

## Simple Yet Flavorful Weeknight Vegetarian Meal

What is the one thing that most dietitians and health experts agree on as far as what is missing in our diet? Fruits and vegetables! The trouble is, they seem to lack in providing suggestions for HOW to actually increase your daily intake. There are so many beneficial vitamins, minerals, and phyto-chemicals that we need on a daily basis from fruits and vegetables. Additionally, fruits and vegetables have fiber and help to keep us satisfied and full after eating a meal. Try some of the ideas below and see how they work for yourself and your family.

Ways to incorporate more vegetables into your meals and snacks

- **Start your shopping in the produce section of the grocery store** – studies have shown that this increases the likelihood that you will purchase more of these foods.
- **Ensure your shopping cart is at least 25% fruits or vegetables** and work up to a goal of 50% so that your house is well stocked and you have these foods surrounding you when making choices at home.
- **Shop according to color** – hunt for new fruits or vegetables according to the colors that you are missing in your basket or ones you struggle with eating on a regular basis. (white, gold, orange, red, yellow, green, dark purple, blue, etc.)
- **Buy into a community supported agriculture (CSA) basket** as we move into spring and more fruits and vegetables are grown locally.
- **Check out local farms or farmers markets** and make it into a fun afternoon outing with your family.
- **Purchase a new-to-you fruit or vegetable each week** and find a fun way to integrate it into your meals by looking up a new recipe online.
- **Set a goal to add veggies to your breakfast** at least once this coming week. How did it go? What recipe did you like? Reassess and perhaps set another goal to add vegetables to your breakfast twice the following week.
- **Have at least one snack each day made of veggies or a whole piece of fruit.** Swap out the chips/crackers/cookies for fruits or veg and take note of how you feel later in the day. Maybe you are less groggy or irritable?
- **Add different textures and colors to your salads** to make them more interesting. Try incorporating nuts, seeds, roasted veggies or adding a small quantity of strongly flavored cheese such as pecorino, blue or Parmesan to add flavor.
- **Always keep frozen fruits and vegetables on hand** – add these to smoothies, soups and stews and enjoy all of the vitamins and minerals they have to offer.
- **Dress up your frozen entrees such as pizza with lots of veggies** or have a whole piece of fruit on the side for a little something sweet and added fiber.