

CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS

VEBA YOUR HEALTH,
OUR PURPOSE

Gut Check:

YOUR ESSENTIAL STARTER KIT

In this toolkit, you will:

-  Learn what gut health means, and why it's important for your overall well-being. **Page 2**
-  Understand how to identify potential food sensitivities or intolerances and reset your gut. **Page 3**
-  Discover valuable lifestyle tips to support and optimize your gut health. **Page 4**
-  Explore a collection of delicious, gut-friendly recipes that nourish your body and contribute to a healthy gut ecosystem. **Page 5-21**

By taking steps towards improving your gut health, you can experience the transformative power it has on your overall well-being and vitality. Start your journey towards better gut health today and unlock the potential for a happier, healthier you!

GET TO KNOW YOUR GUT



What is the Gut Microbiome: the intricate ecosystem of bacteria, viruses, and microorganisms that play a major role in your physical and mental health.

HOW DOES GUT HEALTH IMPACT OVERALL WELL-BEING?

- 1 DIGESTION AND NUTRIENT ABSORPTION:** When the gut is not functioning properly, it can lead to digestive issues like bloating, gas, constipation, or diarrhea.
- 2 IMMUNE SYSTEM:** The gut houses a large portion of our immune system. A healthy gut helps to maintain a strong immune response, reducing the risk of infections and diseases.
- 3 MENTAL HEALTH:** The gut produces neurotransmitters like serotonin, the “happy hormone.” Imbalances in gut bacteria can affect neurotransmitter production, potentially leading to mood disorders such as anxiety and depression.
- 4 INFLAMMATION:** An unhealthy gut can contribute to chronic inflammation in the body, which can lead to health conditions like autoimmune diseases, obesity, and even mental health disorders.
- 5 SKIN HEALTH:** Inflammation caused by an imbalanced gut can affect the skin’s appearance and health, causing conditions like acne, eczema, and psoriasis.
- 6 WEIGHT MANAGEMENT:** Gut bacteria can influence metabolism and weight regulation. An imbalance may contribute to weight gain or difficulty losing weight.
- 7 ENERGY LEVELS:** A healthy gut helps breakdown and absorb nutrients, providing the body with the energy it needs. When the gut is not functioning optimally, it can lead to fatigue and decreased energy levels.

The symptoms and conditions mentioned above could also be caused by other factors unrelated to poor gut health. If you are experiencing any of the symptoms above or other digestive issues, contact your doctor for an accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment.

5 R's

to RESET Your Gut

Use this guide to improve gut health and identify potential food sensitivities or intolerances.

REMOVE



Reduce potential food triggers, including common allergens and irritants such as gluten and dairy.



Avoid processed foods, fast food, and fried foods.



Minimize or eliminate alcohol and caffeine consumption.

REPLACE



Replace inflammatory foods with nourishing, whole foods, including fresh vegetables, fruits, lean proteins, and healthy fats.



Consider adding gut-supportive foods like bone broth, fermented foods, and prebiotic-rich foods.

REPAIR



Support gut healing with nutrients that promote tissue repair and reduce inflammation, such as foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids and anti-inflammatory spices like turmeric and ginger.



Consider supplements like L-glutamine, zinc, and vitamin D, if necessary.

REINTRODUCE



Introduce beneficial bacteria to the gut by consuming probiotic-rich foods or taking a high-quality probiotic supplement.



Include foods high in soluble fiber to support the growth of beneficial bacteria.

REBALANCE



Manage stress through techniques like meditation, deep breathing, or yoga.



Get regular exercise, prioritize sleep, and stay hydrated.



7 TIPS FOR GOOD GUT HEALTH

1

PROBIOTICS

Eat plain yogurt, fermented foods like kimchi and sauerkraut, and drink probiotic-rich beverages balance gut friendly bacteria and prevent digestive disorders.

2

ADD VARIETY

Aim to include foods from all the food groups to regulate good gut health. A good guide is half a plate of non-starchy vegetables, a serving of protein about the size of your palm, and a fistful of carbohydrates.

3

PREBIOTICS

Eat prebiotic-rich foods like onions, bananas, almonds, and chickpeas to feed your gut bacteria and strengthen the immune system.

4

FIBER RICH FOODS

Eat more fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grains to promote healthy bowel movement. Examples include apples, bananas, broccoli, asparagus, brown rice, and oatmeal.

5

PORTION SIZE

Practice mindful eating habits, like eating slowly and paying attention to when you start feeling full, to refrain from overeating.

6

REST AND DIGEST

Use your breath to regulate yourself into a state of rest and digestion, allowing your body to slow down and efficiently process food.

7

STAY ACTIVE

Move your body regularly to help stimulate your digestive system.

PROBIOTIC VS. PREBIOTIC:

Probiotics are live bacteria or yeasts that are beneficial for the digestive system.

Prebiotics are non-digestible fibers that serve as food for the beneficial bacteria in the gut.

GUT HEALTH MADE DELICIOUS:

A Recipe Book for a Happy Gut

Are you ready to achieve optimal gut health through delicious, easy, and affordable meals?

Whether you're looking to improve digestion, boost the immune system, or simply enhance your overall well-being, these recipes provide the tools and inspiration to support a healthy gut microbiome and transform your health.





CONTENTS

STRAWBERRY CHIA PUDDING

This pudding is a great choice for gut health as it is rich in fiber, antioxidants, and probiotics. Chia seeds contain omega-3 fatty acids, which can help reduce gut inflammation.

ZESTY VEGGIE GRAIN BOWL

This customizable high-fiber meal is a powerhouse to support healthy digestion. Explore the optional recommendations of vegetables, seeds, and toppings that add an extra probiotic and fiber punch.

LOADED MISO SOUP

Miso soup contains probiotics and fermented ingredients that support a balanced gut microbiome.

CHICKPEA CILANTRO LIME FRITTERS

Chickpeas contain resistant starch, a type of carbohydrate that doesn't get digested, and acts as a prebiotic that feeds good gut bacteria.

NO-BAKE CHOCOLATE PEANUT BUTTER TRUFFLES

Medjool dates are high in fiber, which supports a healthy digestive system. Oats, on the other hand, are rich in soluble fiber, which acts as a prebiotic, feeding the beneficial bacteria in the gut.

GREEK TOMATO SALAD

This salad contains gut-friendly ingredients such as fresh vegetables, olives, and olive oil, which have anti-inflammatory properties and can help reduce gut inflammation.

CLASSIC ROASTED VEGETABLES

Classic roasted vegetables are a great choice for gut health as they are packed with fiber, vitamins, and minerals. This simple side dish makes it easy to get your half plate of veggies at every meal.

SESAME MISO ORANGE VINAIGRETTE

Combining probiotic miso with omega-6 fatty acids from sesame oil, along with antioxidant-rich vitamin C from orange juice, creates a gut-fueling dressing that can be used for any salad.

Strawberry Chia Pudding





STRAWBERRY CHIA PUDDING

 Easy

 35 Min Prep +
4 Hour Chill

 Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups unsweetened oat milk
- One 16-ounce package fresh strawberries, hulled or frozen strawberries, defrosted
- 1/2 cup chia seeds
- 1/4 cup real maple syrup
- 1/8 tsp salt
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 4 fresh strawberries, sliced

DIRECTIONS

STEP 1

Puree the oat milk and 16 ounces of the strawberries in a blender until smooth and transfer the mixture into a bowl. Stir chia seeds, maple syrup, salt, and vanilla extract into the strawberry puree.

STEP 2

Stir the pudding 3 times, 10 minutes apart each time and then refrigerate until it sets, about 4 hours. If desired, portion into individual serving containers.

ZESTY VEGGIE GRAIN BOWL

 *Easy*  *20 Min Prep +
10 Min Cook*  *Serves 1*

INGREDIENTS

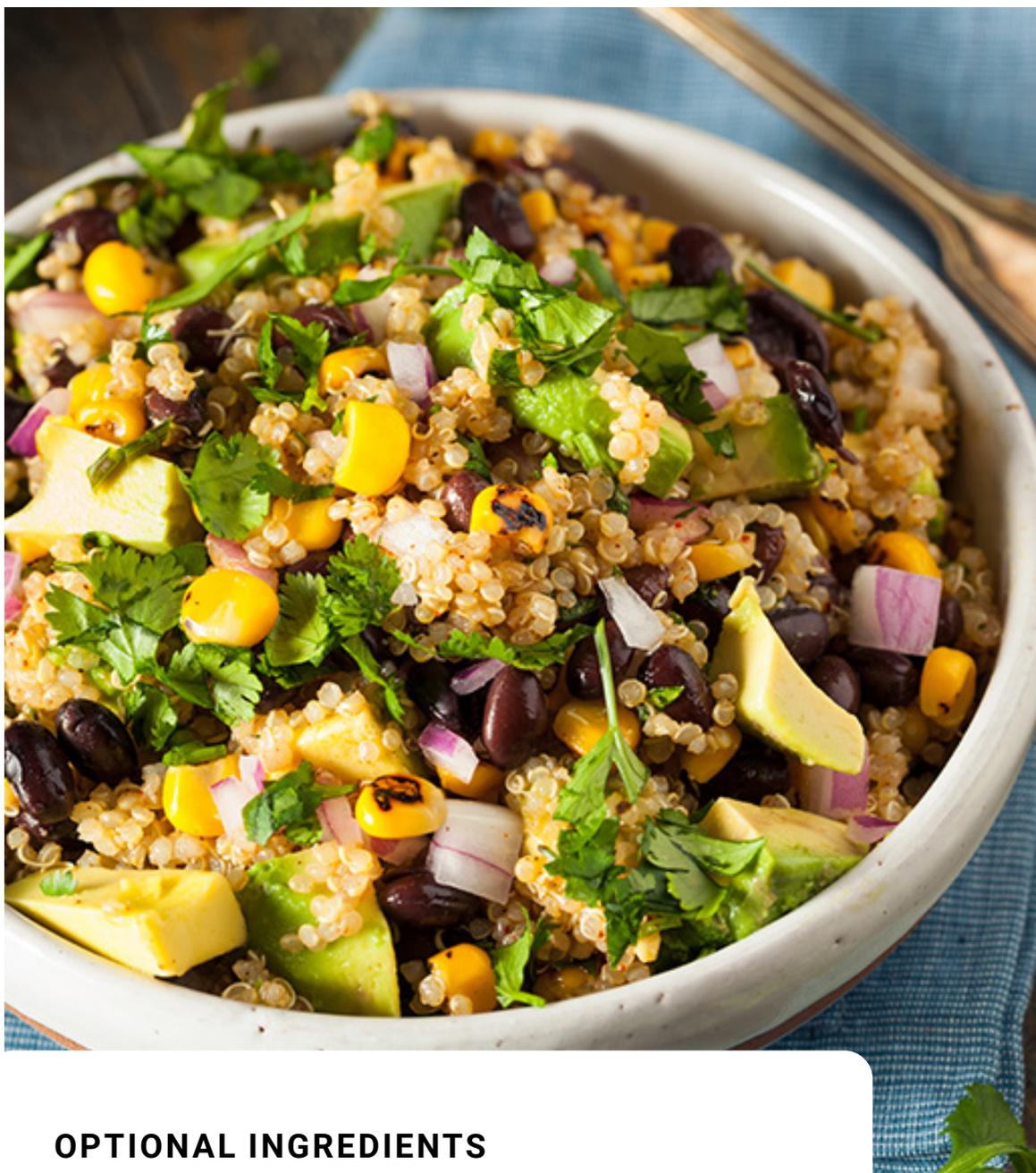
- 1/2 cup cooked whole grains such as brown rice, quinoa, barley, or farro
- 2/3 cup cooked bean such as black beans, white beans, kidney beans, or garbanzo beans
- 1 cup shredded lettuce or spinach leaves
- 2 Tbsp guacamole or 1/4 of a sliced avocado
- 1/2 cup prepared salsa

DIRECTIONS

STEP 1

Assemble the 5 ingredients in a single serving bowl.

Zesty Veggie Grain Bowl



OPTIONAL INGREDIENTS

1 carrot, grated

1/4 cup sliced green onions

1/2 cup diced or halved
cherry tomatoes

1 Tbsp pumpkin seeds

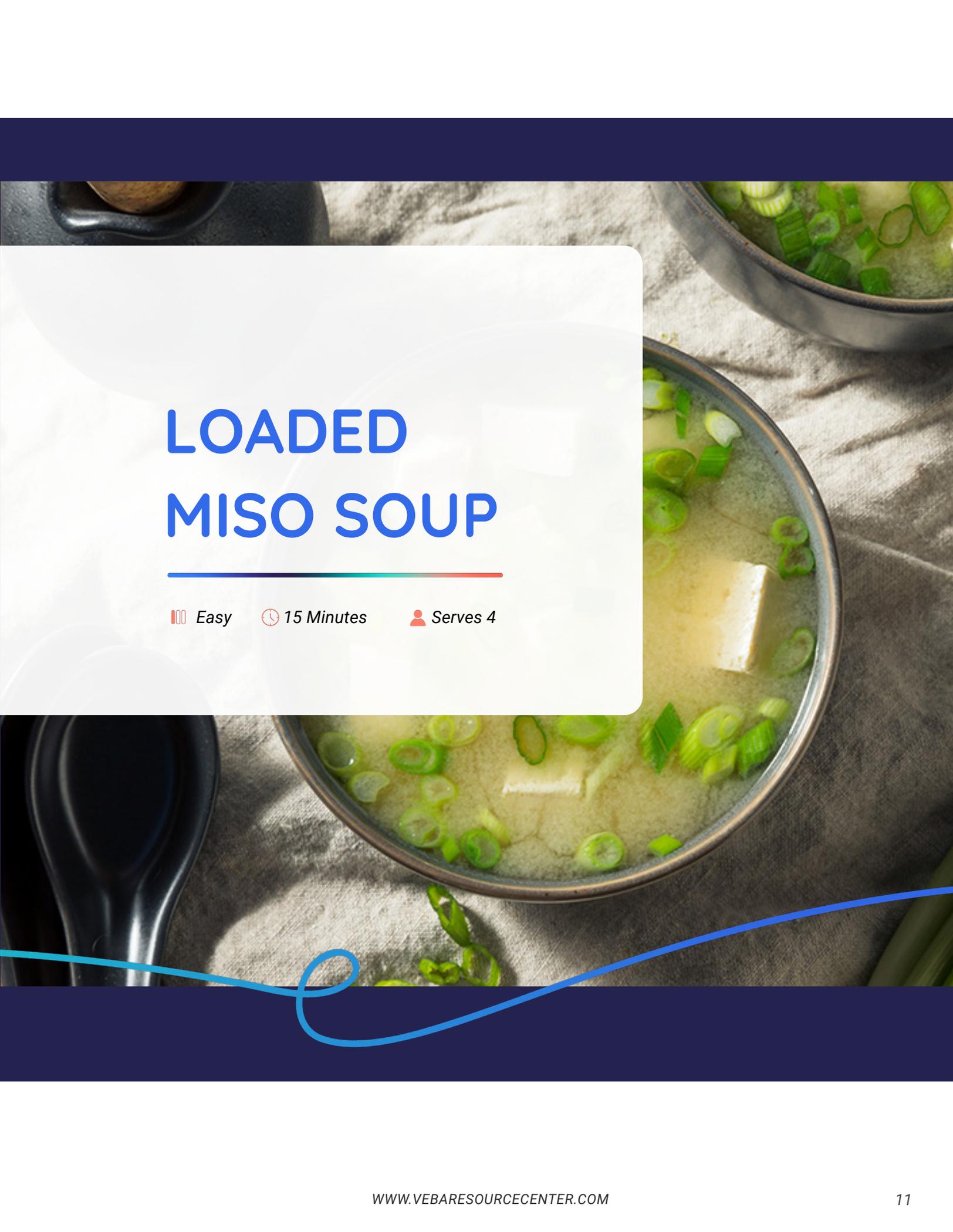
6 corn chips, crushed

1/4 cup shredded cabbage

2 lime wedges for squeezing
on top

2 Tbsp crumbled Cotija cheese

2 Tbsp full-fat Greek Yogurt

A top-down view of a bowl of miso soup. The soup is light-colored and contains a piece of white tofu, several slices of green onions, and some green leafy vegetables. The bowl is on a light-colored, textured surface. A white text box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the title and recipe details. A blue decorative line is at the bottom of the page.

LOADED MISO SOUP

 Easy  15 Minutes  Serves 4

Loaded Miso Soup

INGREDIENTS

- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1/2 medium onion, thinly sliced (about 1 cup)
- 1 cup thinly sliced shiitake mushroom caps
- 1 cup shredded green cabbage
- 1 Tbsp minced ginger
- 1 Tbsp garlic, minced (about 3 cloves)
- 1 Tbsp chili paste or Sriracha to taste
- 1 Tbsp maple syrup
- 1 Tbsp low-sodium tamari or soy sauce
- 4 cups vegetable stock or water
- 4 ounce extra firm tofu, cut into small cubes
- 1/2 cup dried seaweed pieces
- 1 green onion, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup cilantro leaves, roughly chopped
- 1 cup spinach leaves, roughly chopped
- 4 tsp sesame oil

DIRECTIONS

STEP 1

Heat the oil in a large pot and sauté the onions until translucent (about 3 minutes). Add the mushrooms and cook until soft, then add the cabbage and continue cooking until the cabbage softens. Add the ginger, garlic, chili paste, maple syrup, tamari, and seaweed. Cook for another 2 minutes.

STEP 2

Add the miso paste and slowly add the water and cook until the mixture is dissolved. Cook another 5 minutes until flavors come together. Add the tofu.

STEP 3

Remove from heat and add green onions, cilantro, spinach leaves, and sesame oil.

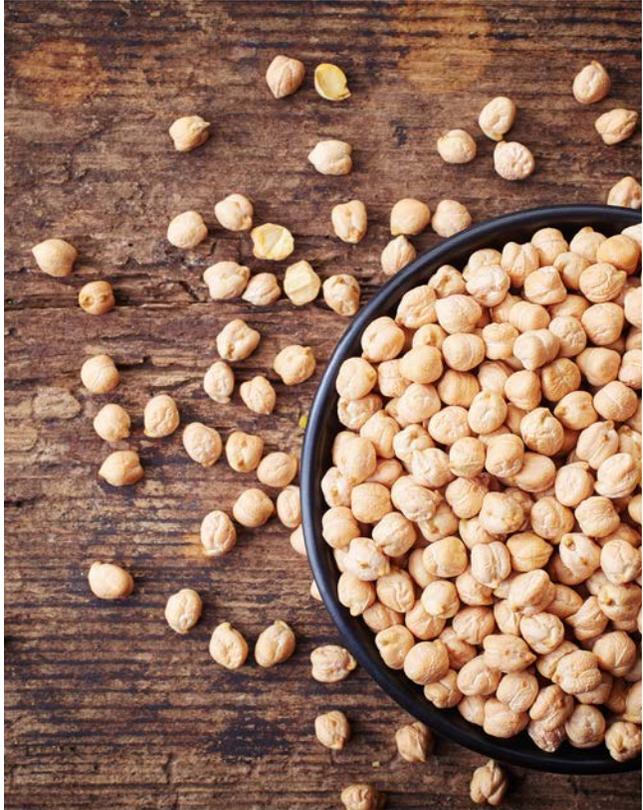
A close-up photograph of several golden-brown, round chickpea fritters arranged on a white plate. Each fritter is topped with a dollop of white sauce and fresh green cilantro leaves. A dark blue vertical banner is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the recipe title and details. A decorative blue line curves across the top of the banner.

CHICKPEA CILANTRO LIME FRITTERS

||| Moderate ⌚ 35 Minutes 👤 Serves 4-6

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cans garbanzo beans, rinsed, drained (3 cups cooked)
- 3 Tbsp garbanzo bean liquid
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 2 tsp smoked paprika
- 1 tsp ground coriander
- 1/4 tsp ground dried chipotle or chili flakes
- 2 Tbsp avocado or olive oil
- 1 tsp lime zest
- 1 Tbsp lime juice
- 1/4 cup chopped cilantro
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced green onions
- 1/3 cup oat flour (you can purchase oat flour or pulse rolled oats in a food processor or blender)



DIRECTIONS

STEP 1

Open 2 cans of chickpeas. Reserve 3 Tbsp. of the bean liquid (otherwise known as **aquafaba**). You can discard the rest.

STEP 4

Let the chickpea sit for 10 minutes or up to a day in advance so that the oat flour absorbs any of the extra liquid.

STEP 2

Pulse the garbanzo beans in a food processor or mash with a fork.

STEP 5

Using clean, damp hands, form into 24 (each 3/4 inch high by 1 inch) wide shapes.

STEP 3

Add the **aquafaba**, salt, cumin, smoked paprika, coriander, chipotle, 1 Tbsp. oil, lime juice, and lime zest and combine until incorporated. Add the cilantro, green onions, and oat flour.

STEP 6

Add the remaining Tbsp. of oil to the air fryer.

NO-BAKE CHOCOLATE PEANUT BUTTER TRUFFLES

📏 Easy

🕒 30 Minutes

👤 30 Pieces

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup oats
- 5 pitted Medjool dates
- 1/2 cup peanut butter
- 2 Tbsp dark chocolate chips
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 2 Tbsp maple syrup

FOR THE DIPPING SAUCE:

1 ½ oz of baking semi-sweet chocolate
(56% cacao)

1/2 tsp cinnamon





DIRECTIONS

STEP 1

Mix all ingredients in a food processor over 2-3 minutes until it is a paste.

STEP 2

Roll into 1 tsp size balls.

STEP 3

Melt the baking chocolate with cinnamon in a glass bowl over a boiling pot of water or microwave it. The bottom of the glass bowl should not reach the water.

STEP 4

When fully melted, use a spoon to dip the truffles in the dipping sauce.

STEP 5

Refrigerate them for 15 minutes while the chocolate hardens.

STEP 6

Sprinkle with salt. Enjoy!



GREEK TOMATO SALAD

||| Easy ⌚ 10 Minutes 👤 Serves 6

Traditional Greek salad does not contain lettuce. Instead, it is a celebration of beautifully ripe tomatoes, bell peppers, feta cheese, olives, and cucumbers. The dressing comes together in no time and is flavored with garlic and oregano. Enjoy this salad as one of your summer staples.

Greek Tomato Salad

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE DRESSING:

- 2 cloves garlic, peeled and minced or grated, or 2 tsp minced garlic
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1/2 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1/4 cup red wine vinegar
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup olive oil

FOR THE SALAD:

- 2 pints cherry tomatoes, cut in half
- 1 medium bell pepper, cut into 1 ½ inch x 1/4 inch strips
- 1/2 medium red onion, cut into 1 ½ inch x 1/8 inch strips
- 3 Persian cucumbers, cut into halves lengthwise and then cut into 1/4 inch half circles
- 1/2 cup pitted Kalamata olives, cut into halves or quarters lengthwise
- 1/2 lb feta cheese, cut into 1/2 inch cubes (not crumbled)

DIRECTIONS

STEP 1

In a large bowl, whisk together the ingredients for the dressing.

STEP 2

Add the cherry tomatoes, bell pepper, red onion, cucumbers, Kalamata olives, and feta cheese. Lightly toss together and serve immediately.

OPTIONAL SUBSTITUTIONS

Substitute or add in sliced zucchini or summer squash. Blue cheese can be swapped for the feta. Add garbanzo beans or leftover roasted chicken for extra protein. Also optional to add mint leaves, sliced green onions, sunflower seeds, and/or marinated artichoke hearts.

CLASSIC ROASTED VEGETABLES

 *Easy*  *5 Min Prep + 35 Min Cook*  *Serves 4*

INGREDIENTS

- 6 cups of dry vegetables, such as: Brussels sprouts (cut in half lengthwise), broccoli florets, carrots (sliced into 1/2 inch pieces) or purple cabbage (cut into chunks)
- 2-3 Tbsp olive oil
- 1/2 tsp salt plus more if desired

OPTIONAL

Top the roasted vegetables with pesto or tahini sauce. Sprinkle on a little “Everything but the Bagel” seasoning.

DIRECTIONS

STEP 1

Preheat the oven to 425° F.

STEP 2

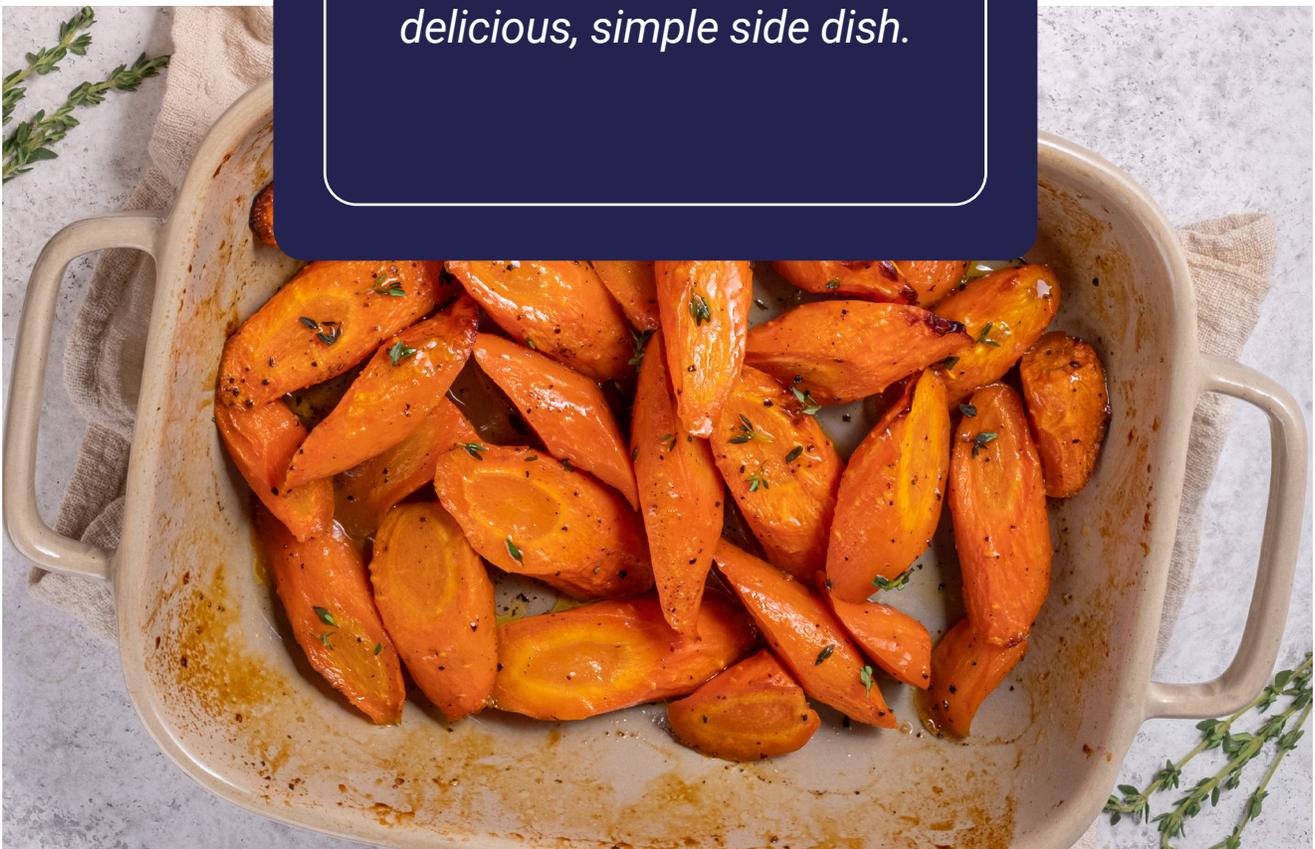
On a lined baking sheet, toss the vegetables with olive oil and salt.

STEP 2

Place the baking sheet into the oven and roast the vegetables for 25-35 minutes, or until parts of the vegetables are browned. Open the oven door for 10 seconds after 10-15 minutes of cooking in order to let out any excess steam. Doing this will make the vegetables crispier.



Vegetable nay-sayers will fall in love with roasted vegetables. Tossed with a little olive oil and salt, the high heat from the oven caramelizes the vegetables' natural sugars, creating a delicious, simple side dish.





SESAME MISO ORANGE VINAIGRETTE

 *Easy*  *5 Minutes*  *Serves 4*

Most salad dressings are a combination of 3 parts oil to 1-2 parts acid (such as a vinegar), but this one adds tahini (sesame butter) and miso (fermented soybean paste) to the traditional oil/acid combination to take homemade salad dressing to the next level.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tsp orange zest
- Juice of 1 orange (about 1/4 cup)
- 2 Tbsp white or yellow miso paste
- 1 Tbsp real maple syrup
- 2 Tbsp tahini paste
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp toasted sesame oil
- 1 Tbsp unseasoned rice wine vinegar
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp black pepper
- 1 clove garlic, peeled and grated (or 1 tsp chopped garlic)

DIRECTIONS

STEP 1

In a medium bowl, whisk together all the ingredients. If necessary, thin the dressing with additional orange juice.

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Enjoy!

From cooking classes that teach you how to prepare nourishing meals for your gut health, to educational classes on holistic medicine that explore natural approaches to wellness, California Schools VEBA (VEBA) is committed to equipping you with the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about your diet and eating habits.

Visit the Cooking & Nutrition hub to explore VEBA Resource Center (VRC) classes, articles, and additional benefits to help in your journey toward a healthier gut!



VISIT THE COOKING & NUTRITION
HUB FOR MORE RESOURCES.