

EAT, DRINK, AND BE HEALTHY

// BY RUTHANNE JOHNSON

AS AN OCCUPATIONAL therapist helping people recover from strokes, diabetes-related amputations, and heart disease, Tanya Sitton was all too familiar with the health impacts of a meat-centered diet. She was also a lifelong animal rescuer who for several years had “flirted with vegetarianism.” But it wasn’t until she developed symptoms of arthritis in her 30s that Sitton committed to a plant-based diet.

That was four years ago. Her symptoms quickly disappeared, but eating veg in the small Arkansas town where she lived wasn’t easy. Sitton looked to the Internet for recipes and tips. For personal support, she started a Meetup group that grew to more than 100 members. “The best advice I got was to continually try new things,” she says. “Because there is a world of delicious plant-based foods that you’ve probably never tasted ... [and] don’t yet know that you love.”

Now living in Olney, Md., Sitton publishes recipes and writes about food politics for *eatdrinkbetter.com*. She and her sister create monthly podcasts for their Progressive Kitch blog and set up a website to raise money for animals in crisis. Outside the cyber world,



Sitton tries to have an impact closer to home, whipping up dishes for her niece and nephew. “Kids have no control over their own food,” she says. “... It’s really important to show them how to eat healthy.”

After this recipe scored high marks with her young relatives, she posted it online, along with her No. 1 tip for feeding children: “Make it a nugget, and dip it in ketchup!”

KID-FRIENDLY CHICKENLESS NUGGETS

(YIELDS ABOUT 24 NUGGETS)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 16-oz. can** chickpeas, rinsed and drained (or substitute any white beans)
- 1 14-oz. can** whole new potatoes, rinsed and drained
- 1½ teaspoons** vital wheat gluten (optional, for firmer texture and ease of flipping)
- ⅞ cup** dried bread crumbs
- 1 teaspoon** dried parsley
- ¾ teaspoon** poultry seasoning
- ½ teaspoon** garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon** onion powder
- ¼ teaspoon** salt (or to taste)
- ¼ teaspoon** black pepper (or to taste)
- 4 tablespoons** olive oil, divided
- Dipping sauce:** barbecue sauce, ketchup, sweet mustard, etc. (optional)

DIRECTIONS

- 1.** Mash chickpeas (or white beans) with potatoes until well-smushed with no whole chunks in the mix. (After starting with a potato masher, you can use your hands.)
 - 2.** Sprinkle vital wheat gluten over mashed chickpea-potato mixture and combine well.
 - 3.** Add bread crumbs and seasonings, then mix well. Taste to adjust seasonings, adding more salt and pepper if needed.
 - 4.** Using a plate or cutting board, form mixture into 1½- to 2-inch patties, about ¼- to ½-inch thick. If mixture feels dry, add water or oil as needed, 1 tablespoon at a time, just until patties are easy to form and hold their shape.
 - 5.** In large frying pan, heat 2 tablespoons of oil over medium to medium-high heat. Fry half the nuggets about 8-10 minutes on each side until nicely browned. (Aim for only turning them once or twice.) When first batch is done, remove to paper-towel-lined plate. Add remaining 2 tablespoons of oil to pan and repeat with remaining nuggets.
 - 6.** Serve with dipping sauce. Yummy!
- Tip:** For “fast food” later, line a cookie sheet with parchment paper and freeze nuggets in a single layer for 1 to 2 hours. Transfer to an airtight freezer container.

Get a free weekly Meatless Monday text with a mobile-friendly recipe: Text TASTY to 30644.

➤ **FOR MORE RECIPES,** visit humansociety.org/recipes.