



Chapter 2

The Low-FODMAP Diet in Five Steps

For me, breaking down any daunting new challenge into doable steps makes it much more manageable, whether it's a work assignment, planning a wedding, or, in this case, a new diet. I've come up with five straightforward steps for approaching a low-FODMAP diet. It's true, these are not "official" steps, but this is what I did as I transitioned to a low-FODMAP diet. The step-by-step approach helped make it a little less intimidating and gave me confidence that I could really do this.

Step 1

Organize Your Pantry

If you're anything like me, after reviewing the list of high- and low-FODMAP foods, your first instinct might be to throw out anything and everything that falls into the high-FODMAP category. Let me stop you and instead suggest you put these items on a different shelf in the pantry or store them in a box so you know that they're off-limits while you're in the elimination phase. Every one of us tolerates certain high-FODMAP foods differently, and you may find that you can still enjoy some of these foods once you try reintroducing them into your diet.

THE GOOD STUFF

Even though the low-FODMAP diet is restrictive, there are still lots of foods that are low in FODMAPs and can be part of a healthy lifestyle. For instance, eggs, lean meats, lactose-free dairy, brown rice, corn, and potatoes are all allowed. For a detailed list of low-FODMAP pantry staples, see page 8 in chapter 1.

It can be a challenge to find brands that have low-FODMAP products, but they are out there. Here are a few of my favorite low-FODMAP products. Note that while I list them by brand, not all products made by these brands are low-FODMAP.

- **88 ACRES:** Their Chocolate & Sea Salt bar, “Seednola” (granola made with seeds), and seed butters are all FODMAP-safe.
- **GLUTINO:** Their pretzels are a great low-FODMAP snack to have on hand. This brand is completely gluten-free (which means no high-FODMAP wheat) and easy to find in most grocery stores.
- **JOVIAL:** I love their brown-rice pastas. This brand is also completely gluten-free and has a wide range of FODMAP-safe products available.

A food that I love to recommend when starting your road to good digestive health is kefir, which is a cultured milk that contains natural probiotics (good bacteria for your gut). Lifeway's plain kefir is 99 percent lactose-free, has no added sugars, and contains 12 live active cultures of probiotics.

THE NOT-NOW STUFF

So, what to do with all the high-FODMAP foods that you've set aside? In some cases, you may be able to add them back into your diet shortly after the elimination period, which is why I suggested storing them away for the short term. In general,

LOW-FODMAP FOR VEGETARIANS

The low-FODMAP diet is compatible with a vegetarian lifestyle with simple swaps you can adapt into the meal plan. Most vegetarian diets revolve around legumes and vegetables, which, unfortunately, are often high-FODMAP. Make sure to eliminate these completely for the duration of the seven days and reintroduce them back in one at a time once you're symptom-free to make sure they're not the source of your discomfort. Through the reintroduction process, you'll find out if you can handle a smaller serving size of high-FODMAP foods and be just fine. For example, I've been able to add chickpeas back into my diet.

Unfortunately, vegan considerations are more involved and beyond the scope of this book. I recommend you check out *Low-FODMAP and Vegan* by Jo Stepaniak if you eat a plant-based diet and want to do a low-FODMAP elimination diet as well.

One of the main concerns for vegetarians is the restriction of pulses, which is a main source of protein and fiber. Low-FODMAP vegetarian proteins that aren't legumes include:

- Eggs
- Lactose-free and nondairy milks and yogurts
- Firm tofu (avoid silken tofu) and tempeh
- Grains like quinoa, buckwheat, polenta, and steel-cut oats (mind serving sizes)
- Certain nuts and seeds in recommended serving sizes
- Canned lentils*

**Tests show that canned lentils have a lower FODMAP count than soaked pulses. You can initially try a ½-cup serving of canned lentils, but make sure they don't contain garlic or onions.*

packaged and prepared foods have many hidden FODMAP ingredients. If you're not sure which to put aside, review the ingredient lists for any of these words: high-fructose corn syrup, onion powder, garlic powder, agave syrup, honey, inulin, chicory root, and sugar alcohols (sorbitol, mannitol, maltitol, xylitol, and isomalt).

If space is tight and you'd rather not keep these tempting, off-limits products around, consider donating them to a homeless shelter or sharing them with family members and friends (who don't have IBS, of course!).

Step 2

Plan Your Meals

I cannot stress enough the importance of having a meal plan when undertaking an elimination diet for the first time. This will ease the stress and anxiety of having to figure out what to eat, particularly when you're short on time and hungry. When you have a meal plan, everything is already planned and ready for you to follow—no stress!

I plan my meals every weekend, taking some time on Saturday to decide which meals I'd like to have during the week. I consider any plans I already have for eating out, make sure I include a snack or two to prepare, plan mostly familiar meals I know I can pull off quickly, and sometimes add a new meal in for variety.

The meal plan included in this book consists of three meals plus two snacks per day, with meal-prep guidelines and a comprehensive shopping list for the week.

Taking the “wing it” approach often leads to bad choices at worst or additional trips to the grocery store at best. Like my parents used to say, the more prepared you are, the better the outcome.

CUSTOMIZING YOUR MEAL PLANS

Chapter 3 of this book includes a one-week meal plan that you can extend and reuse as many times as you would like. Feel free to swap out the meal plan with the recipes from part 2 of the book to create your own customized plan. All recipes in the book will work for the low-FODMAP diet.

Step 3

Buy and Prep Food

With your meal plan set, it's time to go grocery shopping. I like exploring local weekend farmers' markets. They have the freshest produce available, plus there's no need to read labels when purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables. Wherever you shop, bring your quick reference list for low-FODMAP fruits and vegetables, or download the Monash University app (see page 143).

FOOD SHOPPING

Food shopping in the afternoon or evening on Sunday can be extremely stressful. I prefer to do my shopping first thing in the morning, or even on Saturday. I don't want to be rushed or feel anxious when I'm shopping for food. For your first forays into low-FODMAP grocery shopping, give yourself extra time to review labels and explore foods that are naturally low-FODMAP.

The Basics

Before beginning the elimination diet, there are some low-FODMAP basics you can stock up on (or review your pantry to see if you already have them). They include:

- Water and tea (green, black, rooibos, ginger, and peppermint).
- Sea salt, black pepper, and fresh or dried herbs like oregano, thyme, parsley, chili powder, and cumin. For some people with IBS, black pepper, chili powder, and paprika can be irritating. Feel free to replace them with cilantro, parsley, marjoram, rosemary, or bay leaves.
- Garlic-infused extra-virgin olive oil.
- Mayonnaise, mustard (garlic- and onion-free), and soy sauce.
- Beef, chicken, and vegetable broths, as well as bone broth. Just make sure these store-bought products do not contain garlic or onion.
- Nuts and seeds such as pecans, walnuts, almonds, pumpkin seeds, and sunflower seeds. (Make sure to refer to the recommended servings.)

Animal Protein

The low-FODMAP diet does not restrict animal proteins, fish, or eggs. I do advise you to watch your intake of pork, beef, and other red meats, as they can be hard for the stomach to digest properly. In fact, I don't include any recipes with pork or beef in this book. Choose lean meats and wild-caught fish and seafood instead.

Produce

This is when carrying the FODMAP reference chart (see page 8) around with you comes in handy. Stick to fruits and vegetables like unripe bananas, strawberries, oranges, pineapple, green beans, spinach, and carrots, which are all low-FODMAP. Choose fruits and vegetables of multiple colors; variety is best!

A word about bananas: This fruit has been retested by the FODMAP researchers at Monash University and found to be higher in fructans when ripe. If you're going to include bananas in your low-FODMAP diet and/or recipe, choose unripe bananas or limit your intake to one-third of a medium-ripe banana.

FINDING FODMAPS IN INGREDIENT LISTS

It might take an extra few seconds to read ingredient labels while grocery shopping to look for hidden FODMAPs in foods, but it's worth the effort. In no time, you'll be an expert at spotting and avoiding these triggers. The keywords to focus on are: high-fructose corn syrup, onion powder, garlic powder, agave syrup, molasses, honey, inulin, chicory root, and sugar alcohols (sorbitol, mannitol, malt-itol, xylitol, and isomalt). Unfortunately, these are found in most packaged foods. Be aware that even if a package says "healthy" or "gluten-free," the food inside can still be high-FODMAP. Be particularly suspicious if a package says "sugar-free"—that often means it's sweetened with sugar alcohols instead.

Ingredients are listed on a label in order of quantity, from most to least. If one or more of these keywords is listed near the top of the ingredient list, that means the quantity of that item is much higher than if it were listed near the bottom.

Look at the two ingredient lists in the next column. I've highlighted the high-FODMAP ingredients.

INGREDIENTS: Tomato purée (water, tomato paste), vegetable oil (contains one or more of the following: soybean oil, corn oil), **high-fructose corn syrup**, salt, **dried onions**, extra-virgin olive oil, Romano cheese (cow's milk, cheese cultures, salt, enzymes), spices, natural flavor.

INGREDIENTS: Water, soybean oil, distilled vinegar, sugar, salt, contains 2% or less of each of the following: **garlic***, **onion***, red bell peppers*, xanthan gum, maltodextrin (corn), spices, autolyzed yeast extract, calcium disodium EDTA (used to protect quality), natural flavor, lemon-juice concentrate, caramel color, annatto extract (color). *Dried. Gluten-free.

There are some additional sneaky ingredients that you'll want to keep an eye out for, including:

- All-purpose flour: Contains wheat.
- Brown-rice syrup: I know it says rice, but it's high in fructose.
- Dry milk solids or whey protein: Contains lactose.