



Pulses

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Let's talk meatless meals. Now that lent is upon us, meatless meals are more common for a variety of reasons. One great protein alternative to animal protein are pulses. Pulses (formally known as legumes) are dried beans (think kidney beans, black beans...etc), dried peas, and lentils. The protein content varies but 1 cup is about 16-19 grams of protein which is similar to 2-3oz of meat.

One draw to meat vs plant-based protein is essential amino acids (building blocks of protein). There are 9 amino acids that our bodies cannot make and we have to get them from our food. Animal sources of protein (meat, eggs, milk) naturally give us all 9. Plant based proteins have a variety of them but not all 9 in one particular food. It was once thought that if you had pulses as your main protein source at a meal, you had to have a complimentary grain with it to get all of those essential amino acids you need. That is no longer true from what we know today. As long as you're eating some grains during the day, you'll get all of the 9 essential by the end of the day.

Dried beans, peas, and lentils provide our bodies more than just protein. Pulses give us iron, B vitamins, magnesium, folate, and antioxidants. They are rich in fiber especially a type of fiber known as resistant starch. This is the type of fiber that our good bacteria in our gut thrive on. So you're helping promote a healthy gut as well as healthy heart. They're free of saturated fat which is difficult to say for animal proteins + the high fiber can help lower LDL cholesterol.

Think about what you serve with your pulses. Adding a food that is high in vitamin C in a plant-based meal helps our bodies better absorb the iron that's in plants. Examples of foods with a high amount of vitamin C- cauliflower, asparagus, oranges, strawberries, broccoli, green bell peppers, Brussels sprouts, and grapefruit.

New at adding pulses to your diet? Start with adding them as a side dish or go ½ and ½ on your entrée. For example-tacos for supper? Have a side dish of black beans or make your taco meat with ½ hamburger and ½ cooked lentils. Beans, in particular, can cause uncomfortable GI effects such as bloating and gas. Starting with a small amount and slowly increase amount over time can help increase tolerance. Using canned beans instead of dry beans and rinsing the canned beans off before consuming can also help negate GI effects.

Check out my recipe of the month for a meatless dish featuring black beans as the main protein source. You won't regret it!