



Plant-Based Diaries Week 1: Adventures in Breakfast Prep

By Lucie Monk Carter
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Editor's Note: This month is the second annual [Forks Over Knives Fresh Start Challenge](#), our free 21-day program for adopting a plant-based diet one meal at a time. Food writer Lucie Monk Carter is taking the challenge, and we've asked her to document her experiences with whole-food, plant-based cooking and eating in this series.

My toddler is devoted to vegetables. Here in Louisiana, Mae doesn't have to toddle far to fall into heaps of fried oysters, butter-bathed crawfish tails, or smothered pork chops. Temptation is everywhere in the Bayou State for someone trying to eat a healthful diet, and she fares better than her food-writer mother in beating back the urge to indulge. For the sake of setting a good example for my family (and saving money, going down a pants-size, and finally, finally kicking this mild acne that's plagued me since I was 12), I thought we all might take a closer look at plants.

Forks Over Knives asked me to document my adventures (and misadventures) in whole-food, plant-based cooking this month during the [Fresh Start Challenge](#), which promises plenty of approachable, accommodating recipes for anyone looking to make a change. If a toddler and a woman who once ate a bowl of fried chicken and mashed potatoes followed almost immediately by a shrimp po' boy can find satisfaction in this diet, can't anyone?

As a good omen, my pantry already held some of the supplies needed to try out Fresh Start's breakfast recipes: heirloom carrots to shred for [Carrot Cake Overnight Oats](#), a bunch of bananas for [Banana Pancakes](#), and plenty of baking essentials to feed my ongoing bread obsession.

Really, the only first-time buys were plant milk and egg replacer for the pancakes, a relief considering I often let my excitement about a new cooking project blow way past my intended budgetary constraints.

Egg replacer was a mystery, and though I quickly found it next to the flours at Whole Foods, I was happy to learn that [aquafaba](#) (the liquid from a can of chickpeas) would do the same job with a much more mystical name. Almond milk, of course, sat adjacent to the actual dairy

products. I opted for unsweetened. For anyone who's ever serenely slurped the milk remaining from a bowl of cereal, you'll be similarly nutty about almond milk.

I made substitutions here and there based on what I already had at home, seeing an opportunity to sell the relative cheapness of plant-based cooking to my husband, who cannot be called especially enthusiastic about this project. He eats healthier than I do 90 percent of the time. On the other hand, I've caught him scowling at tofu. A fan of the Mediterranean diet, he'll sooner chug olive oil than almond milk.

My ingredient swaps were negligible and centered around the overnight oats, which seemed a bit of a playground already with various spices and add-ons. Instead of ground flaxseed, I used mashed banana. And I had a hefty bag of cashews on hand, so I didn't see the need to stuff my cabinets even more with pumpkin seeds. The layered jar went into my fridge in the late afternoon for a long overnight, and I headed off to help photograph a big Southern wedding, the thought of dessert for breakfast with a side of banana pancakes powering me on.

Next up: The results of a carrot-topped refrigerated slumber party and 10 attempts to flip a perfect oil-free pancake.

Ready to get started? Check out [Forks Meal Planner](#), FOK's easy weekly meal-planning tool to keep you on a healthy plant-based path.