
SPEED
VEGAN

by

ALAN ROETTINGER

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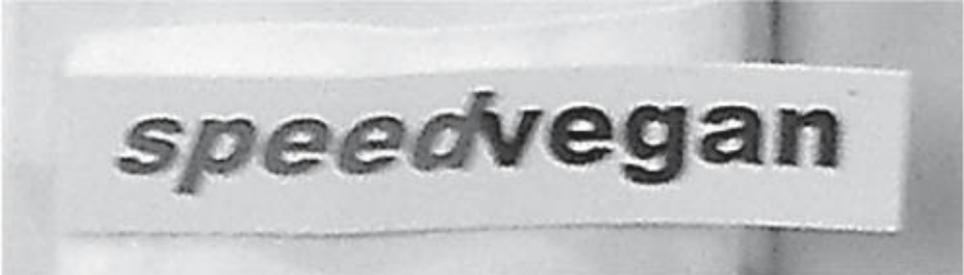
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You take from a recipe, but you give to a dish

–Alan Roetting





speedvegan

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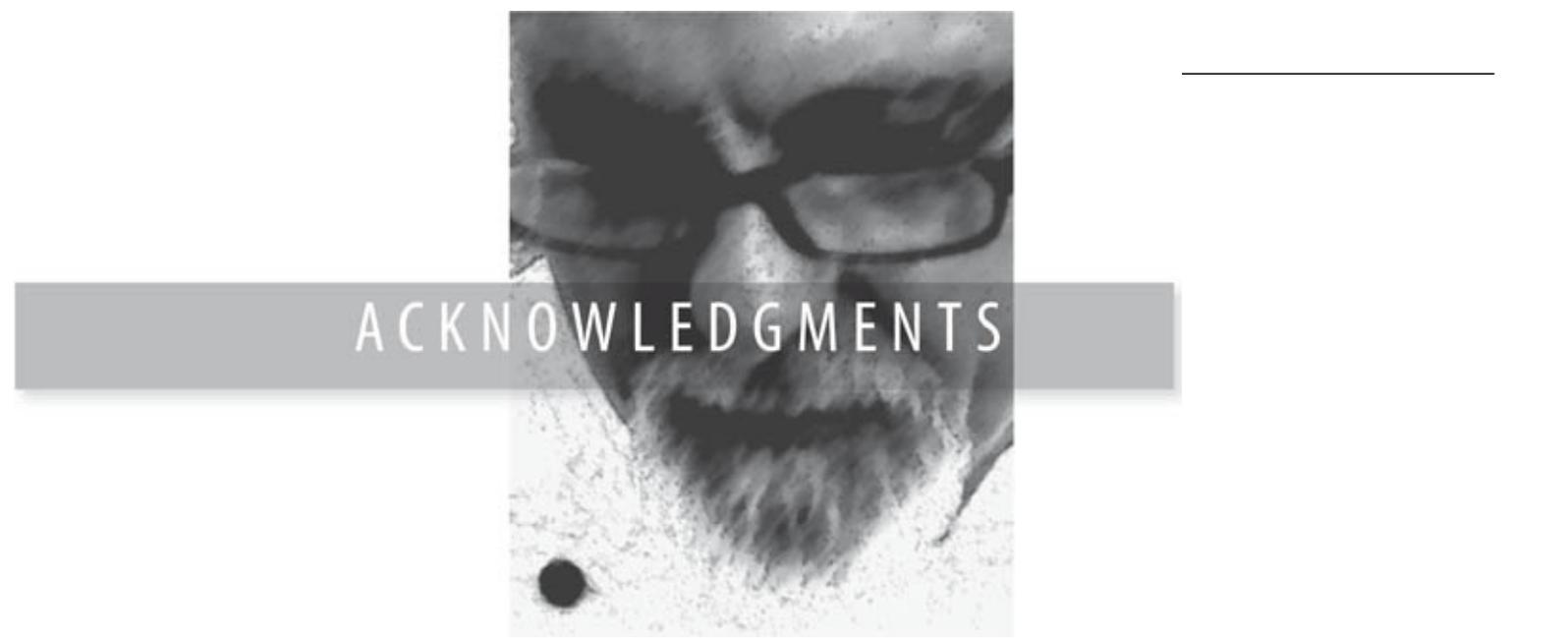
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I AM ONE UNBELIEVABLY LUCKY GUY. Wonderful things just keep happening to me. Even sorrows and disappointments have somehow turned out for the best. Maybe lucky is the wrong word. Whenever I take the time to look, regardless of success or failure, I invariably see *kindness* within all, a sweetness far too deliberate and consistent to be random. I feel the presence of that indefinable supreme existence, vibrating within me, looking out for me, and I know I'm beholden to it for everything. Don't ask me how, but sensing this presence fills me with both joy and gratitude—which is all it seems to want of me, and that works out quite well. I don't get the feeling it cares one bit about being acknowledged in books, but I care, so there you have it.

There are also some people I'm grateful for—special people who make my efforts worthwhile—and I want to acknowledge them too:

My profoundly beautiful wife, Marcia, an endless source of delight for me, without whose fierceness I might never have gotten my act together. Behind every great man there is a woman wishing he made more money. Private joke.

My son, Morgan, a treasure I never could have imagined, who manages to convey his love and admiration while simultaneously confronting my every weakness with piercing wit. He's been practicing reverse psychology since he was two years old.

I try to be my best self in large part for them—for what they mean to me, and what I feel they deserve.

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SPEED VEGAN





INTRODUCTION

WRITING THIS COOKBOOK presented a unique challenge on two fronts. As the title suggests, the primary feature of the recipes was to be speed, specifically the speed at which a home cook will be able to complete my recipes. This stretched the envelope for me. As a chef, I'm well familiar with the urgency to have everything ready on time. But the way I've dealt with this is to plan well and start early, not try to think inside a thirty-minute box! Compounding this, I also have a near-lifelong habit of taking whatever amount of time is needed to "do it right."

This is not meant to imply that there is a right and a wrong way to cook (although there probably is). On the contrary, "doing it right" is about reaching for something ephemeral. It refers to a state of mind, an uncompromising approach that, one hopes, may lead to excellence. If you put fast food at one end of a spectrum, "doing it right" would be at the opposite extremity. It's about refusing to cut corners that devalue the product, searching far and wide for the best ingredients, taking care to cook precisely, and adjusting schedules and temperatures to allow a gentle development of the ideal textures and flavors. Most of all, it's about putting your heart into what you do.

Time is a major factor in all this, because although you can develop skills that enable you to work quickly, with economy of movement and efficiency of technique, you can't make natural processes happen faster. To meet this challenge, I had to make myself think like a time-pressured home cook and come up with dishes I could admire that could also be completed by the average person in a half hour or less. This was the hard part, because so many wonderful ideas end up taking longer to manifest in the kitchen than they do in the mind. Let's just say that not everything I dreamed up made the thirty-minute cut.

The other half of the title was a test also, stemming from the fact that I'm not a vegan—at least I wasn't when I started working on this book—which is actually a good thing. I don't mean good for me, or good for the planet, or good for animals—I mean good for this cookbook. Here's why:

My motive in cooking has always been to create something extraordinary, something that thrills and delights the palate. When I'm working within a set of guidelines—such as low fat, gluten free, nondairy—I regard these parameters as challenges, never as any sort of goal. My objective is clear and consistent: to transform something I absolutely must have (food) into something I deeply appreciate (deliciously satisfying food). Part of that goal is to also ensure that the food is at least vaguely healthful, so it doesn't come back to haunt my pleasure with ugly consequences.

In all of my cooking, this primary goal remains constant. The only difference in these particular recipes is that they also happen to be vegan friendly. And of course, this makes it *all* good—for me, for you, for the planet, and everything that lives. If you're entertaining any nonvegans, this food will

help win them over, because I've made everything in the book to please a nonvegan palate (mine).

News Flash: I must now interrupt this introduction for an important update, inserted after the book's completion but before going to press. Although I still consider myself an omnivore (meaning I *can* eat anything), I have begun eating a strict vegan diet. After only a few weeks, I can say unequivocally that my body is ecstatic with the change. I have more energy, I need less sleep, and in my athletic activities I feel *invincible!* I'd say that's a pretty solid endorsement of the vegan diet, wouldn't you agree? Okay, just wanted you to know that—now back to the present (*your* present, my past). Isn't life exciting? So many interesting plot twists.

Before we get started, I would like to offer a word or two of encouragement for those readers who might find it daunting to enter the kitchen at all, let alone undertake the awesome task of preparing extraordinary food in short order:

Don't be intimidated. It's not rocket science. Making something good to eat is the most ancient activity of civilized human beings. If illiterate people could do it with stone knives and clay pots, surely you will be able to do it with today's refined tools. A recipe is just a guideline, the blueprint of a dish's construction, so you can follow along and repeat what someone else did. Don't feel in any way obligated to copy my approach. If anything strikes you as odd or distasteful, change it or leave it out. If an ingredient proves difficult or impossible to find, carry on without it or replace it with something you think might be just as good. Before long, you'll be creating entirely new dishes of your own, and that's when the real fun starts.

Keep in mind this maxim of mine: You *take* from a recipe, but you *give* to a dish. What will make your food extraordinary is not the recipe, or even the ingredients—it's *you*. That, my friends, is the secret of my success.



ESSENTIAL KITCHEN EQUIPMENT

DON'T FEEL DEFICIENT OR DELINQUENT if you lack any of the kitchen equipment mentioned in this book. You wouldn't believe how ill equipped most people's kitchens are, even very wealthy people's kitchens. During my time as a private chef, I've often walked into elegant, beautiful, designed kitchens tricked out with restaurant-style stoves, commercial refrigerators, gorgeous granite countertops, and little or no useful equipment! I'm not blaming these people—they never cook, so why would they even know what's missing? Of course, I've also encountered the other extreme, which is every drawer jammed with odd gadgets like hand-crank apple peelers, corn strippers, avocado slicers, asparagus steamers, and fractured remains of unidentifiable mechanisms that no one seems to dare throw away.

Why don't we just start fresh and keep it simple. I've broken it down into three lists: things you must have, things you will have a very hard time working without, and things that will make working a lot more fun. Some items you may want to get more of than the recommended minimum (such as bowls, spatulas, and the like), which is fine. Personally, I don't think you can ever have too many bowls. Or spoons. Or spatulas. Or whisks.

Whatever you do, don't go out and buy a "complete knife set," least of all an expensive one. I'm not against quality knives by any means—quite the contrary. But the knife set is not necessary, and you will not need all of the components (like the boning or filleting knives, if you're a vegan). You can do just about everything you need to do with two knives, listed in the first category. Let's get started.

MUST HAVE

APPLIANCE

Blender. Not counting a few industrial blenders, the Braun, with its triangular design, which encourages flow, and serrated blades, which retain their cutting prowess after long years of service, is the best blender I've ever used. The only trade-off is the speed control, which for some reason goes immediately into hyperdrive, even on the lowest setting. I still notice this single flaw every time I use it, but I've adjusted—which in itself is a testament to the effectiveness of the machine overall.

COOKWARE

Baking sheets. I use commercial sheet pans, which are heavier than the standard pans made for home

use, because they conduct and hold heat much better and can double as broiling pans in a pinch. Unfortunately, ~~these are made of aluminum, so it's important to line them with parchment paper when~~ cooking or baking anything acidic (like tomatoes, for example) in order to prevent the aluminum from reacting with and contaminating the food. It's good to have at least one, but two would be better. I don't even know how many I have, and I use them all.

Saucepan, large. There are many uses for a large (2- to 3-quart) saucepan. Not only will it enable you to cook large quantities, but it will also facilitate some procedures involving smaller quantities. Although you may not fill it up with every use, you will find it easier to stir and move ingredients around during the initial steps if there is little or no crowding. It is important to have a proper lid for this pan, especially for cooking grains, when keeping moisture contained is essential. As for a saucepan, a heavy bottom is very helpful for even heat distribution. All-Clad brand stainless steel saucepans with an aluminum core are the best (and most expensive—sorry!).

Saucepan, small. A fairly small (1- to 1½-quart) saucepan is useful in a number of ways. It's ideal for making sauces, reheating one or two servings of soup or hot cereal, or making rice for up to four people. A tight-fitting lid will be essential for some feats.

Sauté pans. Although I know you will discover that having several sauté pans will help shorten the time it takes for you to make a complete meal, you can squeak by with one large pan (10 to 12 inches) and one small pan (6 to 8 inches). If they have lids, so much the better. I would avoid nonstick pans in general because you can get good results without them and the material used to make them is toxic—inevitably gets into the food as well as the air you breathe. It's your life, though—your call.

Stockpot. A very large stockpot (with at least a 2-gallon capacity) is useful for making soups, but it is also essential for blanching vegetables and for cooking pasta. A lid will help water boil faster and keep the contents from boiling away too fast.

CUTLERY

Knife, large chef's. You will use a large chef's knife for most cutting and chopping tasks. To make your work as efficient and easy as possible, choose a knife with a blade at least 10 inches long. It may seem a bit daunting at first, but you'll find that having a long blade helps a lot, especially for chopping herbs. You might want to select a knife before looking at cutting boards. I use a 12-inch knife, so I also have a large cutting board to accommodate it. Next time I'm on TV, I'll show you how to use it, but until then, I recommend picking up a book or video that teaches basic kitchen techniques. That's how I learned—reading, watching, and doing.

Knife, small paring. A paring knife with a short blade is best, as it will give you better control for fine cutting and peeling. I suggest visiting a professional kitchen supply outlet, where you will find high-quality paring knives at near-disposable prices. My favorite (Swiss made!), by Victorinox (about \$4), sports a red plastic handle that stands out among all the prep detritus and will help keep you from scraping it into the trash by mistake. It's the only knife I consider dishwasher safe.

TOOLS

Colander. Some tasks are near impossible to perform properly without some kind of colander. Having one will make many other tasks much easier. I highly recommend the kind that looks like a huge reinforced coarse strainer (versus the classic bowl-with-holes kind). It allows for quick draining,

necks nicely in large bowls for storage, and, oddly enough, it cleans more easily than other kinds. Get the biggest one you can find.

Cutting board. I like a bamboo cutting board for beauty, but for practicality, I recommend one of those poly-plasticlike boards that resists stains and bacteria and can be put in the dishwasher. To protect your knife's edge, make sure to select a cutting board made of "self-healing" material, not hard plastic. Once you've invested in one all-purpose cutting board, you might want to get one or two smaller ones for quick work. It's also a good idea to use a separate cutting board for fruits, to keep their flavor from being tainted by residual garlic or onion juices that may be present, especially with wooden boards.

Grater. If you're choosing a single grater, you'll get the most uses out of a four-sided box grater which has cutters of various sizes and shapes. Tip: Always wash the grater immediately after using it—this will save you a lot of scrubbing later on! Very often a rinse is all that's needed.

Hot pads. I know it's common sense that you'll need a hot pad for each hand, but I don't want any of my beloved fans to find out the hard way, so get two! Of course, you can always use a folded towel as a hot pad, but be careful—there is a very real danger of burning your hand if the towel is even slightly damp. There are some very cool silicone hot pads available now that will keep your hands safe even when wet.

Mixing bowls, large. Although I own quite a few glass and ceramic mixing bowls, I inevitably reach for my stainless steel bowls first, as I prefer their light weight, durability, and even their sound. I recommend having at least two of these bowls, as large as you can fit in your sink to wash.

Mixing bowls, small. You can't have too many mixing bowls, but you should definitely have at least two (again, I recommend stainless steel), with a capacity of 1 to 2 quarts (perhaps one of each size).

Pepper mill. I'm not trying to be a food snob here. Freshly ground pepper has a dynamic flavor that dissipates within a fairly short period of time. The preground pepper available in stores has oxidized, turning whatever flavor remains into an altogether different and utterly undesirable seasoning. Some health experts claim that whereas freshly ground pepper has beneficial properties, oxidized pepper is mildly toxic. Choose an adjustable pepper mill—a few out there have only one setting, and occasionally you'll want to adjust the grind from coarse to fine.

Silicone spatula. Silicone is heat-resistant, so a spatula made from it allows you to use it for stirring hot food in a pan as well as for standard food preparation. To be economical, you can start with one flat spatula and then add one with a slight scoop shape later on. They're each useful in their own way.

Spoon, slotted. My favorite slotted spoon is a Chinese strainer—a wide, wire-mesh affair attached to a bamboo stick that allows instant draining when scooping things out of boiling water or hot oil. I also have a few stainless steel spoons with round or rectangular holes that work quite well, if not as efficiently or elegantly.

Spoons, stainless steel. It's important to have a couple of stainless steel spoons for scooping, stirring, and of course, serving.

Spoons, wooden. When it comes to stirring implements, as anyone who cooks frequently will tell you

the more the merrier. I recommend having at least two wooden spoons, one round-ended and one flat. ~~Bamboo spoons are the only kind I've found that resist warping and the absorption of flavors. They even survive the rigors of repeated dishwasher abuse, which regular wooden spoons do not weather well at all.~~

Strainer. Eventually, you may decide to get at least three strainers (fine, medium, and coarse), but starting out, a medium-fine-mesh strainer, 5 to 6 inches in diameter at the open end, will accomplish most tasks adequately. Think of one that is just barely fine enough to catch raspberry seeds.

Whisk. A whisk is a miraculous device. I have quite a few, in different shapes and sizes for various uses. If you're just starting out, I recommend buying a medium-size whisk, which would extend approximately 6½ inches from the handle. Sooner or later you'll find a need for other sizes and shapes, but I'll leave that shopping adventure to you.

HARD TIME WORKING WITHOUT

APPLIANCE

Food processor. I was sorely tempted to put this in the “must have” category, but I didn't want to scare anyone off. Besides, I worked without one for two months on a job in Portugal, and although it was challenging, I survived. A food processor does not replace a knife—it has no subtlety or craft, and its blades only cut one way—but it makes quick work of some chores that otherwise are pure drudgery. It also does many things better than a blender, as it allows for fine chopping and even puréeing with a minimum of added liquid to keep the food moving. I have two: one with a 6-cup capacity for most jobs and a 2-cup “mini prep” for occasional small-quantity work.

COOKWARE

Stovetop grill. There are a few good versions of the stovetop grill, which is a thick, cast-iron sheet with ridges that you heat directly over the burner on your stove. It even leaves grill marks, just like the real thing. (I guess it kinda *is* the real thing, in its own way.) Of course, you can always use a regular outdoor grill, but for quick work, this is really easy and helpful (and it can be used year-round, in all types of weather).

TOOLS

Garlic press. There are few kitchen items more handy or more frequently used than a garlic press. The alternative is to mash and chop garlic by hand, which takes about ten times longer (I know because this is another tool that wasn't available in Portugal). I don't often endorse or recommend any particular brand of equipment, but the Zyliss (Swiss made) is the only one that really works right. The holes are the ideal size, and it doesn't break during the first year, like most of the other ones, whose names I won't mention. In fact, I've had the same one for twenty-five years and it's still working perfectly (again I say, Swiss made). Since it's made of aluminum, be careful to wash it often if you're pressing a lot of garlic. Otherwise, the aluminum will begin to react and bleed into the pressed garlic (you'll see it turning gray). Another point—very important—don't ever put it in the dishwasher! Even one pass will corrode it beyond repair. Same goes for anything else made of aluminum.

Measuring cups and spoons. To be honest, I almost never use measuring cups and spoons unless I'm baking or writing cookbooks, but since I've provided exact measurements, you'll have a hard time

following the recipes unless you have measuring tools. On the other hand, this should serve as a ~~between-the-lines hint that you really don't need to worry too much about measuring exactly.~~ I suggest that you become familiar with what quantities look like, so you can become comfortable eyeballing amounts and freewheeling it in the kitchen. You'll have a lot more fun that way.

Parchment paper. When I was a pastry chef, I used to order commercial parchment sheets by the ream, but that's gross overkill for the home kitchen. So now I just go to the baking department of supermarkets and ask them for a few sheets. They usually just hand me about twenty-five of them, but even when they charge me, it comes to about a buck. These will be full-sheet size, which is roughly twice the size of a baking sheet you'd have at home, so cut them in half and you'll have enough to last you months. If the freeloading approach creeps you out, you can also buy parchment paper in many supermarkets as well as kitchen supply stores. However, most often it comes in a roll, which I find exasperatingly difficult to use because as soon as a piece is torn off, it insists on curling back up. You can call.

Salad spinner. I consider salad a minimum daily requirement, so for me it would be a genuine hardship to live without a salad spinner. It's a *Speed Vegan's* natural friend. It's fun to use, it makes lightning-quick work of whipping the water off lettuce, and it doubles as a bowl in which to soak and rinse the lettuce, and that can be especially helpful if you don't have a lot of big bowls. Don't get the kind with a hole in the bottom, or the only place you'll be able to use it is over the sink. (I don't know who the hell thought *that* was a good idea.)

Tongs. There is nothing more effective than a set of tongs for picking up hot foods (like baked potatoes or grilled vegetables) or for tossing salads without using your bare hands (especially useful when people are watching).

MAKES WORK MORE FUN IF YOU HAVE

Ceramic ginger grater. A ginger grater is what you use for grating fresh ginger, of course. The Japanese make beautiful ceramic graters that add an ethno-aesthetic design accent for your kitchen, too. I have one in the shape of a flounder, with both eyes looking up at me and an upturned tail for a handle. I keep the ginger on it, waiting for the moment to arise. Looks cool, works great.

Microplane grater. A relatively new culinary tool, the microplane grater was invented by a carpenter who suddenly realized that one of his razor-sharp precision tools would be ideal for grating the zest off a lemon in perfect, thin strips. I used to use the side of the grater that looks like someone poked it all over with a nail. Although that method still works, a microplane grater is a hundred times more fun and a whole lot safer, even considering how sharp the mini-blades are—I've lost count of the times I abraded my knuckles on the old nail-hole kind. It's ideal not only for grating citrus zest but also for making tiny curls and flakes of chocolate. Just don't try it on nutmeg or you'll cut yourself for sure!

More baking sheets, spatulas, and whisks. I know I've said it before, but it bears repeating: you can never have too many good tools! Get as many baking sheets, spatulas, and whisks as your personal tastes (and pocketbook) dictate.

Mortar and pestle. There's something incredibly satisfying about using a kitchen tool that has remained virtually unchanged since before recorded history. Get yourself a large, heavy-duty

seriously ethnic-looking mortar and pestle. I have several, but my favorite is a Thai stone mortar with a pestle made from coconut palm wood that makes a sound like some Neolithic musical instrument.

Pastry brush. I recommend buying an inexpensive, dishwasher-safe, silicone pastry brush, available at many supermarkets and kitchen supply stores. The natural-bristle brushes don't last, and they shed, plus they're made from some kind of animal hair anyway, so there you go. A pastry brush is very useful for dabbing vegetables with oil prior to grilling or for spreading Garlic Oil ([page 38](#)) on toast (mmm!).

Serrated knife. Once you've acquired a large chef's knife and a small paring knife (and recovered financially), a serrated knife is a good investment. It excels at cutting bread, very ripe tomatoes, and anything that tends to smush when you press down on it (even lightly) with a regular knife. Its sawing action can also make easier work of some odd jobs, like cutting the spiny skin off a pineapple or slicing watermelon.

Spice mill. A spice mill is really just a coffee grinder that is dedicated strictly for grinding spices. I've hand-pounded curry powder mixtures in a mortar, which is definitely fun, but a spice mill gets the job done in a tenth of the time (and without the blisters). Trust me, there is no comparison between freshly ground spices and jars of the same stuff preground, and you're more likely to take this extra step if you make it easy on yourself.

Superfine strainer. There will be times when you'll need to strain the fine bits out of a soup or sauce that a medium-mesh strainer won't catch. Don't let anyone sell you a chinois, by the way; it is much finer than you'll probably ever need in your life and very expensive. Someday you may want to get one for the fun of it, but it takes some time to use (and clean!), so it's hardly a *Speed Vegan* item. Just get a regular fine-mesh strainer.



STOCKING THE VEGAN PANTRY

THE ABILITY TO WHIP UP SOMETHING FABULOUS in a half hour or less is not innate; it must be acquired, in very much the same way as the ability to create something spectacular over several hours is acquired. There are a few basic skills that definitely help, such as holding a knife effectively and cutting ingredients accurately, and I highly recommend spending some time acquiring and developing these skills. However, in the short term we can do a lot to enable good results just by stocking our pantry with two categories of ingredients that I call essentials and acceptable shortcuts. The latter refers to commercially prepared foods, which represent a minor trade-off or ones that are well worth the compromise. It would be nearly if not completely impossible to make some things in less than thirty minutes without these items.

The modern pantry has three areas for storing ingredients, depending on whether the items are shelf stable, refrigerated, or frozen. Not all ingredients are acceptable shortcuts when stored in these various ways. For example, canned beans are by and large acceptable, but canned peas are an utter abomination. Dried thyme and dried oregano retain a lot of their aroma and taste, so they are fair good substitutes for fresh thyme and oregano; dried cilantro and dried chives lose nearly all their flavor when dried, rendering them functionally useless.

I've taken the guesswork out of all this by dividing my pantry-stocking recommendations into these three groups. Note that some items that you may have previously considered shelf stable appear here in a different category. Nuts, for example, which contain fragile fats, will keep better and retain both their healthful qualities and optimum flavor when refrigerated for the short term and stored in the freezer for longer periods.

I've included a few recipes for homemade pantry items that will greatly enhance your *Speedy Vegan* efforts. I have also indicated the best storage methods for each of them. All of these recipes adhere to the thirty-minutes-or-less rubric, and most of them can be done in five.

I haven't given quantities for the pantry items because it's up to the individual to determine how often a given ingredient will be used and in what amount. I do recommend, however, that you stock up on hard-to-find items such as ancho and pasilla chile powder, porcini powder, ras el hanout, saffron, and smoked paprika whenever you're in a store that carries them. If you're ordering online, it makes sense to buy as many items as you can afford at one time because the shipping cost will be comparatively less than when you order items individually. All of these ingredients will keep for a long while, and having them on hand will greatly increase your chances of turning out something truly special.

Don't feel like you have to run out and buy all these items at once. In fact, I would advise again

buying anything until you need it, because the longer you wait, the longer that item will remain fresh. Just let your pantry build up naturally as you go. If you're going to buy several items at once to save shipping costs, consider storing the ones you have no immediate plans for in the freezer until the need arises. Once you collect at least some quantity of the items on the list that follows, you'll be able to make anything in this book on short notice; you will only need to buy some fresh vegetables that day.

A final note: Always choose organic products whenever possible. Why? Because they don't have pesticides or poisons on them or in them, that's why. And they taste better. And if you have a way to make sure they're grown locally, you'll get an added triple benefit: you'll have vastly fresher produce, you'll reduce your carbon footprint, and you'll be supporting your local community. Add it up: that's a win-win-win-win situation.

SHELF-STABLE INGREDIENTS

Shelf-stable items are those that do not require refrigeration, even after opening. However, it's still best to store them in a cool, dry, and dark area, especially away from direct sun. If you live in an area prone to natural disasters, like earthquakes or hurricanes, shelf-stable items are good to stock up on because they don't spoil (although bugs and rodents may be attracted to them for the same reason, so be aware of that). There are a few items called for in the recipes that are rather standard and easy to find, like cinnamon, cloves, thyme, and oregano, so I haven't listed them here. However, some of the ingredients in the following list may not be familiar to you or may take some hunting around to locate or perhaps I just have something particular to say about them.

DRIED HERBS AND SPICES

Ancho chile powder. Ancho chile is a ripened (red), dried Mexican poblano pepper (the fresh, green form is the pepper used for *chiles rellenos*). The flavor is exotic and quite strong, enough to alter the character of a dish dramatically. Although ancho chiles are typically sold whole, many Mexican markets and specialty stores also carry them ground. If you can't find the powder, you can make your own by breaking up whole dried chiles (remove the stems first) and grinding them in a spice mill. You can control the amount of heat in the powder by removing all or most of the seeds.

Bay leaves. A single bay leaf has a way of infusing an entire dish with its delectable flavor and aroma, but that's only if it's a high-quality, fragrant bay leaf. Before you buy, give it the sniff test; it should emit an undeniably appealing aroma. A lot of what's out there is pretty sad. I've found Spice Island California bay laurel to be fairly reliable, but the best ever were from The Spice House (see Online Shopping Sources, [page 169](#)).

Black peppercorns. It's important to always grind pepper fresh, at the time of use. This is true of any spice, because once you grind it, you expose a much greater surface area to the air, accelerating oxidation exponentially. You lose a lot of flavor that way, but you also lose nutritional as well as therapeutic value. Many spices have ancient medicinal applications, such as those used in the Ayurvedic system of healing and health, and it's best to retain as much of their inherent qualities as possible.

Cardamom seeds. I love cardamom and have been accused of overusing it, both in appropriate applications and unorthodox ones. With rare exceptions, I've vehemently disagreed with my critics because, well, love is love and follows its own logic. Cardamom is sold in green pods as well

decorticated, or removed from the pod. For the most part, I prefer buying seeds in whole pods because the pod protects the aromatics in the seed better, although even the decorticated seeds are a million times preferable to preground cardamom. Just so you know, I'm referring to green cardamom. There is also a black cardamom, used whole to flavor Indian dishes, but the latter are slow-cooked sophisticated items, so there is really no *Speed Vegan* application for it that I know of.

Curry powder. There are curry powders and then there are curry powders. The mixture itself is a bit of blasphemy, as it purports to standardize something authentically Indian, whereas in Indian cuisine each cook builds the combination of spices needed for a particular dish on the spot, blending and adding as needed to achieve the right balance. Moreover, Indian cuisine varies greatly from region to region; North Indian food differs dramatically in character from the food of South India. However, for the Western cook with no knowledge of Indian cooking but an appreciation for its flavors, a lot can be accomplished with a good curry powder. I suggest trying different ones and selecting the most appropriate one for each particular application. The Spice House (see Online Shopping Sources, page 169) offers a fine selection of very different curry powders.

Garam masala. In Indian cuisine, garam masala (roughly, “hot spice mixture”), is a blend of pungent aromatics, ground together and used to enliven dishes with a vibrant note. The exact mixture varies from home to home and can contain any combination of bay leaves, black or green cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, coriander seeds, cumin, black cumin, nutmeg, mace, black or white peppercorns, and star anise (did I leave anything out?). The “heat” implied by the name refers to the pungent quality of the spice mixture, not the stinging heat of chiles. Again, as with curry powder, this can be a useful ingredient for producing exotic flavors in *Speed Vegan* cookery. Look for commercially prepared garam masala at Indian grocery stores or specialty stores, or purchase it online at The Spice House.

Herbes de Provence. The signature flavors of Provence, France—basil, fennel, lavender, marjoram, rosemary, tarragon, and thyme—come together in a single blend of herbs called (appropriately enough) herbes de Provence, which is widely available in supermarkets.

Mixed peppercorns. More than the sum of its parts, mixed peppercorns (also called *quatre épices*), a combination of black, green, pink, and white peppercorns, can be found in most well-stocked markets and specialty stores. Freshly ground, this mixture creates a complex seasoning, with flavor notes you won't get from any of the different peppercorns individually. Pink and green peppercorns are particularly fragrant, each providing a unique, exotic twist.

Pasilla chile powder. Like the ancho, the pasilla is a dried chile with a distinctive flavor. The powder can be very hard to find, so don't kill yourself trying—just keep an eye out for it in Hispanic food markets. It keeps for long periods in an airtight container. If you are able to locate dried pasilla chiles whole, you can grind them in the same way as the anchos. Not to complicate things for you, but some shopkeepers don't know the difference and will sometimes sell ancho chiles under the name pasilla. I'm probably being charitable; they may know exactly what they're doing, but I'd rather err on the side of charity.

Ras el hanout. A Moroccan spice mixture, available at Mediterranean or Arabic markets and specialty stores, ras el hanout has a character similar in some ways to curry powder, imparting a complex, very fragrant, uniquely North African flavor. “Ras el hanout” means “top of the shop” in Arabic, indicating the shopkeeper's signature blend. In Morocco, the specific mixture varies from shop to shop and may contain well over twenty ingredients, including some unexpected ones like

cassia bark, lavender, orris root, rosebuds, or even hashish, depending on the shopkeeper's expertise and predilection. Outside Morocco, most ras-el-hanout is commercially produced in France (sans the hashish) and is fairly standardized. My favorite comes from The Spice House in Chicago (see Online Shopping Sources, [page 169](#)) and includes whole saffron threads.

Red chile powder. Indian grocery stores carry a very hot and fragrant red chile powder, but cayenne is a good substitute.

Saffron threads. The saying "a little goes a long way" truly applies to saffron. A mere pinch will hue a whole potful of whatever you're cooking into exotic terrains. Once the province of kings (it was worth more than its weight in gold), saffron comes from a purple crocus that yields only three threads (stigma) per flower. Saffron is now much more affordable, in part because it is cultivated in Spain as well as in Kashmir.

Sea salt. I keep both coarse and fine Celtic salt on hand for the best flavor and mineral content. A lot of people think that salt is just something to bring out the flavor of food—and it will—but good salt does much more than that. Hand-harvested salt from the ocean is full of trace minerals and has a delicious flavor of its own that it will impart to the food. My favorite is actually not harvested from the sea, but it is the oldest sea salt on earth: Himalayan pink salt, formed millions of years ago, when the seas had not yet been polluted, as the world's highest peaks were pushed up from the ocean floor. Cool, huh?

Smoked salt. I use smoked salt rarely, but it keeps indefinitely and is ideal for adding a smoky flavor to dishes that warrant it (see "Smoked" Portobello Mushroom Salad, [page 103](#)).

Spanish smoked paprika. Once a rare and hard-to-find item, Spanish smoked paprika is now fairly easy to find (if you're looking for it). Like saffron, a small quantity of smoked paprika can go a long way in turning an ordinary dish in an extraordinary direction.

FATS

Extra-virgin coconut oil. If you're going to fry something, extra-virgin coconut oil is the best vegetable medium for it. It's a highly saturated fat and remains quite firm at room temperature (unless your room is somewhere near the equator). It has a strong but pleasant coconut flavor, which limits its application to dishes that go well with it, such as Southeast Asian, South Indian, Central and South American, and sub-Saharan (not sounding so limited now, huh?).

Extra-virgin red palm oil. Red palm oil is used extensively in Brazilian cooking, and now a high-quality extra-virgin form of it is available in the United States at natural food stores. Don't confuse this with refined dende oil, the standard form of red palm oil used in Brazil, which I think may be better suited to lubricating engine parts.

FLAVORINGS, SWEETENERS, AND SUCH

Agave nectar. About twice as sweet as sugar, agave nectar is made from agave juice (which is also used to make tequila) and is now widely used, especially by vegans, as an alternative to honey. I was disappointed to learn recently that, despite the advertising, agave nectar is a far cry from the *agua miel* (fresh agave juice) I grew up with in Mexico. I had thought agave nectar was merely a filtered or possibly flash-pasteurized version. As it turns out, the processing not only destroys enzymes and removes minerals but also yields a highly refined product virtually identical to high-fructose corn

syrup. Oh well. There isn't a whole lot of it used in this book, and it may still seem better than ripping off the bees in your estimation.

Chinese salted black beans. Available at Asian and specialty markets, Chinese salted black beans are black beans that have been fermented, salted, and dried. A mere teaspoonful will add tremendous depth of flavor to sauces and dressings.

Dark chocolate. Remember that chocolate is good for you, but only dark chocolate, preferably with a minimum of 70 percent cacao solids. Did you know that a recent study in Sweden showed that heart attack survivors who ate dark chocolate at least twice a week afterward cut their risk of dying from heart disease by 300 percent over those poor fools who wouldn't eat it? They don't call it *theobroma* (food of the gods) for nothing. I eat it pretty much every day, and not just for the heart that pumps blood.

Dried wild mushrooms. The wild mushrooms I use most often are chanterelles, morels, porcinis, and shiitakes. Each variety has distinctive qualities, not only in flavor and aroma but also in texture and appearance. Drying concentrates the flavor, which comes out with a vengeance when the mushrooms are reconstituted (this is a good thing). Because dried wild mushrooms can be quite expensive, you may prefer to wait until the need arises before investing in them. I like to keep at least some shiitake around because they go well with a lot of last-minute dishes. Morels are my absolute favorite, but I almost never can keep any in stock because I use them up as soon as I get them.

Dulse. Rich in minerals, with a pleasant purply color, a delicious, mildly briny taste, and melt-in-your-mouth texture, dulse is an ideal "introductory" sea vegetable for people who balk at the idea of eating seaweed. It's delicious in salads and soups or just out of your hand as a salty snack. Look for it at natural food stores in the macrobiotic section.

Mirin. Also known as sweet sake, mirin provides the distinctive flavor in teriyaki sauce. It is a rice wine similar to sake but sweeter and with a lower alcohol content. It adds a uniquely Japanese touch to sauces and condiments.

Palm sugar. A delectable alternative to brown sugar, palm sugar is harvested from coconut palms in Southeast Asia. It is available granulated and as a paste. Indian *gur*, or *jaggery*, made from sugarcane, is a decent substitute.

Pomegranate molasses. A Middle Eastern staple made by reducing pure pomegranate juice to a thick syrup, pomegranate molasses imparts a pleasant, tangy fruit note. I like using it with dishes that are not Middle Eastern in origin, just to stretch the envelope a little. Sometimes it doesn't really work, but it's always worth a try. Many supermarkets now carry it in their international sections.

Porcini mushroom powder. Porcini mushroom powder is simply ground porcini mushrooms. You can grind them yourself in a spice mill. You can also make a wild mushroom powder with a combination of wild mushrooms. I've done this when I've had a few stray dried mushrooms of different types but not enough to make a mushroom dish of any consequence. A mere teaspoon of the powder will influence bland dishes (like tofu) gorgeously.

Tamarind concentrate. Tamarind is a sour, pulpy seed pod that grows in tropical and subtropical climates. In Mexico, it's used to make a refreshing cold drink called *agua de tamarindo*. In Southeast

Asia and India, it's used in cooking not only to add a sour element but also, specifically, for its unique, characteristic flavor. Removing the pulp from the pod and separating it from the seeds is laborious, but commercially prepared tamarind concentrate (also called tamarind paste) takes the headache out of the equation and makes this delicious ingredient readily available to the home cook in any country.

Tekka. I'm not sure how this macrobiotic condiment came to be invented, but tekka is a terrific addition to the macrobiotic-food-lover's larder. It's a kind of moist powder made from burdock root, lotus root, carrot, sesame, and hatcho miso, cooked very slowly, yielding a dark, potent flavor. In addition to the recipe in this book (Lotus Root Soba with Tekka, [page 113](#)), there are several informal uses for tekka, such as sprinkling it over steamed vegetables or brown rice. Look for it at natural food stores in the macrobiotic section.

Vanilla extract. Don't waste money on the cheap, flavorless stuff! Look for Tahitian vanilla or, at the very least, Madagascar bourbon vanilla. The cost is higher but the flavor is well worth it. When I was a pastry chef at a billionaires' country club, I once had an argument with a cheapskate purchasing guy about this. To settle it, I poured a teaspoon of good Tahitian vanilla into one shot glass and the hideous stuff he had ordered into another. I let him "shoot" the good stuff first, suggesting he might get a hint of the exotic orchid plant the vanilla pod comes from. It brought an involuntary smile to his parsimonious lips. Then I had him shoot the other. He actually spat, and that was that. As I recall, there's a saying about catching more flies with honey than vinegar. Not a vegan saying, of course.

Vegetable bouillon cubes. One excellent way to add a mega splash of flavor to a soup, a sauce, or any juicy dish is to drop in a cube or two of vegetable bouillon. I threw one into mashed potatoes once with striking results. I use it for pumping up rice or couscous too.

PASTA AND GRAINS

Basmati rice. Make sure you buy true basmati! Look for it at an Indian grocery store, if possible, because most so-called basmati rice in other stores is not genuine. Ask for Dehraduni basmati. This is not just a starch to bulk up your meal; this is a delicious partner to virtually any vegetable dish, especially those with a juicy sauce. Unlike polished white rice, basmati is hand processed and retains a little of the bran (look at it with a magnifying glass and you'll see). The grains fluff lengthwise into elegant, long, fragrant gems. The smell of true basmati cooking is downright intoxicating. Once you've had the real thing, impostors will be obvious to you on sight (and smell).

Brown rice pasta. This product is the closest to durum wheat (regular white) pasta that I've tried. Unlike other alternatives, it holds together well and retains a good *al dente* texture.

Buckwheat soba noodles. Wheat-sensitive people should check the ingredients because very often buckwheat soba noodles (as well as lotus root soba noodles and mugwort soba noodles) contain some wheat flour. Macrobiotic products are usually 100 percent buckwheat. Since I began working on this book, I discovered that precooked fresh buckwheat soba noodles are now available in vacuum-sealed packages at many natural food stores as well as at Asian markets. Precooked fresh soba noodles are not only speedy to cook (they need just a brief warming in hot water), but they also have a texture that is far superior to the dried ones. You can use the precooked fresh soba noodles in place of the dried form in any of the recipes that call for soba noodles.

Farro pasta. An ancient relative of wheat, farro is grown in northern Italy. Although whole-grain farro pasta can be hard to find, it is far superior to whole wheat pasta both in flavor and texture. It is not exactly gluten free, but wheat-sensitive people can usually enjoy it without a problem. The whole grain itself has a texture that is a cross between wheat berries and barley, with a delicious flavor unlike either. Alas, it takes far too long to cook for the recipes in this book. However, if you're ordering farro pasta, I recommend adding a small bag of whole farro berries to your order so you can try it in its unprocessed form at least once.

Papadums. Sold primarily at Indian grocery stores, papadums (also called papads) are dried wafers made from spiced lentil paste that puff into unusually light, crisp, utterly delicious crackers when fried or toasted over a flame. If you've ever been to an Indian restaurant, you know what I'm talking about.

Quinoa. An ancient grain originally grown in the Andes mountains of Peru, quinoa is now grown organically in the United States and is widely available in natural food stores and some supermarkets. It's a whole protein, highly digestible, with a distinctive texture and flavor.

Red quinoa. A close cousin of regular quinoa, red quinoa is a bit firmer in texture, with a richer taste and a dark rust color. Not as easy to find, but gaining ground slowly.

Saifun (mung bean threads). Saifun are the glass noodles that appear in Asian dishes. Unlike other noodles, saifun are made from mung beans, which are a legume, not a grain.

VINEGARS

Balsamic vinegar. Pretty well known by now, balsamic vinegar is a fairly recent addition to the American food scene, but it has been treasured in Italy since the Middle Ages. But that's not even half the story. What we casually pick up in half-liter bottles at our supermarkets is not true balsamic vinegar but an imitative (albeit very tasty) commercial product that tastes vaguely like the real thing. Real balsamic vinegar is a labor of love, involving as much craft, tradition, and certification as the finest brandy. It can cost up to \$400 for a 100-milliliter bottle, and it is typically doled out in drops and drams, not whisked gratuitously into salad dressings. But don't worry, that kind is not an ingredient in any of the recipes in this book. I just thought you'd like to know the roots.

Brown rice vinegar. Made from fermented brown rice, brown rice vinegar is mild, making it ideal for subtle salad dressings or any dishes that include traditional Japanese flavors, such as shiitake mushrooms, ginger, shiso, or tamari. I prefer brown rice vinegar hands down over the more mainstream "rice vinegar" found in supermarkets. It has a better flavor, and most brands are organic.

Red wine vinegar. Some dishes simply must have red wine vinegar. Greek salad wouldn't be the same with any other vinegar. When I add a little splash of vinegar to something for added dimension (like *peperonata*, an Italian roasted pepper dish), I almost always choose red wine vinegar.

Sherry vinegar. Real Spanish sherry vinegar has a complex, rich background of flavor. Like its Italian cousin, balsamic vinegar, sherry vinegar is aged and has specific certification requirements. Far from merely sour, sherry vinegar is like a poem, with nuances and delectable subtleties.

White balsamic vinegar. Balsamic vinegar (see above) is characterized by its slightly sweet mildness. This is a valuable feature for "lipophobes," who wrongly believe all fats are inimical to their health.

because you can use balsamic vinegar to make a nicely balanced salad dressing with less oil. Little do they know, you can accomplish the same results by adding some sugar to any vinegar, which is basically what commercial producers use to make balsamic vinegar less tart. White balsamic vinegar has the same mild nature, with a bright, fresh character and none of the heaviness and dark color of regular balsamic (that's "regular" as opposed to "traditional" balsamic—again, see above). I use white balsamic when I want that mild, bright quality without the dark color.

White wine vinegar. Like white balsamic and rice vinegar, white wine vinegar is the milder sister of the full-bodied vinegars. It makes an ideal pairing with herbs like chervil, chives, lavender, and tarragon that would be bowled over by the gutsier red wine vinegar.

UNREFRIGERATED, *BUT* . . .

Some fresh produce fares better at room temperature than when refrigerated. Tomatoes, a good example, lose their wonderful fresh tomato flavor when they are refrigerated. However, fruits and vegetables spoil much faster at room temperature, and especially in a warm room. So keep them following out, but keep an eye on them:

- fresh ginger
- lemons
- limes
- onions
- potatoes (store in a dark place)
- shallots
- tomatoes

REFRIGERATE AFTER OPENING

Artichoke hearts. For the recipes in this book, use plain artichoke hearts packed in water (not marinated), preferably in glass jars. I recommend the small whole artichokes, as they are the most tender and flavorful. Some good artichokes can be found frozen; however, they are rather more expensive than those in jars. Supermarket frozen artichokes are reasonably priced, but I've found them to be tough and lacking in flavor.

Beans. There are only a few things I consider acceptable as canned food, and beans are among the top two or three. I keep a supply of black beans, garbanzo beans (also known as chickpeas), navy beans, pinto beans, and red beans. I also keep on hand cannellini beans (Italian white beans), which are similar to navy beans but are longer and much creamier, with a distinctive taste that lends itself particularly well to combining with Mediterranean flavors and textures.

Capers. I prefer the tiny nonpareils to the larger capers, but this is an aesthetic choice; the flavor is pretty much the same. You decide.

Chipotles en adobo. Recipe-ready Mexican chipotle chiles, reconstituted and prepared in a sauce, are known as *chipotles en adobo*. They can be served as a fiery condiment with a Mexican meal; blended with tomato, garlic, and onion to form the flavor base for spicy sauces; or chopped and added to soups, beans, and stews. They are quite spicy, so be sparing until you become familiar with them.

Coconut milk. Thai coconut milk is inexpensive and delicious. I keep a couple of cans in my pantry for sudden urges that come up in the middle of cooking anything with an Asian flavor.

Diced tomatoes. I like to keep a few containers of diced tomatoes on hand for a quick pasta sauce, add to a vegetable soup, or to use in any number of dishes that need just a bit of tomato to round them out. I used to buy them in cans, but after reading about BPA, a toxic chemical in the lining of cans that reacts with the acid in tomatoes and leaches into them, I've switched to using only tomatoes in glass jars or aseptic cartons.

Hoisin sauce. There is some controversy in the health-freak community regarding commercial-made hoisin sauce (perhaps it involves poor-quality ingredients, maybe MSG). You decide. On the other hand, you might want to try my recipe for a homemade version in my book *Omega-3 Cuisine*. Homemade is bound to be better because most commercial products have been made cheaper by cutting corners, both in flavor and health benefits. I like to keep hoisin on hand for building interesting layers of flavor in complex sauces. The tamarind in hoisin adds a pleasant tang to Asian hot-sourpungent sauces.

Natto miso. Not easy to find, and not absolutely essential, but a good thing to have around, natto miso isn't like the regular miso you may be familiar with. It's actually more like a sweet chutney, made with ginger, sea vegetables, barley malt, and fermented whole barley. Look for it wherever macrobiotic food is sold.

Peanut butter. Yes, natural peanut butter (the kind that contains only peanuts and maybe salt) will survive a long time unrefrigerated, but the oils in it will degrade long before you can detect rancidity over the strong peanut taste. I recommend keeping all nuts, nut butters, and oils cold. Plus, storing natural peanut butter in the refrigerator will keep the oil from separating out.

Roasted red peppers. I've gotten a lot of practice, so it takes only a few minutes for me to roast and peel my own red peppers, but for most people it will save a lot of trouble to just buy a jar or two and keep them on hand. (Even I do this for extreme situations.) Just be sure to rinse them well before using, to get that "jar taste" off them, and remove the seeds and any burned skin the producers may have left on.

Roasted yellow peppers. It's a little harder to find roasted yellow peppers than the red ones, so if you run across any, my advice is to buy a couple of jars.

Sriracha sauce. A Vietnamese sweet-and-spicy red chile sauce, Sriracha is now a fairly ubiquitous table condiment in Asian restaurants. This is a very useful ingredient, even in Western-oriented dishes, for adding a stab of heat. Sugar has been used for a long time in Chinese cooking to coax the heat and flavor out of chiles, and Sriracha sauce does an excellent job of that.

Tahini. I used to buy only Middle Eastern tahini (sesame paste) for some food-snob reason I now can't recall, but since I value organically produced seed and nut butters, I go for American or European brands (depending on where I am, of course).

Thai green curry paste. Buyer beware! There are some vegan-friendly green curry pastes available, but traditional Thai versions include dried shrimp paste, so read the label.

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