

# Vegan cooking made easy

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**T**he world is now high on the vegan lifestyle, which excludes meat, fish and poultry. In fact for some, it's become an easy option as finding ingredients to substitute their regular food items is no longer a herculean task anymore.

## EASY ACCESS TO VEGAN SPECIFIC PRODUCTS

Besides vegan products being available for making vegan dishes, there are food suppliers that cater to this lot. For instance, caterers and bakers who specialise only in vegan food. Ritika Ramesh is one such person, who bakes at home. Having seen the rise of the vegan culture, she says, "After seeing the cruelty involved in the meat and dairy industry, I started baking vegan stuff. Now I only use vegan product as there are dedicated buyers for it. Baking pure vegan cakes and savouries is now easy, since ingredients such as soy based cream, vegan milk, vegan cheese spread etc., are easily available."

## VEGAN GROUPS AND ACTIVITIES

Apart from individuals, there are certain help groups that are spreading the message of veganism. Reyna Rupani, who is attached to one such initiative, has been conducting vegan cooking classes for the last one year. She says that she gets a lot of queries from people wanting to go vegan in the past couple of years. "We do potlucks, film screenings, consultations, etc., for those interested in going vegan," she says, adding, "We go one step further by recommending the use of only homemade vegan products without any preservatives as we make all substitutes at home."

Many of these groups stress on being a healthy vegan with zero oil cooking, using only organic and whole products such as brown rice flour and whole moong dal for making idlis. "It is very easy to adapt to a vegan lifestyle. It also makes you calm and content as these small changes help you reconnect to nature," adds Rupani.

### Dairy replacement options

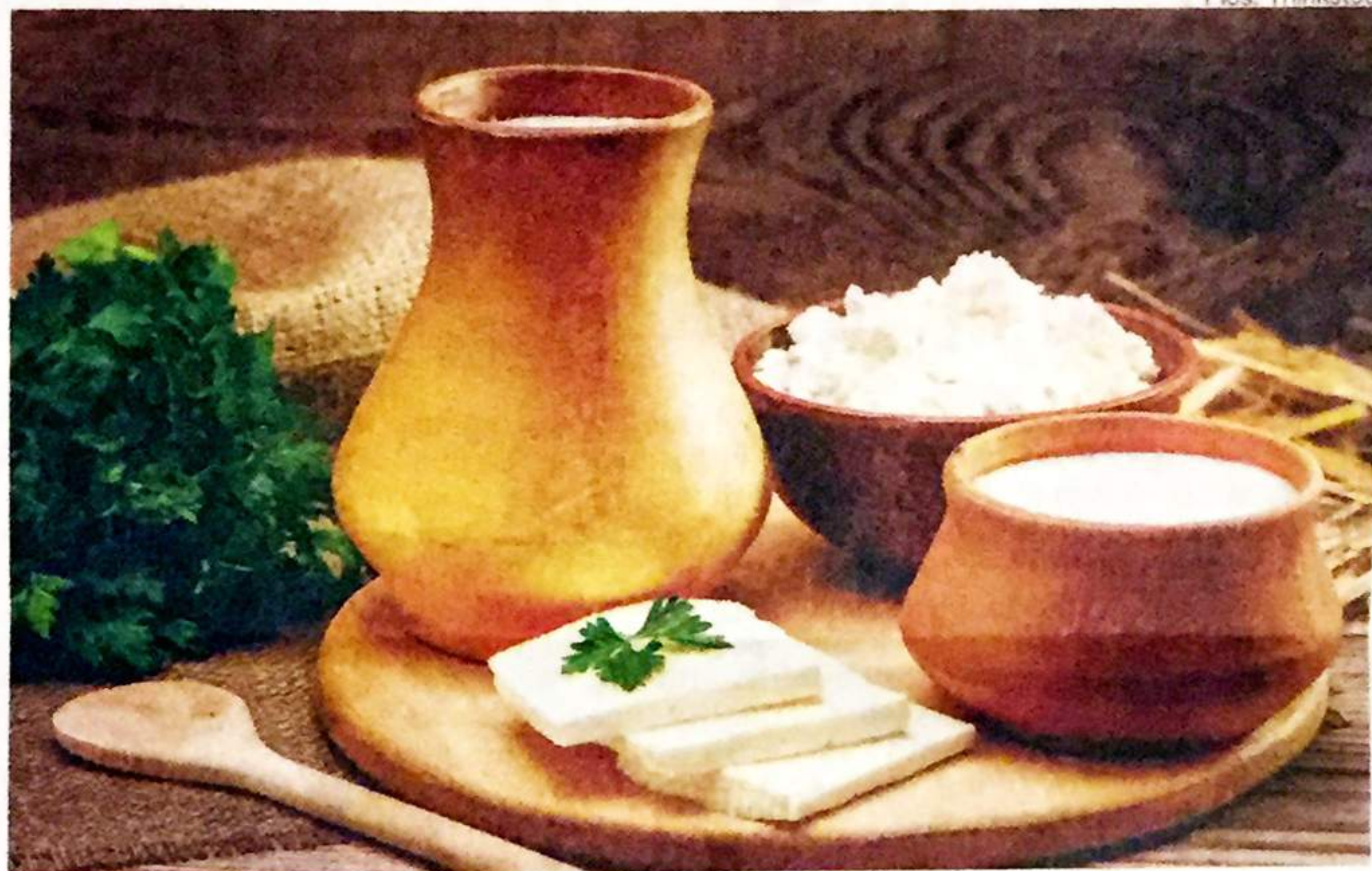
- Almond milk
- Soy milk
- Peanut milk
- Coconut milk
- Soy or peanut curd
- Cashew milk
- Savoury/ sweet cashew cream
- Cashew mayonnaise

### Oil/sugar replacements

- Almond butter
- Cashew butter
- Peanut butter
- Sesame butter (Tahini)
- Pecan
- Figs, date or raisin paste
- Homemade tomato ketchup

### Substitutes for thickening

- Thick coconut milk
- Brown rice flour
- Arrowroot for a creamier texture
- Mashed banana / potato
- Homemade applesauce
- Soft tofu blended with soy milk
- Cashew paste



## TOMATO KETCHUP

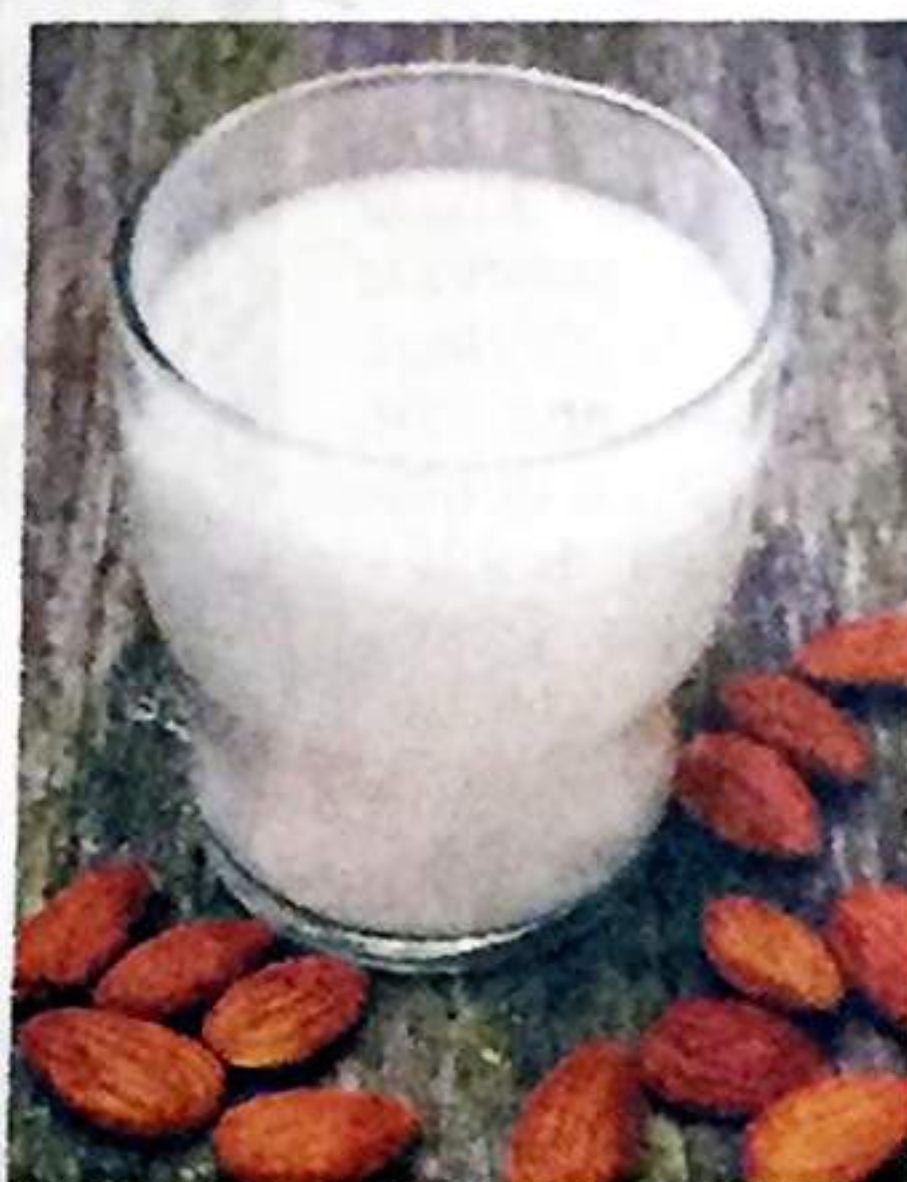
It is best to use this fresh. However, it can be stored for a maximum of one week in the fridge.

### Ingredients

4 tomatoes, 1 tbsp organic apple cider vinegar, 1 date, salt to taste, flavourings (optional) — garlic powder, red chilli flakes, black pepper

### Method

- Take a pan to roast the tomatoes. Stir and cook them well.
- When cool, add the rest of the ingredients and flavourings.
- Blend to a paste and use this as tomato ketchup.



## ALMOND MILK

This homemade almond milk can be stored in the fridge for upto 3 days. Use the almond pulp residue to thicken curries and the almond milk to make kheer, porridge and other desserts.

### Ingredients

1 cup almonds, soaked overnight, 1½ glasses water

### Method

- Grind the almonds in a blender using ½ a cup of water at first, till you get a very smooth paste.
- Adjust the thickness by adding enough water and blend into a smooth paste.
- Strain this mixture through a muslin cloth or a mesh bag to get smooth almond milk. Shake well before use.

## SOY MILK

Use this to make milk shakes and curds. It can also be stored in the fridge for a week.

### Ingredients

100 gms soy beans, washed and soaked overnight, 1 litre water

### Method

- Drain out the water from the soaked soy beans and while doing so peel off the skin too.
- Grind the soy beans with a little water first and then add the remaining water to adjust the consistency and blend till smooth.
- Strain the mixture through a muslin cloth or a mesh bag and get the soy milk.
- Pour it into a pan and stir well as you bring it to a boil on a medium heat.
- After the first boil, allow to simmer for 10 minutes on low heat so that it is thoroughly cooked.
- After it cools down to room temperature you can store it in the fridge.



## PEANUT CURD

It can be used as regular curd to make buttermilk, raitas, kadhi, etc. If you want to just use the peanut milk, remember to use it when it is fresh instead of storing.

### Ingredients

1 cup raw and shelled peanuts, soaked for five hours, 500 ml water, 1 tbsp vegan or regular curd starter

### Method

- Drain and rinse the peanuts. Blend with water to make a smooth paste.
- Sieve this milk through a muslin cloth or a mesh bag. Take the liquid in a pan and bring it to boil. Once it starts boiling reduce the heat and keep stirring to prevent it from burning. Simmer for 10 minutes and cook till it reaches a thick consistency.
- Allow to cool till lukewarm and mix in the curd starter. Stir once and leave it overnight. Once set, put it in the fridge.