

vegan miam

we travel + eat

cooksimple™ meal kits (gluten-free + vegan-friendly)

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posted by RIKA on MAY 25TH, 2013 | 5 COMMENTS »

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If you are a family of 4-5, do not have the time or energy to cook, or on an inexpensive food budget, try cooksimple™ meal kits. It is a line of all-natural and gluten-free meal kits made out of simple and whole-food ingredients, including quinoa, whole grains, legumes, spices and herbs that are combined with your choice of protein, as well as pantry staples including tomatoes or olive oil to create easy globally-inspired dishes. They do not contain artificial additives or preservatives.

All of the meal kits are vegan on their own, but some call for ingredients that aren't vegan. However, those that do include meat can also be prepared with tofu or other vegan meat alternatives (Gardein, Beyond Meat, Viana, Upton's Naturals, etc). Priced at \$4.99 per kit, the meals are designed to serve a family of four at approximately \$2.00 per serving, even with added ingredients.





cooksimple™



about

Available in Montana since 2009, cooksimple™, originally founded as The Healthy Pantry, was started by a family man, Keith Lauver. He wanted to build a sustainable and healthy eating lifestyle. He worked with a renowned chef and nutrition consultant Tony Sobiech to create cooksimple™. “Their nutritious meal kits are designed with the everyday consumer in mind – inexpensive, appealing, easy to prepare – to prove that home cooking can be simple, that healthy food can taste great, and that buying nutritious ingredients can be affordable” ([The Healthy Pantry, Our Story](#)).

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available in

Nine varieties since Spring 2013: Asian Burgers, Cowboy Quinoa Chili, Punjabi Curry, Tamale Pie, Cranberry Wild Rice, New Orleans Jambalaya, Tibetan Dal, Skillet Lasagna and White Bean Chili.

where to buy

cooksimple™ is now available at more than 3,000 stores across the United States, through retailers including Whole Foods, Safeway, ShopRite, Cub Foods, New Seasons, Raley's, Vons, Jewel, Fresh&Easy, Sprouts, Albertson's, and Earth Fare. The full product line is also available for [purchase online](#).



General Verdict

cooksimple™ contacted me to try few meal kits. I received three varieties: Cranberry Wild Rice, Punjabi Curry and Tibetan Dal.

The three cooksimple™ meal kits I've tried have lots of flavor with plenty of seasonings. They are all sweet and savory. Try the Tibetan Dal if you prefer savory dishes and add your favorite hot sauce and spices. Try the Cranberry Wild Rice and Punjabi Curry if you like both sweet and savory dishes. cooksimple™ meal kits will feed a family of 4-5, but perfect as side dishes for the two of us, with plenty of leftovers. After making them, it is best to make them without protein (tofu or vegan meat alternative) since they have flavors already. The instructions are very simple and easy to read, especially in large fonts. The meal kits will be 100% gluten-free without the use of tofu.



CRANBERRY WILD RICE

with rosemary, parsley + thyme



verdict: cranberry wild rice

Calories per Serving: 140 | Total Fat: 0g | Sodium: 280mg | Total Carb: 32 g | Protein: 4g |
Sugars: 11g | Fiber: 3g

The meal kit includes Cranberries, Wild Rice and Spice Mix and states that it takes about 25 minutes to make it, but it took more than 25 minutes. In the instructions, you will need 1 lb. firm tofu cut into 1/2" cubes and 1/4 cup red wine (which is optional). I added the red wine and 14 oz firm tofu in the first step. I would prepare the tofu differently by baking or frying them with more texture and add them in the end otherwise they will be too soft for the dish. The red wine made my tofu more tart so red wine is not necessary. After 25 minutes, the dish was watery due to the tofu and it took about another 25 minutes to reduce the water. In my experience, the dish does not need tofu or any alternative because the meal kit itself has flavors and it would have been ready in 25 minutes. Otherwise, add prepared vegan meat alternative in the end.

The Cranberry Wild Rice will go well with additional ingredients: diced green onions, garlic, walnuts, sautéed mushrooms or pine nuts. It is a sweet dish. If you like less sweeter versions, omit the cranberries and add sautéed vegetables, nutritional yeast, garlic, onions, or crushed nuts. The dish can be served cold or warm as a salad or stew.

Ingredients

Wild Rice, Sweetened Cranberries*, Onion*, Carrots*, Garlic*, Spices, Sea Salt, Rosemary**Dried

* denotes for dried





verdict: punjabi curry

Calories per Serving: 190 | Total Fat: 2.5g | Sodium: 15mg | Total Carb: 39 g | Protein: 5g
| Sugars: 12g | Fiber: 5g

The meal kit includes Rice/Spice pack and Dried Peas. The cooking time is accurate: 30 minutes. The instruction calls for 1 1/4 lbs. firm tofu (a vegetarian protein variation) and 1 tablespoon olive oil. Instead of the tofu, we used one package (10 oz.) of lightly seasoned chick'n scallopini from Gardein, and it worked well with the Punjabi Curry meal kit. I defrosted the chick'n scallopini, fried them for about 5 minutes each side until golden brown and set them aside. I followed the instructions carefully and added the chick'n scallopini in the end.

The Punjabi Curry was both sweet and bit savory just like the Wild Cranberry Rice reviewed above. The sweetness came from the seedless raisins and shredded coconut. If you prefer a less sweeter version, add more curry powder and other savory seasonings or omit the raisins from the rice/spice pack (which will be more difficult to attempt). The seedless raisins should be optional, unfortunately they are enclosed in the rice/spice.

Ingredients

Brown Rice, Seedless Raisins, Peas*, Onion*, Shredded Coconut, Curry Powder (spices, cloves), Garlic*, Cilantro*, Spices *Dried

* denotes for dried



verdict: tibetan dal

Calories per Serving: 140 | Total Fat: 1g | Sodium: 270mg | Total Carb: 25 g | Protein: 9g
| Sugars: 2g | Fiber: 7g

This was the easiest and quickest vegan meal kit so far, requiring no protein at all. The meal kit includes 1 bag of Lentil Mix and 1 packet Spice Mix. The instruction calls for 15 oz. diced tomatoes and 1 tablespoon olive oil. You will also need cayenne pepper, which is not mentioned in the pictorials. I only used 1 teaspoon cayenne powder. The cooking time (20 minutes) is accurate, and it is quicker than the other two meal kits above. The Tibetan Dal has a mildly spicy flavor and pairs well with rice or grains. It is necessary to garnish with fresh cilantro for a burst of fresh herb-iness.

Ingredients

Lentils*, Onions*, Spices, Sea Salt, Garlic*, Cilantro* *Dried

* denotes for dried



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