Completing Your Protein Goal as a Vegetarian

Soya, low-fat paneer, tofu, Greek yogurt and smart combos

Hitting 100 g or more of protein a day on a vegetarian diet is very doable. The trick is to build each meal around a **protein anchor**: **soya chunks, low-fat paneer, tofu or Greek yogurt**, then back them up with dals, pulses, seeds and smart pairings. This guide shows how to include each one, how they help with fat loss and muscle building, and which alternatives and combos fill the gaps. All values are approximate and vary by brand.

1. Protein Basics for Vegetarians

Targets and quality

Why this matters: Knowing your target and how plant protein works makes planning much easier.

TOPIC	WHAT TO KNOW	NOTE
Daily target	About 1.6 to 2.2 g of protein per kg bodyweight for muscle gain or fat loss while training. For a 70 kg person that is roughly 110 to 155 g.	Vegetarians can aim for the middle to higher end of the range.
Per meal	About 25 to 40 g per meal across 3 to 4 meals.	Spreading it out supports muscle repair better than one huge meal.
Plant vs animal protein	Plant proteins can build muscle just as well when total protein is enough and you lift weights.	Studies show similar results, though plants may need slightly larger amounts.
Leucine and amino acids	Leucine is the amino acid that switches on muscle building. Soya, dairy and whey are good sources.	Mixing sources covers all essential amino acids.
Complete protein	Soya and dairy are complete. Cereals and pulses each lack something, but they complement each other.	Dal with rice or roti is a classic complete pair.
Common gaps	Vegetarians should watch vitamin B12, iron, zinc and omega-3.	Dairy helps with B12. Consider tests and advice from your doctor.

2. Protein Sources at a Glance

Approximate values

Why this matters: These are the anchors and backups, with protein and calories for comparison.

FOOD	APPROX. PROTEIN	APPROX. KCAL	NOTE
Soya chunks (dry)	About 50 g per 100 g dry	About 330 to 345	Soak before use. 30 g dry is about 15 g protein.
Low-fat paneer	About 18 to 20 g per 100 g (varies by brand)	About 150 to 200	Check the label, as brands differ a lot.
Tofu (firm)	About 12 to 15 g per 100 g	About 120 to 145	Soft tofu has less, about 7 to 8 g.
Greek yogurt (plain, low fat)	About 8 to 10 g per 100 g (Indian brands)	About 60 to 80	Thick curd, hung curd or high-protein curd work too.
Moong dal (cooked)	About 7 to 8 g per 100 g	About 105	Good everyday base.

FOOD	APPROX. PROTEIN	APPROX. KCAL	NOTE
Chickpeas or rajma (cooked)	About 8 to 9 g per 100 g	About 130 to 140	Carbs and fibre come with it.
Peanuts	About 25 g per 100 g	About 570	Protein-rich but very calorie dense.
Milk (toned)	About 3.2 g per 100 ml	About 58	A glass is about 8 g protein.
Whey protein (1 scoop)	About 20 to 25 g	About 110 to 130	Vegetarian, as it is a dairy product. Pea or soy isolates are options too.

3. Soya Chunks

Often the cheapest protein

Why this works: Soya is the most protein-dense vegetarian food and is very low in fat.

WAY TO USE IT	HOW	BENEFIT OR NOTE
Soya chunk curry or masala	Soak in hot water, squeeze out water, then cook with onion-tomato masala.	40 g dry gives about 20 g protein for very few calories.
Soya keema or bhurji	Crumble soaked chunks, cook with spices and vegetables.	Filling, and works with roti or in a wrap.
Soya pulao or biryani	Add chunks to rice with vegetables.	Raises the protein of a rice meal.
Soya stir fry or roast	Pan-roast soaked chunks with pepper and spices.	A high-protein snack.
Soya flour in roti dough	Mix 1 to 2 tablespoons per roti dough portion.	A simple way to raise roti protein.
Soya milk	Unsweetened versions.	A dairy-free option with about 3 g protein per 100 ml.
Why it helps	Complete plant protein, very low in fat, and filling.	Great for fat loss and muscle gain on a budget.
Watch out	Start with 25 to 40 g dry per day. Boil and discard the water to reduce gas.	Evidence shows moderate soya is fine for most people. People with thyroid conditions should check with their doctor.

4. Low-Fat Paneer

Slow-digesting and satisfying

Why this works: Paneer is easy to cook and keeps you full, but the type and the cooking method decide the calories.

WAY TO USE IT	HOW	BENEFIT OR NOTE
Grilled paneer tikka	Marinate in hung curd and spices, then grill or air fry.	About 100 g gives roughly 18 to 20 g protein.
Paneer bhurji with vegetables	Scramble with onion, tomato, capsicum and little oil.	Quick breakfast or dinner.
Paneer wrap or roll	Stuff roti with paneer and vegetables.	Portable protein meal.
Paneer in salad or bowl	Cubes with cucumber, chana and lemon.	Easy lunch.
Paneer curry with less cream	Use tomato or spinach gravy, not cream or butter.	Keeps calories under control.
Why it helps	Casein digests slowly, so it keeps you full, and it gives complete protein.	Good for evening or night meals.

WAY TO USE IT	HOW	BENEFIT OR NOTE
Watch out	Check labels, since 'low fat' varies, and avoid frying or heavy butter gravies.	A rich paneer dish can have as many calories as a biryani.

5. Tofu

Light and versatile

Why this works: Tofu absorbs flavours and is lower in calories than paneer, which suits fat-loss phases.

WAY TO USE IT	HOW	BENEFIT OR NOTE
Tofu bhurji	Crumble firm tofu and cook like egg bhurji with onion, turmeric and spices.	About 150 g gives roughly 20 g protein.
Pan-seared or grilled tofu	Press out water, then sear with pepper, garlic and soy sauce.	Crisp outside, soft inside.
Tofu stir fry	Add to vegetables and a little oil.	Absorbs the flavours of the dish.
Tofu curry or masala	Cook cubes in a tomato gravy like paneer.	A lighter swap for paneer.
Tofu in smoothies or dips	Silken tofu blends smoothly.	Raises protein without taste.
Why it helps	Low in calories and gives complete protein, plus some calcium and iron depending on type.	Great for fat loss meals.
Watch out	Store cold and cook well, and pick plain tofu without added sugar or sauces.	Taste needs seasoning, since it is mild.

6. Greek Yogurt

Protein plus probiotics

Why this works: Thick yogurt turns breakfast, snacks and sides into protein meals.

WAY TO USE IT	HOW	BENEFIT OR NOTE
Bowl with fruit and seeds	200 g plain yogurt with berries or banana and a few nuts.	About 16 to 20 g protein, a good breakfast.
High-protein raita	Mix with cucumber, onion and jeera.	A side that adds protein to any meal.
Swap for cream or mayonnaise	Use in dips, sandwiches and dressings.	Cuts calories and adds protein.
Marinade for tikka	Use hung curd or Greek yogurt to marinate paneer or tofu.	Tenderises and adds protein.
Smoothie or lassi	Blend with fruit, ice and a pinch of cardamom, with no sugar.	A post-workout option.
Overnight oats	Mix oats, yogurt, chia and milk.	A prepared-ahead breakfast.
Why it helps	Rich in protein and calcium, and the probiotics may help digestion.	Satisfying and low in calories.
Watch out	Pick plain, unsweetened versions, since flavoured ones can have 12 to 20 g sugar per cup.	Check the protein on the label, as brands vary.

7. Other Vegetarian Protein Sources

Alternatives to rotate

Why this matters: Variety covers more nutrients and keeps meals interesting.

FOOD	APPROX. PROTEIN	NOTE
Dals and lentils (moong, masoor, toor)	About 7 to 9 g per 100 g cooked	Eat daily. Pair with rice or roti.
Chana, rajma and chole	About 8 to 9 g per 100 g cooked	High in fibre. Add slowly if you get gas.
Sprouts (moong or mixed)	About 3 to 4 g per 100 g raw, more when cooked or dry	Better steamed or lightly cooked.
Besan chilla	About 6 g per chilla	Add paneer or vegetables.
Sattu	About 20 g per 100 g	Drink or use in rotis, a classic cheap protein.
Edamame	About 11 g per 100 g	A tasty snack.
Tempeh	About 18 to 20 g per 100 g	Fermented soya, with a nutty taste. Not always easy to find.
Peanut butter	About 4 g per tablespoon	Calorie dense, so measure it.
Pumpkin, chia, hemp and flax seeds	About 5 to 9 g per 30 g	Small amounts add up, along with minerals.
Quinoa, ragi and oats	About 4 to 14 g per 100 g depending on type	Better than refined grains, though not high protein alone.
Milk, curd and buttermilk	About 3 to 4 g per 100 ml	Easy daily protein.
Eggs, if you eat them	About 6 g per egg	Optional, for eggetarians.

8. Combos That Complete or Boost Protein

Smart pairings

Why this works: Pairing foods improves amino acid balance and boosts the benefits.

COMBO	HOW	WHY IT WORKS
Dal + rice or roti	Cereal and pulse together.	Covers all essential amino acids and gives about 10 to 15 g per plate.
Soya chunks + roti or millet	Soya keema in rotis.	High protein with slow carbs.
Chana or rajma + curd	Pulse plus dairy.	Adds quality protein and probiotics.
Paneer or tofu + vegetables	Add leafy greens and peppers.	More fibre and nutrients for few calories.
Greek yogurt + oats + seeds	Breakfast bowl.	Combines dairy, grain and seed protein.
Sattu + water or buttermilk	With lemon and jeera.	A cheap, cooling protein drink.
Peanuts + curd or chikki with jaggery in small amounts	Snack.	Adds protein, but watch calories.
Milk + whey or soya + oats shake	After workouts.	Quick 25 to 35 g protein.
Add vitamin C with iron foods	Lemon with dal, spinach or chana.	Improves iron absorption.

COMBO	HOW	WHY IT WORKS
Protein before carbs	Start the meal with dal, paneer or sprouts.	Helps with fullness and blood sugar.

9. A Sample Day of About 110 g Protein

Putting it together

Keep in mind: This is an example only. Adjust portions to your weight and calorie needs.

MEAL	WHAT TO EAT	APPROX. PROTEIN
Breakfast	200 g Greek yogurt + 30 g oats + seeds and fruit	About 26 g
Lunch	40 g dry soya chunks curry + 1 cup dal + roti or rice + vegetables	About 36 g
Snack	30 g roasted chana + buttermilk, or 100 g paneer tikka	About 12 to 24 g
Dinner	150 g tofu bhurji + 2 rotis + 100 g curd + salad	About 31 g
Total	The day adds up to roughly 105 to 117 g.	Add a whey or milk shake to reach 130 g or more.

10. Tips to Stay on Track

Make it a habit

Why this matters: Small systems make a protein target easy to hit.

TIP	WHAT TO DO	WHY
Plan protein first	Pick the protein for each meal, then add carbs and vegetables.	Easier than counting at the end.
Track a few days	Use a food app or label for 3 to 7 days.	Most people overestimate their protein.
Use convenience foods	Keep soya chunks, tofu, hung curd and roasted chana ready.	Less temptation to skip.
Watch hidden calories	Ghee, cream, fried paneer, nuts and peanut butter add fast.	Protein goals shouldn't come with surplus calories during fat loss.
Rotate sources	Don't rely on only soya or only paneer.	Better variety of nutrients.
Consider a supplement	Whey, or pea or soy protein if food alone isn't enough.	A convenience, not a must.
Keep an eye on B12, iron and zinc	Dairy, fortified foods and supplements as advised.	A blood test can show gaps.
Pair with lifting	Resistance training 3 to 4 days a week.	Protein only builds muscle when muscle is trained.

11. When to Check With a Doctor

Be careful if

Safety first: A high-protein diet suits most healthy adults, but a few situations need individual advice.

SITUATION	WHAT TO KNOW	ACTION
Kidney disease or reduced kidney function	High protein intake needs individual advice.	Check with your doctor first.
Thyroid condition or on thyroid medicine	Large soya amounts may matter.	Ask your doctor about soya and timing.
Soya, milk or nut allergy or lactose intolerance	Choose suitable alternatives.	Avoid the trigger and get advice.
Persistent gas, bloating or stomach pain	Often from raw sprouts, beans or too much too fast.	Build up gradually and see a doctor if it persists.

Note: This is general nutrition information written from general knowledge, not medical advice, and I did not look up food databases for it. Protein and calorie values are approximate and vary by brand and preparation, so check labels. People with kidney, thyroid or other medical conditions should get individual advice from a doctor or dietitian.