

# Looking for a Greener Way of Eating

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Air quality and climate change are both hot topics in the Kittitas community. Driving less, turning off lights and using less water may be among the few of the tips you have heard to reduce your carbon footprint, but did you know that you can also help the environment by changing the way you eat?

The WorldWatch Institute estimates that 51 percent of greenhouse gas emissions are caused by the farming of animals used for meat, eggs and dairy. In fact, adopting a more plant-based diet may be more effective in reducing climate change than switching out a standard car for a hybrid vehicle. Since converting to a strict vegan overnight may not be realistic, a popular trend is adopting a “flexitarian” lifestyle, where most, but not all, meals are vegetarian or vegan.

Want to give it a shot? Incorporating morevegan recipes into your weekly menu does not have to involve buying special ingredients. In this festively green-colored recipe, perfect for a St. Patrick’s Day party, black beans and brown rice provide protein and fiber to

make the meal more filling. An avocado contributes a nice green color while adding a creamy texture without the use of dairy.

## Dessert

What about dessert? Mix together five sliced frozen bananas, two avocados and one teaspoon of peppermint extract in a food processor for a vegan, naturally-colored mint ice cream. Add maple syrup or vanilla extract for some extra sweetness.

Whether you are a participant of meatless Mondays, a flexitarian, or a strict vegan, the food choices we make have a significant effect on our environment. While converting to a vegan lifestyle may not be the most appropriate solution for everyone, experimenting with one vegetarian or vegan dinner a week can be a small change that has a big impact on both personal and environmental health.

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## **Avocado Black Bean Rice Salad**

1 cup cooked brown rice  
1 can black beans  
1 roma tomato, diced  
1/4 cup chopped cilantro  
1 avocado, mashed  
1 Tablespoon lime juice  
1 teaspoon cumin  
1 teaspoon sriracha or hot sauce  
Salt and pepper to taste

### **Directions**

Combine brown rice, beans, tomato, and cilantro in a salad bowl. In another bowl, combine avocado, lime juice, cumin and hot sauce. Stir avocado mixture into rice mixture. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve immediately or store in airtight container in refrigerator. Serves 4.