

This is not your typical boring salad — it has tons of flavor, protein, veggies and fiber. (At Elizabeth's Table/Elizabeth Varga)



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Editor's Note: *In this series, Elizabeth Varga will explore how fasting from meat impacts our relationships with self, others, the rest of creation and God. Her reflections and recipes will be posted on the Wednesdays and Fridays of Lent 2022. To receive this series via email, sign up for EarthBeat Reflections.*

Throughout this Lenten series, we've explored food in different ways — the role it plays in our relationships, the benefits of fasting from it and the purpose of expressing gratitude for it.

Food is deeply integrated with love. It's easy to go about our days and forget this, but how we care for our bodies, how we feed the hungry, how we protect creation and how we honor God are all acts of love.

How can your food choices reflect love in the context of these actions?

Food that reflects self-love is food that nourishes us: soul, body and mind. The Eucharist is love itself that feeds our souls. Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds are foods that nourish our bodies — they provide vitamins, minerals and fiber that help us stay healthy. There is also room for food to nourish the mind. I prioritize a whole food plant-based diet, but I don’t focus on restriction. Restriction isn't love. Treats and sweets are foods of love, too.

Food that reflects love for others is food that nourishes and respects other people — everyone deserves to eat nutritious and fulfilling food in a safe environment. It's also food that is accessible. If you and I are consuming foods that are taking away the ability for other people to access food or live safely, that's not love.

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Food that reflects love of creation is food that works with the ecosystems of this planet, not against them. Plant-based foods have a lower impact on climate change than animal agriculture. Love of creation includes love of the animals created by God, too. Catholicism teaches that only humans are made in the image and likeness of God, yet we also know that animals can feel pain. Many animal products found at the grocery store come from animals who were treated poorly; they were kept in

unhealthy living conditions, given hormones to grow bigger and produce more meat and tortured in other ways. Food that loves creation should not include torture, maltreatment or death of God’s creatures or harm to their habitats and livelihoods.

God is love. And the food that reflects love is God. God nourishes us in the Eucharist and is the ultimate expression of food as love. Beyond that, we honor God by choosing foods that reflect love.

How will you choose foods that reflect love of self, others, creation and God even when Lent is over?

Recipe: Teriyaki mushroom tempeh salad

Teriyaki mushroom tempeh salad has a base of spinach and a mushroom-tempeh teriyaki topping. This is not your typical boring salad — it has tons of flavor, plus protein, veggies and fiber.



This is not your typical boring salad — it has tons of flavor, protein, veggies and fiber. (At Elizabeth's Table/Elizabeth Varga)

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup liquid aminos, soy sauce or tamari
- 1/3 cup water

- 2 tablespoons date syrup
- 2 teaspoons arrowroot powder or cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 8-ounce block tempeh, crumbled
- 8 ounces cremini or button mushrooms, sliced
- 1/2 large red onion, diced
- 8 cups spinach

Instructions

1. Make the teriyaki sauce by whisking the liquid aminos, water, date syrup, garlic powder, ginger and arrowroot powder.
2. In a non-stick pan, heat 1/4 cup of the of teriyaki sauce over medium heat. Add the tempeh, onion and mushrooms and cook until the onion is translucent and the mushrooms are soft (5–7 minutes). Add more sauce when the mixture starts to stick and reserve any remaining sauce to use as dressing.
3. To serve, place a bed of spinach on a plate or in a bowl and top with the teriyaki mixture. Drizzle on extra teriyaki sauce as dressing. Enjoy!

Find recipe notes, substitutions and other nutritional information on atelizabethstable.com.

This story appears in the **Recipes for an ecofriendly Lent** feature series. View the full series.