

The Power of Combining Plant Proteins

When I came back from a semester studying in England, newly vegetarian, I was fortunate to take a nutrition class and learned lots of good stuff, including how to properly nourish my body.

One thing I learned from the class that always stayed with me is that our bodies need nine essential amino acids to grow and, as we are unable to produce them, we must take in these amino acids through food. As animal proteins have all nine, they are called “complete proteins.” Proteins that come from plant have different amino acids, and very few of them contain all the essential ones, so plant proteins are considered “incomplete” proteins.

It was a huge relief to subsequently hear the professor explain how we can combine different plant proteins to get all the essential amino acids necessary for our bodies to grow healthfully.

I was also glad to learn you don't even have to eat the combinations of foods at the same meal, you can spread them throughout your day. Working together is a beautiful thing! Take it from grains and legumes... which are known as “complementary proteins” as when combined, they can provide all of the essential amino acids your body needs.

Legumes are foods such as lentils, dry beans, soy beans, chickpeas serve as a delicious base to many soups, while nuts and seeds are the crunchy toppings for salads or wholesome goodness in an energy bar.

Grains are getting a bad rap these days because of the gluten

thing, but there are still so many varieties we don't always think of, like buckwheat, quinoa, oats, polenta, millet, and of course rice. All of those listed are gluten free!

Combining complementary proteins comes naturally to us. Look at rice and beans, fried rice with corn and peas, peanut butter sandwich, barley and lentil soup. Once you start loving these foods, the possibilities are seriously endless.

- [Crunchy Thai Peanut and Quinoa Salad](#)
- [Edamole and Baked Chips](#) (Edamole is like quacamole, but made from Edamame beans)
- [Black Bean Salsa with Blue Chips](#)
- [Green Pea Buckwheat Risotto](#)

Without even realizing I was mixing incomplete proteins, I've been eating nuts for breakfast for years. The combination varies, but generally includes at least 5 of the following: soybeans, dried edamame, almonds, wasabi peas, sunflower seeds, watermelon seeds, sesame sticks, and dried cranberries.

I mix these all up and put in glass jars in the cupboard. I just pour out a half cup in a small bowl to eat with my mid-morning glass of water. When I'm hungry between meals, or when I come back from a run, I often find myself reaching for the mixed treasure. If you are looking for another way to combine your proteins, I highly recommend mixed seeds and nuts.

For you visual learners, here is a great resource I want to share. It is a [chart that shows you which amino acids specific legumes and grains have](#) so you can mix and match to get your complete set of essential amino acids. Hopefully it'll spark some additional ideas of what you can make to build your complete set of amino acids for today. Comment below on what you'll combine next!

I love the book *Veggie Protein Power* by HurryTheFoodUp. The recipe for Chile 'Con' Carne is a great example of combining plant proteins! [The \\$4.95 ebook is totally worth it!](#)



Veggie Protein
Power book by
HurryTheFoodUp
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