



# THE POWER OF PLANTS:

## Adventures in Plant-Based Nutrition



By Emma Levez Larocque, RHN

February is a month for celebrating love, and as such it's a great month to celebrate veganism! After all, what defines the vegan lifestyle better than love? Every time I make a vegan meal for the people in my life – or even for complete strangers – it reminds me how connected this food is to genuine gratitude, compassion and caring, and I can't let Valentine's Day pass by without talking a little about that.

A large, vibrant border of fresh vegetables and fruits surrounds the central text. The border includes items like corn, tomatoes, bell peppers, onions, mushrooms, asparagus, and watermelon.

Sharing The Love

- With A

**VEGAN  
DIET**

# The Way to Someone's Heart...



**I**t has been said that the way to a loved one's heart is through their stomach, but many people don't realize how LITERALLY true that is. When you make someone you love a healthy delicious meal, you are not only nurturing their (figurative) heart and soul by providing something delightful to the senses, you are also providing true nourishment for a healthy body and mind. What better gift can you give than the promotion of good health? In Western culture we too often associate sugar- or fat-laden "treats" with kindness and special occasions, but it's time to change that. Yummy foods do not have to be full of unhealthy ingredients (just check out the super easy recipe below for my homemade Vegan Love Ginger-Apricot Chocolate Bark). When we treat those we love, tasty and healthy can be – and should be – synonymous!

## Time to Circulate

A healthy plant-based way of eating should truly be crowned the diet of lovers. Why? Well, of course because whole plant foods are rich in fibre and a plethora of other nutrients that promote good circulation (among other benefits). So it not only gives you a strong heart that can hold up to all those heart-pounding moments when your love object enters the room and looks your way, but it'll keep you going (especially if you are of the male gender) when things get hot and steamy. I think you get my drift...eat plants.

## Vitamin L

What is it about Grandma's or Dad's cooking that

brings back so many warm memories? Those smells you remember when you came as a kid into the kitchen from a cold day out in the snow. One whiff of something familiar can take you right back. What is it about homemade food that tastes so darn good? Besides all the natural foods, I believe it has a lot to do with a vitamin we don't talk much about...vitamin L. I don't have children, but I love cooking for my many nieces and nephews, and they all know my cookies (no matter what kind they are) as Vegan Love cookies – because whatever the other ingredients, the most important ingredient is love. At first it was a joke, but when I was studying to become a Plant-Based Chef, presence and vibrations in the kitchen were one thing we talked about. And I began to notice that the calmer, more collected and zen I felt, the more attention and *love* I put into my food, the better my food turned out. For me at least stress is not the producer of a good meal – it's almost as if you can taste it in the food. And so now, I'm a little more serious when I provide Vegan Love meals to my family. I prepare them and serve them with reverence, and I feel that that adds another healing component to the delicious, healthy meals I create. So how about adding a little more Vitamin L to your diet?

Love yourself, love others, love non-human animals, love the planet. That's what veganism is all about.

Enjoy February – a great month to celebrate all the awesomeness that surrounds the vegan lifestyle!

# Vegan Love Ginger-Apricot Chocolate Bark

## Ingredients:

- ¾ c cacao butter, melted
- ¾ c cacao powder
- 3 tbsp pure maple syrup
- 2-3 drops ginger essential oil (food grade)
- 1-2 tbsp dried apricot or dried ginger, chopped
- 1 tbsp cacao nibs

## Directions:

- 1) Prepare a cooking sheet by covering it with a piece of parchment paper and set aside.
- 2) Cut the cacao butter into small pieces and melt it in a double boiler (this only takes couple of minutes).
- 3) Immediately add the cacao powder, maple syrup and essential oil and mix well. Working fairly quickly, spread the mixture into a 1/3-inch layer on the prepared pan. Now sprinkle with the dried apricot/ginger, cacao nibs and/or any other toppings you desire.
- 4) Place in the freezer for 10-15 minutes, until the chocolate has hardened. Remove from the parchment and break into bite-sized pieces.
- 5) Devour, or place into a air-tight container and store in the fridge.

## Notes:

- Cacao butter – made from the cacao bean, this butter helps to harden the chocolate once it is set. It's rich and delicious, and is often used as the base of raw vegan chocolate desserts/ confections. It's good to try to avoid overheating it (that's why you grate it or cut it into small pieces before melting). You can find it at many health food stores, or online.
- Cacao powder is not the same thing as cocoa powder – it is less processed and quite a different tasting product, and it has health benefits that cocoa does not (it has more antioxidants and minerals because these are not lost in the processing); you can usually find it at health food stores.



- Make sure you are using pure maple syrup, not syrup that has a lot of additives. Not only will it taste better, but it is better for you too.
- Go easy on the essential oils! One drop goes a long way, so if you're new to using them, first, ensure the one you are using is food grade (most of them are not food grade, so the food grade ones say that you can use them in cooking) and second, err on the side of too little rather than too much – if you drop too much in, it can ruin a dish beyond repair.



Emma Levez Larocque is a Registered Holistic Nutritionist and a Certified Plant-Based Chef. She has been vegan for 7 years, and veg for more than 20. She is passionate about sharing the benefits of plant-based eating and living with others, and working to make the planet a kinder, more compassionate place for all who share it.

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