

# Wellness

## Wednesday



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## 9 Easy Ways To Eat Less Meat This Summer

Meat shortages due to the coronavirus. Climate change. Do you need another reason?

To say that summer looks different in 2020 is an understatement. As states try to reopen safely, various restrictions will remain in place for months to come. While there are no rules about what we can and can't eat, viral outbreaks at processing plants mean that meat shortages are a threat. And even if you do get your hands on hot dogs and burger patties, they'll likely be more expensive.

Not to mention, experts who speak about climate change say that reducing your meat consumption could be the single most effective way to fight global warming.

Still, summer isn't canceled, and there's no reason you shouldn't take advantage of your grill and all the foods still available. Think of this summer as an opportunity to try out ingredients you would have otherwise overlooked. To help get those creative (plant-based) juices flowing, we asked chefs for their advice on how to turn vegetarian ingredients into satisfying meals.

### 1. Prep lentils for lunch.

"I like to boil lentils in salted pasta water and use them as a way to add heft to grain bowls, salads, etc.," said Priya Krishna, food writer and author of the "Indian-ish" cookbook. "They cook quickly (quicker than beans, for sure), and they absorb flavors beautifully!"

Starch and salt from the pasta water will give the lentils extra flavor and texture, and experimenting with adding your favorite herbs and spices to the mix will ensure that each batch is a little bit different. Any leftover cooked lentils will keep for a few days in your fridge, so you can prepare a big batch and eat it throughout the week.

### 2. Give mushrooms extra oomph with plenty of fat and a little soy sauce.

Mushrooms have long been a stand-in for meat in vegetarian cooking, from portobello "burgers" to chopped mushroom Bolognese sauce. "They offer a chewy texture similar to meat," said Ryan Grimm, co-owner and executive chef at Robinson Ferry in Warrenton, North Carolina. "I like to pan-fry them in butter and finish them with some fresh garlic and a splash of soy sauce."



Any kind of oil will work, but know that you'll likely need more than you think. Mushrooms are particularly sponge-like when it comes to soaking up whatever they're cooked in, so be prepared to add more butter or oil as they cook to achieve that meaty texture. And don't skip that splash of soy sauce, which will enhance the umami flavor of the mushrooms.

### 3. Serve up a platter of pulled-jackfruit sandwiches.

Jackfruit "has been growing in popularity the last year," Grimm said. It's sold pre-flavored in the refrigerated section (near the tofu) at many grocery stores, and Trader Joe's sells it canned in brine. It's "great for a vegetarian version of chili, pulled pork, sloppy joes and pasta sauces," Grimm said.

And hey, if a North Carolinian vets it as a reasonable pulled-pork substitute, it's certainly worth a try.

### 4. Skewer up some hearty tofu.

Bryant Terry, chef activist and author of "Afro-Vegan" and "Vegetable Kingdom," has long been an advocate for accessible, affordable plant-based cooking. To help tofu absorb flavors and to avoid the wet texture that cooked tofu sometimes takes on, Terry recommends freezing and thawing it before cooking, and then pressing the thawed tofu between two weighted, paper towel-lined plates for 20 minutes before cooking.



Then, you can cube it and soak it in your favorite sauce or marinade before skewering it on the grill. Since so much of the moisture has been pressed out, the tofu won't fall apart on the grates.

### 5. Grill cauliflower "steaks."

"Vegetables begin to taste better and more like a main dish when cooks pay as much attention to developing flavor and texture in vegetarian cooking as they do with meat," said Dean Neff, chef and owner of soon-to-open Seabird in Wilmington, North Carolina. In the case of cauliflower steaks, that means you should brine them before grilling, he said, so that the salt is soaked into the flesh of the vegetable before cooking, instead of just sitting on top.

To start, cut cauliflower lengthwise into steaks at least an inch thick. Then, boil 2 cups of water with 1/4 cup of salt and 1 tablespoon sugar, cool slightly, and pour the mixture over the cauliflower in a shallow dish. Refrigerate the cauliflower steaks in brine for 1-2 hours. Then pat them dry, rub them with your favorite spice blend, and grill them over medium heat until there are marks on both sides and the insides are al dente.

### 6. Try your hand at parsnip "bacon."

Parsnips aren't technically in season until the fall, but these inexpensive root vegetables are available in supermarkets year-round.

"We treat parsnips as you would pork belly by washing well, nipping the root end, slicing lengthwise into 1/4-inch strips, and curing overnight for 24 hours in salt, sugar and spices," said Briar Handy, executive chef at Handle in Park City, Utah, and HSL in Salt Lake City. "Then we submerge the parsnip strips in apple cider, maple syrup and apple cider vinegar and hot smoke [them] over cherry wood until tender." The cooked parsnips are then drained and seared in hot oil, while the liquid is simmered to a thick glaze with a little butter. The process takes some time, but it's relatively simple if you already have a smoker (or a grill that doubles as one).

## 7. Give broccoli dogs a try.

It might sound crazy to serve a whole stalk of broccoli inside a hot dog bun, but it worked for chef and owner Amanda Cohen at Dirt Candy in New York City. Similar to the way Handy turns parsnips into bacon, Cohen smokes whole stalks of broccoli and then grills them for a few minutes before sliding each one into a hot dog bun and topping it with condiments. If broccoli isn't your thing, you could do the same with whole carrots.

## 8. Turn maitake mushrooms into legit barbecue.

Maitake mushrooms, also known as hen-of-the-woods, have a unique layered, feathery texture (it's hard to explain, so you're better off just looking at a picture). They can be pricey, but they're available at some supermarkets and most farmers markets, and are certainly worth it for a treat. Drew Smith, chef and owner of *kō•än* in Cary, North Carolina, uses them to make meatless North Carolina-style barbecue.

First, he roasts a half-pound of maitake mushrooms with 2 tablespoons of canola oil and some salt and pepper at 375 degrees Fahrenheit for 15 minutes. Then, he chops the mushrooms and tosses them in barbecue marinade. Smith makes his own by combining 1 cup apple cider vinegar, 1 cup brown sugar, 2 tablespoons ketchup, 1 tablespoon Worcestershire or soy sauce, and 1 teaspoon red chili flakes — but your favorite store-bought barbecue sauce would also work.

## 9. Take advantage of eggplant's natural umami.

"Eggplant can be used to enhance your vegetarian cooking by adding tons of flavor due to its natural MSG properties," Neff said. He likes to char a large eggplant on the grill until it's blackened and very soft. Then he peels it and mixes the flesh with 1/2 cup olive oil, 3 tablespoons lemon juice, 2 tablespoons capers, 2 tablespoons parsley, 1 tablespoon minced shallot and 3 roasted garlic cloves. The resulting spread works as a dip but is also great as a substitute for cold cuts on sandwiches.

## Remember, you can add vegetarian dishes without swearing off meat forever.

For sound reasons, many people go vegetarian. But embracing what vegetables have to offer doesn't mean you have to give up meat entirely — especially if meat is accessible and affordable to you right now. A stalk of broccoli isn't the perfect approximation of a hot dog, and even expertly cooked maitake mushrooms aren't the same thing as actual brisket. But these foods are tasty in their own right and can be delicious options to add to your cooking repertoire.





# GRILLED CHICKEN KABOBS WITH CUCUMBER YOGURT SAUCE



266 Calories | *PREP TIME: 2 hours 30 mins* | *COOK TIME: 30 mins* | *TOTAL TIME: 3 hours*  
*YIELD: 4 Servings* | *COURSE: Lunch, Dinner* | *CUISINE: Lebanese*

## INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 pounds skinless boneless chicken breast or thighs, cut into 1 inch cubes  
 2 tablespoons fresh squeezed lemon juice  
 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil  
 2 teaspoons dried za'atar or oregano  
 1 clove crushed garlic  
 1 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt  
 fresh ground black pepper, to taste  
 lemon wedges for serving

### Cucumber Yogurt Dip (makes 1 1/4 cups)

3/4 cup plain low fat plain yogurt  
 3/4 cup finely chopped cucumber, peeled and seeded  
 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice  
 1/2 tablespoon fresh dill, chopped  
 1/2 tablespoon fresh mint, chopped  
 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt  
 fresh black pepper, to taste

These Grilled Chicken Kabobs are marinated in lemon juice, olive oil, za'atar, and garlic and served with a cucumber yogurt sauce on the side. You can use either chicken breasts or thighs.

## TIPS:

You should grill chicken kabobs on medium heat for about 12-15 minutes until the chicken is cooked through. You can grill them on an indoor or outdoor grill.

### Nutrition Information

Serving: 1 kabob, 1/3 cup sauce, Calories: 266 kcal, Carbohydrates: 4.5 g, Protein: 41 g, Fat: 8 g, Saturated Fat: 2 g, Cholesterol: 5 mg, Sodium: 595 mg, Fiber: 0.5 g, Sugar: 3.5 g  
 Source: [Skinnytaste.com](http://Skinnytaste.com)



## INSTRUCTIONS



### How to make:

#### For the marinade:

Mix lemon juice, olive oil, za'atar, garlic, salt, and pepper together. Put chicken in a zip-locked bag and pour marinade over it. Marinate the chicken at least 2-3 hours or as long as overnight.

#### For the kabobs:

If using wooden skewers, soak in water at least 30 minutes if grilling outdoors (I usually double them up so they are easier to turn).

Prepare the yogurt sauce by combining the ingredients in a medium bowl. Refrigerate until ready to eat.

Thread chicken onto the skewers. You should have 4 kabobs total.

Preheat the grill over medium heat, oil the grates and cook (indoor or outdoor grill works fine) until the chicken is cooked though, turning often about 12 to 15 minutes.

Serve with lemon wedges and yogurt sauce.

## FEATURED EXERCISE

Grab your GRAB a 10-pound plate with cutouts. – let's get to work! ✓

### Plank Plus

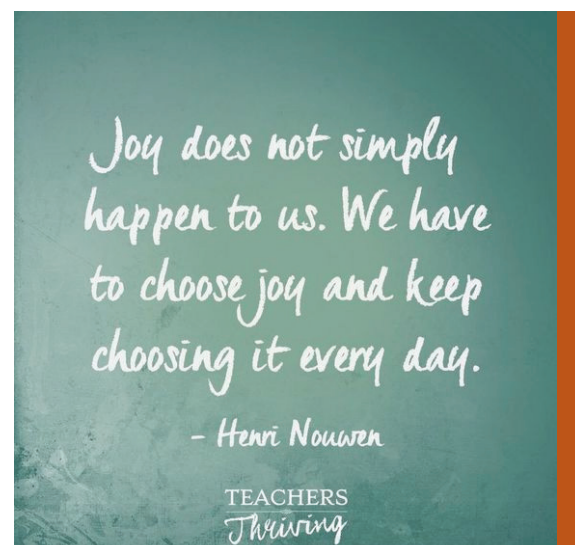
Works: shoulders, chest, abs, obliques

Start in a plank with plate under chest. Grab plate with right hand and slowly drag it toward right side. Then grab plate with left hand (as shown) and slowly drag it toward left side. Continue for 1 minute.



Source: <https://www.self.com/gallery/tone-every-muscle-weight-plate-routine-slideshow>

*Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.*



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