

## Get Grilling—No Meat Required!

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**By Marlo Dublin**

Summertime signals the start of barbecue season and, for many, an increase in meat consumption. Grilled hamburgers, hot dogs and chicken typically take the spotlight, leaving vegetables in the dust. Is it possible for vegetables to play a larger role in our summer meals? Absolutely!

Incorporating vegetables and meat substitutes, like tofu and tempeh, in place of traditional meats can be better for our health and wallet. While full of protein, meat tends to be high in calories, cholesterol and saturated fat which, in large amounts, can be harmful to our heart health over time. Processed meats, such as hot dogs and sausages, usually contain preservatives, additives and extra salt which are unhealthy if consumed in excess.

Research shows that meat prices, particularly those for beef, are on the rise; if we can learn how to

be creative with vegetables instead, we will save money at the supermarket and on future health care costs. Most vegetables are fat-free and low in calories. They provide a variety of vitamins and minerals, in addition to fiber, which is helpful for digestion, maintaining healthy blood sugar and cholesterol levels, and keeping us feeling full and energized.

Here are some suggestions for easy meatless dishes that can be prepared on the grill:

- 1) Grilled eggplant or zucchini steaks can serve as a lighter and tasty substitute for traditional beef steaks. Simply wash and then cut either vegetable into one-inch-thick ovals, brush each side with olive oil, season with salt and pepper or dried spices, and grill for 2-3 minutes on each side or until they are tender.
- 2) Take a break from classic beef burgers by making fresh vegetable burgers. Mash two cups of your favorite cooked bean, such as garbanzo or black, and combine it with one stalk of chopped celery, one grated carrot and ¼ of a small chopped onion. Add ¼ cup whole wheat flour to the mixture, along with salt, pepper and other seasonings, and combine until the ingredients can be formed into six flat patties. Brush the burgers with a light coating of olive oil, place them on a lightly oiled sheet of tin foil and grill them for about 8 minutes on each side. Serve the burgers on a whole grain roll with your favorite trimmings, or serve them breadless along with a tomato sauce or gravy and your favorite salad.
- 3) Vegetable pizza, quesadillas, peppers or tomatoes, and mushrooms are other tasty alternatives to traditional barbecued meats and can all be grilled.

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