

# Minimal Prep Convenience Foods for Vegetarians

*by Pamela Fay*

There is nothing like a freshly prepared vegetarian meal from scratch. But, as a vegetarian, it can be difficult to know what to eat when you are in a hurry. Perhaps you have a demanding schedule or you are on the road traveling. Or, maybe you just don't feel like spending the 30 minutes required to whip up a vegetarian stir-fry. Fortunately, there are many quick and healthy vegetarian options from which to choose. Once you have identified your favorite vegetarian convenience foods and where to find them, you'll never have to face the "what's for dinner" dilemma again.

## **Frozen**

Several manufacturers offer tasty vegetarian convenience foods. Morningstar makes everything from Mushroom Lover's Burgers to Three Bean Chili to Chik'n Nuggets, all from soy and vegetable based ingredients. Their Hickory BBQ Riblets are vegan, as well. If you prefer organic foods, Amy's Kitchen offers enchiladas, tamales, Indian fare and veggie loaf whole meals. Amy's also carries a selection of light meals including Spinach Lasagna and Soft Taco Fiesta. And, don't forget the mainstream manufacturers like Healthy Choice, Lean Cuisine and Stouffers. You can always enhance the flavor of your frozen convenience meal with dried or fresh herbs and freshly chopped tomato, garlic or onion. Always check the nutritional label to ensure that you are not consuming too much sodium.

## **Ready-to-eat and Heat-and-eat**

Visit any good sized supermarket to find vegetarian ready-to-eat options. Head straight to the deli for a selection of green, pasta or bean salads, as well as burritos, veggie platters, hard-boiled eggs and fresh guacamole,. (Be aware that some prepared guacamole contains gelatin. Look for guacamole that is prepared on-site.) Some delis offer vegetarian croquettes, burgers, or spinach pies. Who says a meal has to be elaborate? Combine a couple of fruits or vegetables for a fast, convenient mini-meal. For example, avocados and tomatoes are luscious together. Want to get fancy? Throw some chopped deli olives on top. Or buy a banana and an orange. Blend them with ice for a fast, delicious meal-in-a-glass.

## **Fast Foods**

When fast food is your only choice, you do not always have to buy a boring salad. But, choose with care. Beware of fries that are cooked in the same oil used for meat or contain beef flavoring. For example, while Burger King's fries are okay, McDonald's are not. Vegetarian burgers, on offer at some fast food restaurants, may be cooked in the same oil used to cook the meat. Subway has at least one vegetarian convenience food on the menu: the Veggie Delight sub. Some Subways may also offer a vegetarian patty. The Italian dressing, cookies and many of the chips are vegetarian, as well. Taco Bell has a wide selection of vegetarian dishes that can be made vegan by omitting the cheese and sour cream. The corn and wheat tortillas are vegan; however, the soft burrito tortilla contains non-fat dry milk. Their cheeses are vegetarian and do not contain animal-sourced rennet. Be sure to ask about lard because different locations may have different practices.

### **Convenience Stores**

Convenience stores are convenient for nearly everyone. You can even find vegetarian selections there. Typically, convenience stores carry hard-boiled eggs, nuts, cheese, or even a small selection of fruits and vegetables, such as bananas, apples, avocados, and tomatoes. Visit the frozen food case for burritos and, perhaps, a vegetarian pasta dish, such as Lean Cuisine's Vegetable Eggroll. The peanut butter and jelly sandwich in the deli case may not be a good choice; the inexpensive additive-laden ingredients used to produce a convenience store sandwich may include gelatin in the jelly. Buy a jar of peanut butter and a whole banana and make your own.

### **References**

Spiritual Guides; Burger King Vegetarian & Vegan Options at Fast Food Restaurants  
<http://www.vegetarian-restaurants.net/OtherInfo/Burger-King.htm>

Spiritual Guides; Taco Bell Vegetarian & Vegan Options at Fast Food Restaurants  
<http://www.vegetarian-restaurants.net/OtherInfo/Taco-Bell.htm>

### **Resources**

Vegetarian Restaurants; <http://www.vegetarian-restaurants.net>

Morningstar Farms; <http://www.morningstarfarms.com>

Amy's Kitchen; <http://www.amys.com/products>