scoop of cooked chickpea pasta.



Gotham Greens Vegan Pesto (contains oil)

Gotham Greens nixed the cheese in this classic sauce made from a combo of extra-virgin olive oil, basil, pine nuts, lemon juice, garlic, and sea salt. In addition to pasta and pizza, pesto can be used to dress up whole grains, veggies, tofu, and pulses. For a make-ahead chilled grab-and-go lunch, add steamed lentils, cooked quinoa, greens, sliced cherry tomatoes, and a dollop of pesto to a glass food storage container. Close the lid, shake, and refrigerate overnight. (Editor's note: For a no-oil option, *Forks Over Knives* recommends [this homemade](#)

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[pesto recipe.](#))



Lucini Organic Rustic Tomato Basil Sauce (contains oil)

I've long been a fan of this brand for its high quality, lack of added sugar, and short list of ingredients, which reads like a recipe: fresh tomatoes, organic onions, organic extra virgin olive oil, organic basil, organic carrots, sea salt, and organic black pepper, all sourced from Tuscany. Use it for [lentil-stuffed peppers](#) and chickpea shakshuka, or layer it with roasted veggies, quinoa, and crumbled, herbed tofu for a nourishing noodle-less lasagna. *(Editor's Note: For an oil-free option, FOK recommends [365 by Whole Foods Market Organic Fat Free Marinara](#).)*