

# How to Successfully Become a Vegetarian

Even if You Think You Can't Do It

Even If You Think It's Way Too Hard

Even If You Have Tried & Failed Before

Dedicated To : You – A compassionate person who tries to bring the  
better for the world.

From the bottom of my heart, Thank You

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## CHAPTER ONE

Pesco, Ovo Lacto, Vegan

Defining the Types of Vegetarians

To most meat-eaters, the vegetarian lifestyle is mysterious and confusing. Do they never eat animal protein at all? Does that include eggs and milk? Is it something they do for health reasons or because they love animals? And how do they get enough protein in their diets if they don't eat meat?

If you took a poll of vegetarians, you'd quickly discover that there are almost as many ways to be a vegetarian as there are, well, vegetarians. Some people claim to be vegetarians when really they've just cut back on the amount of animal products they consume. On the other end of the scale, there are vegetarians who eat no animal protein at all, or anything produced by animals – including milk, eggs and honey. So the first thing to consider when approaching the vegetarian lifestyle is exactly what kind of vegetarian you plan to be.

## **Vegetarian Diets – the Big Three**

There are three main vegetarian diets, although variations abound in each category: Lacto Ovo vegetarian, Lacto vegetarian, and Vegan. Let's take them one at a time and look at the differences:

A lacto ovo vegetarian eats mostly plant foods, but also eats eggs and dairy products including yogurt, milk, cheese and ice cream. This is the first step most people take when they switch to a vegetarian diet, because it's easy to fulfill all your nutritional requirements and, well, everything tastes good when you cover it with cheese! It's also an easy diet to maintain in the "real world," as there are always restaurant choices – including fast food options – so no matter where you are or who you're with, you can always find something to eat.

Lacto vegetarians eat no animal protein or eggs, but do consume dairy products. While acceptable dairy substitutes have become much more palatable in recent years, it can still be difficult to avoid dairy entirely, and it makes cooking much more challenging. Many lacto vegetarians don't eat eggs because, as ovum, they're potentially animals. Or they choose not to eat eggs because they're uncomfortable with egg farming practices (more

on that later). Conversely, there are ovo vegetarians, who eat eggs but don't consume dairy products.

Vegans eschew all animal proteins and animal by-products. This is the most extreme form of vegetarian diet, as vegans get all of their nutrition from grains, vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts and seeds. And vegans must avoid a large number of commercially produced foods that contain animal proteins – most breads are made with eggs, for example, and many non-dairy products are thickened with casein, a protein extracted from milk. Even vegetarian "burgers" often contain eggs! Despite the challenges, the vegan diet has steadily grown in popularity in recent years as more and more vegetarians have become savvy label-readers and vegan-friendly food companies have created more products for them to enjoy.

In addition to the three basic vegetarian diets, there's also macrobiotics, a diet inspired by ancient Chinese principle of yin and yang which relies primarily on locally produced, seasonal foods. The basic macrobiotic diet includes fish – but remove the fish and the diet is vegan, with most macrobiotic cookbooks heavily favoring Asian-influenced cuisine and the use of ingredients like pickled vegetables, daikon radishes and sea vegetables like kelp and nori.

This isn't to say that you're required to sign up for any one style of vegetarian diet and follow it to the letter. Pesco vegetarians, for example, don't eat poultry, beef or pork but they do eat fish. The so-called "semi-vegetarian" has cut back on their intake of meat overall, but still eats it occasionally – if you're reading this, that's probably where you are already! Pollo vegetarians avoid red meat and fish but eat chicken. While the pesco-pollo vegetarian avoids red meat but consumes both chicken and fish. There are even fruitarians, who only eat seeds, nuts and fruit, plus vegetables that are botanically classified as fruit like zucchini, eggplant, squash and avocados. And there are other diets that, while vegetarian in nature, further restrict consumption of certain foods depending on the diet's purpose – the raw food diet requires that you only eat uncooked foods, and the "natural-hygiene" diet, while making limited use of animal products, is designed to cleanse the body of toxins and the allowed foods are chosen accordingly.

But don't let all of that confuse you! As a newcomer to vegetarianism, you should first set your sights on the three primary types of the diet – ovo

lacto, lacto and vegan. Once you've discovered which of these best meets your needs, then you can decide if you want to adapt them even further, adding or subtracting as you see fit. For the most part, labeling your diet is less important than figuring out how to transition from a meat-based diet to a vegetarian one.

## **Which Comes First – the Dairy or the Egg?**

Giving up meat but holding onto eggs and dairy in your diet is a good way to start your vegetarian experience. Your menu options are far greater, and it's easier to work enough protein into your diet than by jumping straight to a macrobiotic or vegan lifestyle. Yes, there are good reasons to avoid eggs and dairy, and we'll discuss that as we go along. But ovo lacto vegetarianism is perhaps the most popular, simple and straightforward approach to vegetarianism.

Besides being a great protein source, eggs also provide your body with lecithin, a substance that emulsifies dietary fat and which is needed to build cell walls. In fact, lecithin is very important in protecting your cells from oxidation, and is vital in building the protective tissues that surround the brain. (Should you choose not to eat eggs, lecithin is still important – but there are now soy-based lecithin supplements that have been shown to improve blood cholesterol levels.)

Besides, eggs are an easy meal and, for many vegetarians, the veggie omelet is a great fall-back meal that's available at virtually every coffee shop. You should limit the amount of yolks you eat, though, as they're high in fat and cholesterol – egg whites, on the other hand, are almost pure protein.

As for dairy, you may find yourself going overboard when you first start your vegetarian diet, making up for the loss of meat by eating more cheese and drinking more milk. Keep an eye on the amount of fat you're eating – changing your diet isn't going to make you feel better if you start loading up on extra fat and cholesterol!



## So – What Can I Have For Lunch?

If your first thought is that you're about to embark on a way of eating that's going to be boring, repetitive and limiting, then you have a surprise in store. Vegetarians – vegans included – enjoy a widely varied diet made up of tasty and nutritious foods, most of which you already eat on a regular basis.

All of the same things that you eat today – burritos, burgers, casseroles, soups, lasagna, sandwiches – can be enjoyed as part of a vegetarian diet. All you need to do is remove or replace the meat. The key is to make sure you get enough protein from combining grains and legumes (which we'll discuss in detail in Chapter Five) and choose your meals wisely.

Take that burrito. Skip the meat-based style and go for one that's packed with beans, rice, tomatoes, onions, bell peppers and sour cream. It's delicious, chock-full of protein and other vital nutrients, and absolutely delicious. Even something as decadent as stroganoff can be adapted to a meat-free diet – cubes of tofu, marinated in soy sauce, make for a fine meat substitute when tossed with noodles, spices and cream.

And don't overlook the cuisine of cultures that have long celebrated vegetarian cooking. Miso soup, Spanikopita, hummus, vegetable curries, tabouli salad, samosas and veggie stir-fry dishes are all on your menu – so enjoy!

Once you become accustomed to eating meatless meals, you'll find that it's much easier than you think. With a little creativity, you can even plan entire meatless dinner parties around foods so delicious that your most carnivorous guests won't even notice that meat's missing from the menu – a dinner of hearty vegetable chili topped with shredded cheese with a spring salad of field greens, toasted walnuts and crumbled bleu cheese in a balsamic vinaigrette, followed by key lime pie for dessert ... well, who wouldn't love that?

By choosing to adopt the vegetarian lifestyle, you're going to improve your health, help conserve the earth's natural resources, eat more ethically and responsibly, and lower your risk of contracting meat-borne illnesses from E. coli contamination and additives like hormones, chemicals and antibiotics.

But that doesn't mean your diet has to be boring – there's a whole world of foods out there that you can enjoy.

Whatever the reason you've decided to remove meat from your diet, you'll find that it's the best nutritional decision that you've ever made. In the course of this book, you'll learn about the fascinating history of vegetarianism, how you can transition from a meat-eating diet to a meatless one, the ways in which you can insure that you're getting proper nutrition, how to buy food and cook for your family, and how to stick with your diet in a world full of carnivores.

You're about to embark on a journey which will make you healthier and happier. Congratulations on choosing to live as a thoughtful, caring eater – your body will thank you!

## CHAPTER 2

### A Brief History of Vegetarianism

### How It Started and What It All Means

When you think of early man, odds are that the first image that pops into your mind is that of spear-carrying Neanderthal dragging a large, dead animal home to his cave for dinner. We've long held onto the erroneous notion that our ancestors were mighty warriors, taking down gigantic beasts with their bows, arrows and flint knives, and tearing into meat as their primary source of nourishment.

But the truth is more complicated than that. Certainly there were eras in human history when meat was a staple – during the Ice Age, for example, the ground was so cold and hard that vegetation was difficult to find, so that Neanderthal was forced to hunt down meat to fill his grumbling tummy. But the very earliest humans were more gatherer than hunter and actually scavenged the remains of animals that were killed by other predators, essentially gleaning from others' roadkill. Studies by anthropologists indicate that early man was far more interested in feasting on the nutrient-rich bone marrow of found animals rather than on their flesh, using tools to cut away the meat not to eat it, but to remove it from the desired bones.

No, early man's diet consisted of what he could find growing where he lived – vegetables, fruits, nuts and seeds. By combining those, and relying primarily on a diet of calcium-rich wild greens, he was able to get all of the vitamins, iron, protein, fats and carbohydrates that he needed. Animals had yet to be domesticated, so the only meat our ancestors had to eat was either what they chased down or found lying about – gathering nuts and seeds was simply more productive than counting on being able to catch and cook an animal by supper time. Eventually, man developed agriculture, raising vegetables and grains, and domesticating animals for meat and dairy. But before that time, some 10,000 years ago, man relied heavily on that which he could pluck from trees, bushes and the ground, and his diet was about 90 percent plant food. So toss out the idea that man is at heart a carnivore – we are, in fact, omnivores, able to eat meat but certainly not required to by our biology or our history.

## **The Pythagorean Credo**

By the time that man's adventures were being jotted down in scriptures and testaments, meat-eating had become commonplace – but there were still those who advised against the practice. In the Old Testament's book of Daniel, it was set down that Daniel refused the wealthy King Nebuchadnezzar's feast of rich foods, meat and wine, asking for only vegetables and water for 10 days. At the end of that period, Daniel asked that his health and that of his companions be compared to those who indulged in the fare of the king's table, and Daniel's group was deemed "better in appearance and fatter in flesh" than those who ate the king's diet. The parable was intended to show that Daniel was a smart, strong iconoclast, able to assert himself in the presence of a king, but it also serves as one of the earliest records of the superiority of a vegetarian lifestyle – and how going against the meat-eating norm was, even then, considered an act of rebellion!

But the earliest vegetarian diet, way back in the sixth century B.C. and long before the term "vegetarian" was coined, was the Pythagorean Diet. The Greek philosopher Pythagoras, famous for his contributions to geometry and mathematics, strongly believed in the reincarnation of the soul and preached an ethical lifestyle that included injunctions against killing living creatures, whether through animal sacrifice or for the eating of meat. His proscribed diet was very close to today's vegan diet, and attracted two different classes of adherents. One group, an elite group who studied directly under Pythagoras called *mathematikoi* ("mathematicians") followed an extremely restricted regimen, eating only cereals, bread, honey, fruits and some vegetables. A larger group of followers called the *akousmatikoi* ("listeners") who attended lectures by the philosopher were allowed to eat meat and drink wine, but were required to abstain on certain days.

According to historical documents, Pythagoras told his followers, "Oh, my fellow men! Do not defile your bodies with sinful foods. We have corn, we have apples bending down the branches with their weight, and grapes swelling on the vines. There are sweet-flavored herbs, and vegetables which can be cooked and softened over the fire, nor are you denied milk or thyme-scented honey. The earth affords a lavish supply of riches, of innocent foods, and offers you banquets that involve no bloodshed or slaughter: only beasts satisfy their hunger with flesh, and not even all of those, because horses, cattle, and sheep live on grass." His biographer, Diogenes, wrote that Pythagoras ate millet or barley bread and honeycomb

in the morning and raw vegetables at night, and that he paid fisherman to throw their catches back into the ocean.

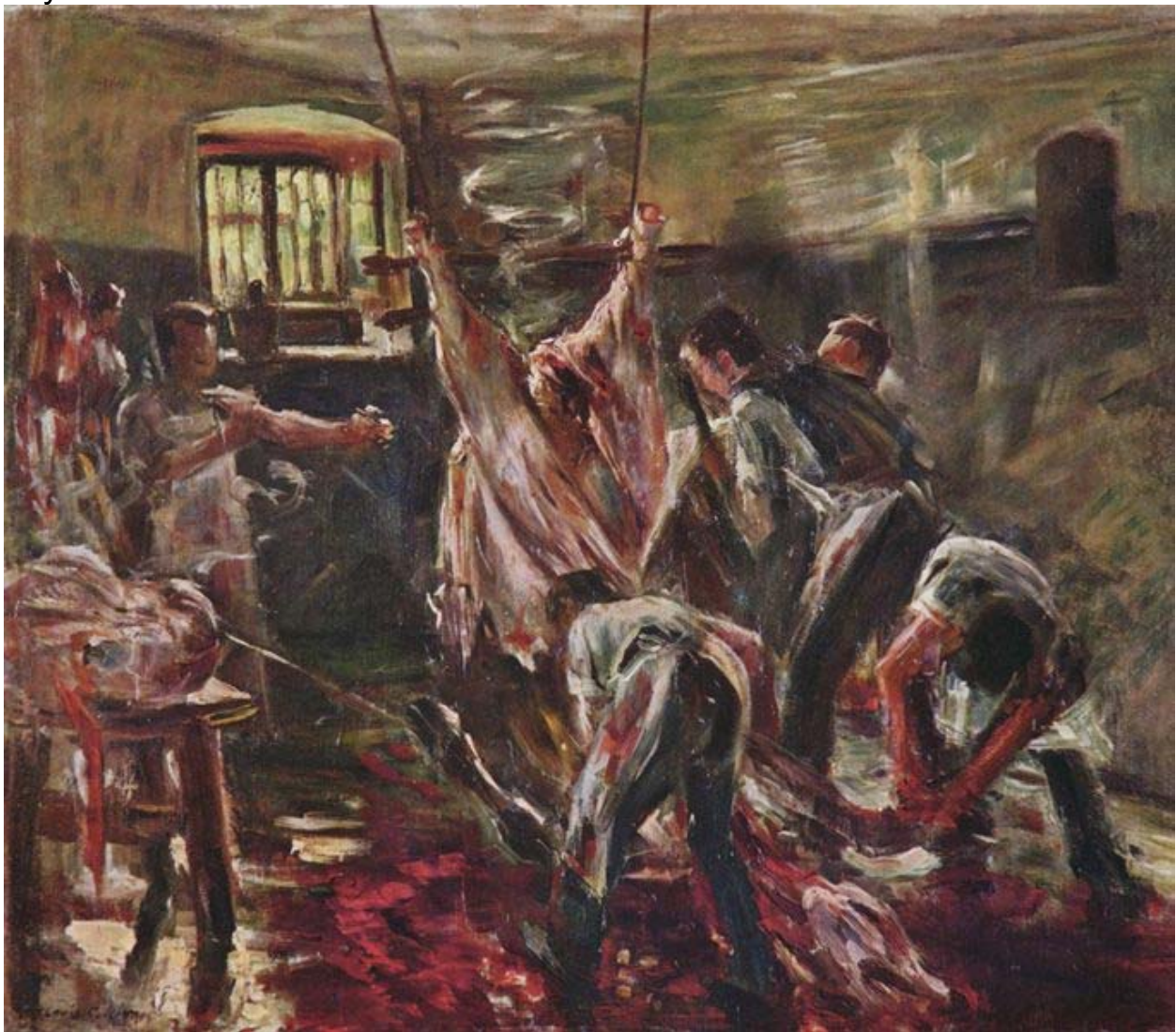
The Pythagorean diet – which the philosopher claimed had been taught by the goddess Demeter to Heracles, who taught it to him – became known as that of intellectuals and rebels, and was banned by Rome. But in the smaller, outlying Greek states, the Pythagorean diet was more acceptable and found a wide share of adherents. And Pythagoras wasn't the only philosopher to advise that a vegetarian lifestyle was healthier and more ethical than a meat-eating diet – Hippocrates, Socrates, Plato, Seneca, Ovid and Virgil all advocated vegetarian diets. Throughout the times that followed, Pythagoras' teachings, included his diet, retained its advocates, even seeing a resurgence of popularity in Europe during the 17<sup>th</sup> century when a devout Christian named Thomas Tryon read the works of the German mystic Jacob Böhme and started a Hindu vegetarian society in London.

## **Towards an Enlightened Way of Eating**

The Age of Enlightenment during Europe's 18<sup>th</sup> century saw an upsurge in interest in vegetarianism, following hundreds of years in which diet was dictated by need – after all, during periods of famine and disease, one eats whatever one can get. But by the 18<sup>th</sup> century medicine had curtailed many of the more widespread diseases, and Europeans had discovered a number of delicious New World vegetables like potatoes, cauliflower and corn. The intellectuals of the time, including the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer – who were now able to think about loftier issues than mere survival – began to reappraise man's place in the order of things. For the first time, arguments were put forth that animals were intelligent, feeling creatures, and that it was immoral to mistreat them.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, painters like Oudry and Delacroix made artworks that showed animals as individuals with personalities, rather than just beasts to be used and slaughtered for human convenience. During this time, the treatment of animals was often horrific – beating one's horse wasn't considered out of line, nor were cock fights or bear-baiting, the

setting of bulldogs against bears as sport. Pigs were beaten to death with knotted ropes in the belief that it would make for more tender meat and, in Paris, the slaughter of animals was done in the alleys next to the city's many, many butcher shops, which led to public outcry against the horrible sounds of slaughter, the blood in the streets and the stench of rotting flesh. When Napoléon took control of Paris in 1799, he began a program of extensive city works that including sewers, and slaughterhouses located on the outskirts of the city. The methods used to butcher animals were made no less humane, but at least people no longer had to witness the slaughter as they walked down the city streets – beginning a tradition of killing mass quantities of animals for meat behind closed doors that continues to this day.



The 1800s saw a number of religious and educational communities spring up which advocated vegetarian diets. In 1807, the Reverend William Cowherd broke with the Church of England and established the Bible Christian Church, founded on a literal interpretation of the scriptures. Cowherd believed that the Bible prohibited the eating of meat – a view that was not shared by leaders of the Church of England – and he quickly developed a large congregation. His timing was perfect, capitalizing on a widespread backlash to the industrial revolution that inspired a more romanticized view of nature and animals. Cowherd's flock abstained from consuming meat, coffee, tea, tobacco and alcohol, and many also eschewed dairy products and eggs. The Bible Christian Church handed out free bowls of vegetable soup to the poor, and are often credited with coining the term "vegetarian."

In 1817, a disciple of Cowherd's named William Metcalfe sailed for America with 41 church members and formed a small but influential Philadelphia congregation. Among Metcalfe's followers was a Presbyterian minister named Sylvester Graham, a raw foods enthusiast and inventor of the graham cracker. Graham toured the United States, giving lectures on temperance (abstention from alcohol) and the importance of proper diet to good health. Through his lectures and his writings in the "Graham Journal of Health and Longevity," he counseled that certain foods and activities were unhealthy because of their "stimulating" qualities, including white bread, alcohol and the wearing of tight pants. He was a tireless advocate of the vegetarian diet – he compared human physiology to that of orangutans, concluding that vegetarian food was optimal for all primates – and founded the American Vegetarian Society in 1850. But Graham's two greatest legacies are health related – he lectured extensively on the connections between diet and disease (stating that New York residents had weakened their resistance to epidemics through their unhealthy eating habits) and promoted the use of whole grains, denouncing the increasingly popular use of refined flour in baked goods, pointing out that while bakers were able to turn out more loaves of bread due to the faster baking times, the nutritional value of the bread was lost.

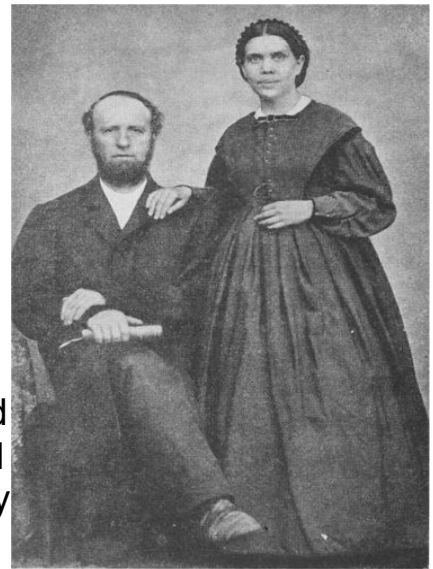
Among those that Metcalfe and Graham influenced was Amos Bronson Alcott, father of "Little Women" author Louisa May Alcott. A writer, philosopher and educator, Alcott was a proponent of Transcendentalism, which began as a reform movement within the Unitarian church and proposed that the soul of each individual is identical with the soul of the



world, and contains what the world contains. In 1843, he and educational reformer Charles Lane established Fruitlands, an ambitious utopian community in Massachusetts. Gathering together a small but eager group of disaffected intellectuals, Alcott advocated an austere vegan lifestyle, writing, "The entrance to paradise is still through the strait and narrow gate of self-denial. Eden's avenue is yet guarded by the fiery-sworded cherubim, and humility and charity are the credentials for admission." The diet at Fruitlands consisted of fruit, grains, beans and peas. All animal flesh and by-products were forbidden due to their "corrupting" nature, and tea, coffee, rice, molasses and sugar were off-limits because they were produced by slave labor. The community's goal was to produce only what they needed, believing that the acquisition of material goods inhibits spirituality. For a time, Alcott admired the self-supporting activities of the nearby Shaker community, but ultimately condemned them for indulging in production and trade with the outside world. As well-intentioned as Fruitlands' goals were, it didn't take long to discover that successful communal living requires more than a well-tended vegetable garden and discussions of philosophy – Alcott's experiment lasted just seven months. Louisa May Alcott wrote of her experience at Fruitlands in "Transcendental Wild Oats," and Fruitlands stands today as a museum.

## **Adventists and Corn Flakes and Vegans – Oh My!**

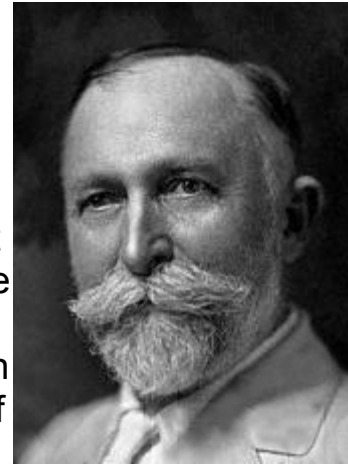
One of biggest influences on modern-day vegetarianism in the United States has been the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church, founded in the 1840s by vegetarian health reformer Ellen White. She believed that the proper diet for humans was prescribed by God in the Bible, and wrote in 1864 that Adam and Eve were given all they needed for nourishment – "He designed that the race should eat. It was contrary to His plan to have the life of any creature taken. There was to be no death in Eden. The fruit of the trees in the garden was the food man's wants required." The SDA church focuses heavily on spiritual health, diet and exercise – in fact, several studies have found that Adventists are significantly healthier than the general population! Today,



ELDER AND MRS. JAMES WHITE

almost all of the church's clergy and roughly half of its two million members worldwide are lacto-ovo vegetarians, and the SDA church owns its own publishing company, plus a number of hospitals, natural food stores, and vegetarian restaurants. Church-affiliated universities are leaders in scientific research into dietetics, and continue to promote vegetarianism with a strong emphasis on health.

One man who worked as a printer for White, helping to publish the Adventists' health journal, was a fellow named John Harvey Kellogg. White and her husband, James, took a liking to Kellogg and paid for his medical school education, then placed him in charge of their Battle Creek Sanitarium, a spa retreat for "health restoration and training." A believer in the value of preventative medicine, Dr. Kellogg's treatments were founded in the Adventist philosophy with an emphasis on fresh air, sunshine, exercise, rest and diet. The diet he prescribed, which he called "biologic living," forbade meats, condiments, spices, alcohol, chocolate, coffee and tea, but he worked tirelessly to create a vegetarian diet that was also varied and tasty – over the course of his career, Dr. Kellogg invented over 80 different products using nuts and grains, including peanut butter, a cereal-based coffee substitute (an early version of Postum) and corn flakes.



Dr. Kellogg was convinced that a great many illnesses were caused by toxic bacteria in the bowels and favored a high-fiber vegetarian diet, blaming some 90 percent of all disease on stomach and bowel problems. He was especially concerned about the effects of meat-eating on the intestinal tract. In many ways, Dr. Kellogg's practices can be viewed as somewhat different – he disapproved of sexual activity of all kinds, gave patients multiple daily enemas, and shocked them in electrified tanks of water – but his influence as an advocate of vegetarianism was profound. Among the visitors to his sanitarium were automobile tycoon Henry Ford, retailers J.C. Penney and S.S.Kresge, actress Sarah Bernhardt, explorer Richard Byrd, inventor Thomas Edison, industrialist Harvey Firestone, President William Howard Taft, and aviator Amelia Earhart. Once he started marketing his food products, Dr. Kellogg had to hire his brother to take over because the enterprise was so successful, and his method of mass-producing cereal for the marketplace was copied by numerous competitors.

Battle Creek Sanitarium was just one of many vegetarian health retreats in the United States, and advocates of the lifestyle – and shrewd businessmen hoping to capitalize on a trend – opened vegetarian restaurants in large cities across the country. Toward the end of the century, however, interest in vegetarianism waned. In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) began producing food guides, ostensibly to help struggling families plan nutritious meals during times of little money and, later, food rationing. These food guides, unsurprisingly, recommended that Americans eat hefty amounts of meat, eggs and dairy – all products of the food industries overseen by the Department of Agriculture.

### **The Swingin' 60's: Peace, Free Love and Vegetarianism**

Vegetarianism regained some popularity in the 1960s with the teaching of Michio Kushi, an advocate of macrobiotics who founded the Kushi Institute in Massachusetts. Born in Japan, Kushi came to the United States in 1949, eager to share what he'd learned from macrobiotic educator Georges



Ohsawa, who taught that food was the key to health, and that health was the key to peace. In Boston, Kushi founded Erewhon, the country's pioneer natural foods distributor, making organically grown whole foods and naturally processed foods widely available and introducing countless people to miso, tofu, tempeh and other soy products, as well as sea vegetables, barley malt and rice syrup, azuki beans and rice cakes – the mainstream availability of health foods that we have today simply wouldn't exist if not for Michio Kushi. Throughout the 1980s, Kushi met with government leaders at the United Nations and around the world, promoting macrobiotics, working to convey the philosophies of healthful, thoughtful eating.

But the real vegetarian boom came in the early 1970s following the publication of Frances Moore Lappé's "Diet for a Small Planet." Published at a time when the world was beginning to register alarm over depletion of

the earth's resources, Lappé's book raised awareness of the wasteful manner in which animals are reared for consumption as meat. Though not a vegetarian herself, Lappé promoted feeding ourselves in a healthful, respectful ways that made a gentler impact on the environment. Her book advocated a complicated methodology for eating complete proteins that involved combining food low in certain amino acids with other foods high in that amino acid – in later editions of the book she abandoned that method, saying, "In combating the myth that meat is the only way to get high quality protein, I reinforced another myth. I gave the impression that in order to get enough protein without meat, considerable care was needed in choosing foods. Actually, it is much easier than I thought." While Lappé's book was slow to gain popularity, in the three decades since its release it sold over three million copies and spawned a 2002 sequel, "Hope's Edge" The Next Diet for a Small Planet," in which Lappé once again looks at the way we feed ourselves. In 2001, Lappé and her daughter, Anna, founded the Small Planet Institute, a research and education organization which partners with foundations, individuals and socially responsible businesses to promote "living democracy," a philosophy of sustainable, positive, working communities.

The ethical side of vegetarianism also received a boost in the mid-1970's, with the publication of the book "Animal Liberation" by ethicist Peter Singer, which argued against what the author called "speciesism" – discrimination based on the belief that humans own animals and can do whatever they like with them. His contention that all beings capable of suffering should be granted equal consideration helped to promote not just vegetarianism but a vegan lifestyle, due to his belief that the use of animals for food is unjustifiable because it creates unnecessary suffering. A few years later in 1975, the non-profit group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) was formed, founded on the tenet that "animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, or use for entertainment." In addition to high profile campaigns against animal testing and fur farming, PETA has lobbied passionately against the use of animals for food. The group has had great success in uncovering and stopping inhumane treatment of animals in laboratories and in spreading awareness of veganism, particularly through their placement of "Lettuce Ladies" – lovely young women dressed only in bikinis made from lettuce – and a 2003 advertising campaign which compared animals killed in factory farms with concentration camp victims.

## **So Where Are We Now?**

Vegetarianism is more popular and acceptable by mainstream society than ever before. The more that we learn about diabetes, heart disease and cancer, and with more meat-borne illnesses from E. Coli, Mad Cow disease and other bacterial infections on the rise, a vegetarian diet is a smarter option than at any time in the past. In a world where our natural resources are being depleted at a rate far faster than they can possibly be renewed, it makes more sense than ever to walk gently on the planet. Fortunately, the ranks of vegetarians are swelling as people figure these things out for themselves – with any luck, most of the world will come around to the vegetarian way of thinking, while we still have some of those resources left.

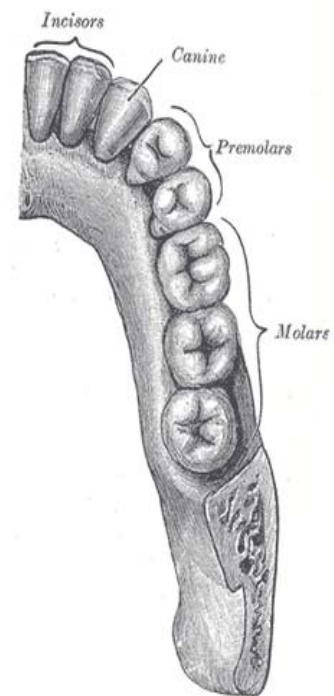
## CHAPTER 3

### Ethical Eating

#### Why Becoming a Vegetarian is Good for You and for the Earth

Some people become vegetarians because they simply find meat unappetizing – chewing and digesting hunks of animal flesh isn't their idea of fine dining. And that's a perfectly valid reason to embrace a meatless lifestyle. But for many others, vegetarianism is part of their commitment to living their lives with as much environmental, moral and political responsibility as possible – and becoming a vegetarian is a natural part of that resolve.

In fact, just because humans can digest meat and metabolize the protein, that doesn't mean that we were designed to eat meat as a primary nutritional source. Yes, we *can* eat meat – but the way our bodies are built shows that we function more efficiently on plant foods. One clue is the design of our teeth. If you examine the teeth of true carnivorous animals, theirs are long, sharp and pointed in the front for the purpose of tearing away flesh. Our so-called "canine" teeth – the four teeth in the front corners of our mouths – are very poorly designed for the task when you compare them to the teeth of dogs, cats, lions and wolves. Human teeth are short, blunt and only very slightly rounded on top – not designed to tear at meat at all! Similarly, the lower jaws of meat-eating animals open very wide but move very little from side-to-side, adding power and stability to their bite. Like other plant-eating animals, our jaws not only open and close but also move forwards, backwards and side-to-side, designed to bite off pieces of plant matter and then grinding it into smaller pieces with our flat molars.



But the most important evolutionary development that sets humans apart from other animals is our huge, overdeveloped brain. We have the ability to choose what we eat and how we live – we aren't just eating machines forced by the circumstances of nature to eat a specific diet. As a human, you can make decisions based on science, ethics, morals and good old fashioned common sense.

Every choice you make has repercussions, from the excess packaging that you toss in the trash (plastic and cardboard that ends up in a landfill) to the light bulbs that you use (most likely manufactured by a company that

supplies nuclear triggers to bomb manufacturers). The food you choose to eat is no exception. In our industrialized Western world, meat appears in tidy wrapped packages in our grocer's case so we don't have to think about where it came from – the resources used to raise the animal, the additives pumped into feed to increase production, and the manner in which the animals live and die. But every time you buy meat, you support the system that created it – and chances are, you have no idea just what that entails!

### **What's the Beef with the Cattle Industry?**

One of the most eye-opening revelations in Frances Moore Lappé's provocative 1971 book, "Diet for a Small Planet" was the information she provided on the environmentally disastrous impact of the beef industry. One of the biggest effects is on the groundwater supplies that provide the water we use for drinking, cooking and bathing. In the United States alone, the various underground water tables are dropping from six inches to six feet per year. And even as our water supplies are dwindling, almost half of the water used in the U.S. each year is used to irrigate land to grow food – with vast quantities of that going to produce the grain that's fed to farm animals.

The rate of return – the amount of food we get for the amount of water we use – on animal protein is pretty poor. As an example, it takes about 23 gallons of water to produce a pound of tomatoes. Compare that to the estimated *2,000 gallons* of water used to produce a pound of beef. In her book, Lappé called cattle a "protein factory in reverse," meaning they consume more protein than they provide! For every pound of beef that a steer provides, it eats seven pounds of grain and soy protein – so doesn't it make more environmental sense to just eat the grains?



As global warming due to air pollution becomes an ever more dire development, scientists are looking not only to the pollutants caused by cars and factories, but to that caused by factory farming as well. Cattle produce methane



gas (and if you've ever driven past a stockyard, you know how dense that gas can be!) and methane makes up 9 percent of the gasses contributing to the greenhouse effect – approximately 70 to 80 tons of methane per year. They also produce waste high in nitrous oxide, another factor in global warming. In fact, animal waste is the largest source of environmental emissions of nitrous oxide, making up 95 percent. Cattle farming in rainforest areas contributes to global warming, too, as more and more rainforest is leveled to create pastures for grazing. And the runoff from cattle farms – containing nitrogen, phosphorous, waste-borne pathogens and detergents – often flows directly into the waterways, destroying fish habitats and leaching into the groundwater that provides our drinking water supplies.

Then there's the massive use of fossil fuels required to get beef to market. Today's massive, high-tech factory farms burn fuel to run the machinery that provides heating, lighting and cooling, in addition to the gasoline that fuels the trucks that deliver the feed, transport the cattle and deliver the meat to market. The Worldwatch Institute estimates that it takes about 48 gallons of gasoline per American, per year, to provide the red meat and poultry that we eat.

## **Old McDonald Doesn't Live Here Anymore**

Ah, the pastoral pleasures of farm life! Fluffy sheep grazing contentedly in the fields, the chickens clucking in the henhouse and the pigs happily munching away at the family's leftovers from their communal trough. Everyone's happy and healthy and doing their part for the cycle of life. Right?

Unfortunately, it's not at all like that. At least, not in this day and age of mass-quantity factory farms where the well-being of animals isn't considered – the only issue is how to harvest as much meat for market as possible per square foot of land. And to that end, farmers now forgo traditional grazing practices, packing as many animals as possible into crowded feedlots, where they do nothing throughout their short lives but eat tons of grain and drink thousands of gallons of water. Dairy cows are often treated better than beef cattle, but not much – increasingly, dairy farmers are keeping their cows housed inside barns their entire lives, where they

develop leg and hoof problems due to standing in one place on cement floors. Cows today are also forced to produce more milk than ever before, being constantly milked by machines with little rest from the process, giving them painfully inflamed udders. The forced milk production shortens their lives, too – when treated well, cows can live for up to 20 years, producing milk for over half their life. Today's dairy cows are so overmilked that they can only produce for three or four years, after which time they're sent to the slaughterhouse.



Cows aren't the only animals to suffer under factory farming practices. Chickens are treated especially poorly, living their entire lives in cramped confinement, crowded so closely together that they're "debeaked" – their beaks snapped off with a machine tool – so that they don't harm each other with their hysterical pecking.

Debeaked chickens have difficulty eating, which isn't surprising, and live in such terrible conditions that they're forced to eat their own and other chickens' feces along with their food, contributing to the wide variety of potentially deadly bacteria that gets passed onto the consumer.

Besides the debeaking, another unpleasant practice is "molting." Chickens produce more eggs when they're shedding their feathers, so egg farmers induce the state by starving the birds for up to twelve days at a time. Besides being inhumane, some researchers have concluded that forced molting increases chickens' levels of salmonella. This also assists egg farmers in weeding out the weaker hens – about 3 percent of chickens die of starvation during the forced molting process. In fact, the entire egg-production process starts with killing – male chicks have no function on a modern egg farm and are "culled" by workers whose job consists of identifying male chicks and tossing them, while still alive, into machines that grind them up and add them to the hens' feed. Practices like this, along with molting and debeaking, have caused enough of a public outcry that even the McDonald's Corporation couldn't ignore it – in 2000, the fast food giant sent letters to the farmers who provide the over 1.5 billion eggs that they use each year, demanding that chickens be housed in larger cages and that forced molting be stopped.

## How This Little Piggy Gets to Market

Pigs are one of the most intelligent of the domesticated beasts, friendly and gregarious. Those who raise pigs – the ones who care about their animals – say that they're as smart and as loving as dogs or cats, enjoying music, basking in the sun and playing with toys. They're also very clean animals who only "wallow" in mud to cool off and keep away flies. All of which makes it especially horrifying when you learn how they're treated in factory farms.

Mother pigs on farms in the United States live out most of their lives in "gestation" crates that are just 7 feet long by 2 feet wide, too small for them to even turn around. They display signs of boredom and stress when contained in such a manner, biting the bars of the cage and gnashing their teeth – piglets' tails are often routinely cut off so they won't bite each other's tails, a neurotic behavior that only occurs in confinement. Piglets are taken away from their mothers three weeks after birth, then packed into pens until they are singled out to be raised for breeding or for meat. Often, the piglets' teeth are chipped off with pliers to further discourage them from biting each other.



For transport, pigs are stuffed into trucks with no food or water and without any temperature regulation, subjecting them to extremes of heat or cold. During the freezing midwestern winters, they often freeze to the sides of the trucks or die from dehydration. According to numbers provided by the pork industry, over 100,000 pigs die on their way to slaughterhouses each year, and over 400,000 arrive crippled due to barbaric transport practices. At the slaughterhouse, the pigs are stunned with an electrical charge to their brain or heart which, when done correctly, renders them immediately unconscious before they're tossed into tanks of scalding water which

softens their skin and removes their hair. Stunning is often done incorrectly, however – meaning that the pigs are still conscious and already in severe pain when they're thrown into the scalding water. Audits of factory farms by the USDA and independent organizations continually find scores of humane slaughter violations, including one PETA investigation that uncovered a plant in Oklahoma where workers killed pigs by slamming the animals heads against the floor and beating them with hammers.

## **Vegetarianism – The Thoughtful Alternative**

There are many, many benefits that you'll see immediately by becoming a vegetarian, including clear skin, shiny hair and lower risk of high cholesterol, diabetes and kidney disease. But the wider benefit is the one you can't see – the benefit to the rest of the world. Keep the following in mind when you feel tempted to go back to eating meat ...

**You're helping to conserve water.** Water is the earth's most precious resource, and currently about 50 percent of the water in the United States is used to grow crops for grain-fed animals – as opposed to 35 percent that's used to grow food crops for humans to eat. It takes roughly 15 times as much water to produce the same amount of protein from an animal that we can get from plant sources. Switching to a vegetarian diet is the single biggest thing that you can do to cut down on your consumption of water.

**You're helping to protect the land.** Livestock grazing erodes topsoil, drying out the land and making it unusable for other farming. This is one reason why forests are clear-cut at an alarming rate to make room for more cattle grazing – agriculture accounts for nearly 90 percent of the 30 million acres of rainforest that are destroyed each year. Nearly 25 percent of all prescription drugs have a basis in rainforest plants – destroying the rainforest may mean destroying our chances of curing cancer or AIDS.

**You're helping to conserve fossil fuels.** In this supply-and-demand world, less demand means less production, which means less consumption of fossil fuels. More than a third of the fossil fuels used in the United States are used by animal agriculture – a calorie of animal protein requires *ten times* as much fuel as needed to produce a calorie of plant protein.

Researchers at the University of Chicago compared the amount of fossil fuel needed to cultivate and process various foods, fuel that's used to operate agricultural machinery, provide food for livestock and irrigate crops. They also factored in emissions of methane and nitrous oxide produced by cows, sheep and manure treatment. According to the findings, the average American diet that consists of about 28 percent animal foods generates the equivalent of 1.5 tons more carbon dioxide each year than a comparable vegan diet. The researchers pointed out that driving a hybrid car rather than an average vehicle would conserve a little over one ton of carbon dioxide per year – meaning that living a vegan lifestyle reduces more emissions than driving a hybrid car!

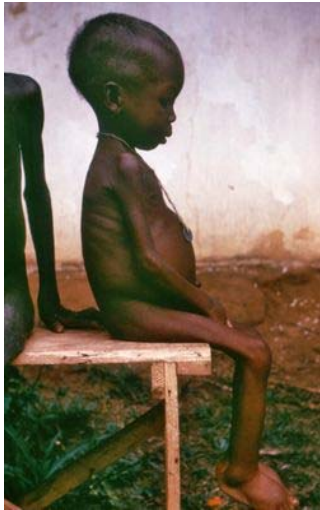
**You're making a more compassionate choice.** Now that you've read about the horrors of factory farming, is that slice of bacon really worth it? There's a famous quote from George Bernard Shaw: "When a man wants to murder a tiger he calls it sport; when the tiger wants to murder him he calls it ferocity." Many people believe that we have a natural right to kill and eat animals, but think of it this way – imagine a time when an alien species visits our planet. They're smarter than we are, and have technology far more advanced of our own. And they like to eat meat. So humans become the factory-farmed animals, taken to slaughterhouses – as we cry and scream and fight to no avail – and we're shoved into pens until such time as we're marched onto the killing floor, bashed in the head and stripped of our flesh, which is then neatly packaged up for market. It's a horrible thought – yet that's what humans do to animals every day. St. Francis of Assisi said, "If you have men who will exclude any of god's creatures from the shelter of compassion and pity, you will have men who will deal likewise with their fellow men." Choosing a vegetarian lifestyle is choosing the path of compassion.

## **Feeding the World with Plants**

Considering the vast resources squandered to provide consumers with meat, it's obvious that it's an illogical, inefficient way to feed our continually growing population. Vegetarian diets can sustain far more people than diets that revolve around meat – when we eat grains, vegetables, fruits, nuts and seeds, we're eating the food that is fed to the meat animals that are later, in turn, eaten by us. It just doesn't make sense! Factor in the damage to the

earth, the water and the air ... on a global level, our reliance on animal foods is devastating.

There's some debate as to whether choosing a meatless diet really helps to feed people elsewhere – there simply isn't enough food to feed the world, but that's an issue with far more complicated issues of politics, distribution and geography involved than just choice of diet. But one thing is certain – Westerners eat way more food than we need. In poorer nations, the average person eats about a pound of grain each day. In the United States, it's four times that – and a large part of that is the grain used to produce the animal proteins we eat. While people are starving all over the globe, the U.S. feeds 70 percent of its harvested grain to animals – meaning that most of the food we grow goes to produce even more food that most of the rest of the world can't afford to purchase.



What's absolutely true is that the expansion of meat-eating around the world is directly contributing to hunger, and will continue to do so unless something drastic is done. Worldwide, meat production quadrupled from 44 million tons in 1950 to 195 million tons in 1996. Countries like China and India – both countries with a long, rich tradition of vegetable-based diets – are becoming increasingly avid consumers of meat foods. In China alone, pork consumption has risen so astronomically in the last decade, the Chinese now consume more pork per person than in the United States. And while India still has the largest vegetarian population in the world, the country is now also the largest exporter of meat in Asia. There just isn't enough grain to support these industries, much less feed people directly. In 1993, China exported 8 million tons of grain, thanks to the country's expanding pork industry, China *imported* 16 million tons of grain in 1995 – just two years later. Meat-eating is almost universally seen as a symbol of a economic progress, but the more meat humans eat, the more humans there are that go hungry.

It's likely that, if more people embraced vegetarianism, less animals would be fed and killed for meat. A widespread conversion to plant-based diets would reduce food shortage simply by reducing the amount of factory-farmed animals and their drain on land and other resources. With fewer animals to feed, it might be possible to rebuild world grain reserves,

guaranteeing that there's enough food for even the poorest countries. And reducing the amount of world-wide animal agriculture would contribute to biological diversity, climate control, and the ozone layer.

It's a lot to comprehend, thinking about world hunger. Ultimately, though, your conscience is your guide – knowing what you know now, do you still feel good about eating a hamburger? Albert Einstein said it best: "Nothing will benefit human health and increase the chances for survival of life on Earth as much as the evolution to a vegetarian diet." By choosing a meatless lifestyle, your choosing to be a caring citizen of the world.

## CHAPTER 4

### Where Do I Begin?

### Getting Started on Your Meatless Journey



If you've made it this far, you're obviously ready to change your life and become a vegetarian. But giving up meat – especially if you've become accustomed to making it your main source of protein – can be tough. You'll find as you go along that it's about more than just changing the foods that you eat – you're going to have to adjust the way you think about nutrition, about your body and self-image, and about how your choices affect the world you live in. But it's also a deeply personal voyage that's yours to do in your own way, finding the path that will take you into the future in the healthiest, happiest way possible.

It may not be an easy transition, either. You may still love the taste of meat, and the idea of living your entire life without it is daunting. You may have family members who are resistant to making the change, and who'll try to sabotage you for their own reasons. You'll need to learn new recipes, plan new menus, and arm yourself with nutritional information that you never bothered with before. It's a lot to think about!

It can all seem overwhelming, but with a plan, some structure and a little guidance it can be done by anyone. The most important thing is to be patient – allow yourself the time you need to develop new menus that you enjoy, try new recipes and discover new foods. Don't think that becoming a vegetarian means that you'll be spending countless hours wandering the aisles of natural foods stores and figuring out what to do with quinoa – unless you enjoy that sort of thing. The truth is, the easiest way to transition to a meatless diet is to eat foods easily available at your neighborhood grocery store – although you'll definitely want to check out that health food store as you become more comfortable with your vegetarian lifestyle.

## **Finding a sense of purpose**

To successfully change a lifelong habit like eating meat to the healthier habit of living entirely on plant-based foods, you'll need a strong reason for changing. If you aren't 100 percent sure of your reasons for becoming vegetarian, you'll find it hard to resist temptation. Social pressure is often the undoing of new vegetarians – they're completely committed when at home or eating out with another vegetarian, but give in to meat-eating when presented with a friend's meat loaf or attending an outdoor BBQ. I

was the same way – until I found a way of thinking that helped me to stick with the vegetarian lifestyle.

When I first started to become a vegetarian, I "fell off the wagon" many times. I'd be a committed vegetarian for days, then give in to some form of temptation (I still craved KFC!), feel bad about myself, then try again. And again. I kept improving all the time, eventually sticking to my vegetarian diet for weeks at a stretch. I was sure I was successful when I stayed true to my new lifestyle for three months – and then a friend took me to a seafood buffet, and I gave into temptation yet again! I knew that I wanted to become a vegetarian because I hate the idea of killing animals for my food, but sometimes animal foods are very hard to resist.

I wanted so badly to become a vegetarian, yet I kept failing. Why? How could I want to do this so much and still fail? After a lot of soul-searching, I found my reason to be a real vegetarian, and I've never looked back since. Once I knew, completely and with every part of my mind and my heart, why vegetarianism was so important to me, I was able to commit to it completely, and not have any desire to eat meat again!

Here's the reason that I found works for me. Like most people, I don't want to be hurt, killed, or receive pain, and animals certainly don't want those things either. They feel pain, just like we do. So isn't it wrong to inflict pain and death on animals? Just because humans have better technology, we often believe that we're superior to other living beings and we can do whatever we want to them.

In an earlier chapter, we discussed the concept of an alien race coming to earth and believing themselves to be superior to humans. We would be nothing to them, beneath their respect – much the same way we look at cows, pigs and chickens – so why wouldn't they think, "These humans are a low, primitive species. We can do whatever we want to them since they can't fight back. We have complete control over them?" And if these aliens were meat-eaters, there would be nothing to stop them from herding us into pens, cutting off our feet and hands so that we can't run or fight back, kill us in slaughterhouses and then eat us for their food. I mean, we taste great! So they kill millions of us every day, cut us up into steaks and chops, store the meat and sell it to each other in little white, plastic-wrapped packages.

It's a horrible, horrible thought. Yet this is exactly the way we treat animals right now, because we believe we are superior to them and we have better technology. But is this really the right way to treat other living beings? Just like, they feel happiness and fear, pleasure and pain. They just want to live.

Think about that. They just want to live. Who doesn't want to live? What right does humanity have to decide the time and the manner in which an animal's life should end?

That's my personal reason for becoming a vegetarian. Once I came to the realization that harming and killing animals for my food was wrong – and completely unnecessary – I was no longer even tempted by meat. I found my reason to stay committed. My journey has ended.

And I've been a vegetarian ever since. You need to find your own reason that strikes such a strong chord with you intellectually emotionally that you never look back at your previous life. A reason that you believe so strongly, you'll never regret the decision, because you know that it's the right thing to do.

If you found my "alien" reasoning quite logical, whenever you have the temptation to eat meat again, please try to remember about it 🤖. Whatever reasoning you choose, make it something that you believe with your whole heart. Once you do, vegetarianism will be something that you can adopt completely, for your entire life.

### **Look on the bright side!**

The best way to make stress-free changes in your eating habits is to keep your mind on the benefits of your new diet. Many meat-eaters think that vegetarians must have a painfully boring diet, all brown rice and broccoli and tofu. But in truth, most vegetarians have much more adventurous, interesting diets than your average Joe Meat-And-Potatoes. Crack open a few vegetarian cookbooks and you'll find delicious recipes drawing from cuisines with long histories of meat-free eating – foods from India, China, the Mediterranean, loaded with spices and exotic flavors. Add those to the meat-free foods you already love – like macaroni and cheese, vegetable soup, pasta with marinara sauce – and you'll find there's a whole world of delicious things you can eat!

How long it takes for you to fully embrace vegetarianism is entirely up to you. Some people give up meat in one fell swoop, deciding in an instant that, for moral, ethical or health reasons, that the time to give up meat is now, and they never look back. Other people transition slowly, giving up meat-based foods one at a time over a long period. Many take the “two steps forward, one step back” approach, falling off the meatless wagon here and there on the road to a plant-based diet. None of these methods is the “right” way – the right way for you will be any way that works! But there are methods that can make the change easier.

A radical dietary can take a lot of getting used to, both mentally and physically. And while a vegetarian diet is absolutely the best, healthiest way of life, not everyone can dive straight into the deep end straight away. Many people take a long time to slowly make the changes necessary to live a meatless lifestyle – and transitioning gradually is often the most enjoyable, low-stress way to do it.

But before we outline a ten-point plan for gradually transitioning to a vegetarian diet, let’s take a look at the pros and cons of making a quick change versus making a gradual one.

### **Tearing Off the Band-Aid – Making the Quick Transition**

There are a number of benefits to making a one-step switch to meatless eating. They are:

**You can feel good about changing your life right away.** There’s something deeply gratifying about taking decisive action and making positive changes in your life. You reach your goal right away, and you get to say to yourself, “Yes – I’m a vegetarian!”

**You’ll enjoy the benefits of vegetarianism starting on the very first day.** By making a major, life-altering change right away, you’ll see the results much sooner. This is especially important if you’re going vegetarian for health reasons, say because you want to lose weight or you’re concerned about your cholesterol.

**There's less concern that you'll fail and never become a "total" vegetarian.** For some people, doing things gradually just isn't an option – they lose focus and never make it to their goal. If you're the sort of person who has a history of giving up on diets before you've reached your goal weight, or on hobbies before you master the craft, you may want to make the change in one big jump. There's nothing wrong with you if that's the kind of personality that you have – you just need to own up to it and act accordingly!

The quick approach works best for people who've already educated themselves on basic vegetarian nutrition, have a strong support system in place (living or working with vegetarians, or having a partner who's also making the change at the same time) and who don't have other stressful situations going on while they do it. Again, only you can determine if this is best for you – many people find the gradual approach just doesn't work for them because they lose their motivation during a slow dietary overhaul, but others do much better at making huge changes slowly over a long period of time.

You may choose to make a quick change to vegetarianism because you have no other choice. You may have seen a documentary on factory farming practices and just can't stand to eat meat again. You may have been diagnosed with a condition like diverticulitis -- which causes small pockets in the intestine to harbor bacteria – and your doctor has advised you to stop eating meat. If that's the case, you won't be able to do your homework ahead of time – but you can still do the best you can with the information in this book and other resources that you'll discover as you go along.

There are a few drawbacks to this method, of course. You'll be changing a major part of your everyday life without any learned skills, and without the education that comes with experience. You'll be springing your new meat-free lifestyle on your family, friends and co-workers all of a sudden, and will have to deal with their reactions. If you're bombarded by negative feedback from those around you, you may find that your new way of eating is kicked to the curb before it really starts.

But, as mentioned above, many people thrive on this kind of change. You may find that giving up so many of your old habits all at once helps you to break unhealthy old patterns and seek out new recipes and menus right

from the start. If that's the case, keep an eye out for bumps in the road, look for support – whether from other vegetarians you know or on the Internet – and check out the chapters in this book dedicated to nutrition and meal planning.

## **Easing In – The Gradual Approach to Going Meatless**

Taking changes one step at a time makes the process more manageable and, for many people, makes the entire transition seem far less daunting. It also makes it fun – with each step, you change a little something, learn some new information, and try a few things you've never tried before! As you master each new skill, you become more confident in your ability to maintain your new lifestyle, plan your meals and handle yourself in any number of social situations.

There are two main advantages to taking a gradual approach to switching to vegetarianism. They are:

**You're more likely to make the changes permanent if you change your habits slowly.** By changing your habits gradually, you change the way you think about eating as you go along, learning more and creating a strong base on which to anchor your new, better, healthier habits.

**Making a number of small changes gives you the chance to adapt them to your current lifestyle as you go along.** You probably have so many things in your everyday life going on at once that you often feel overwhelmed already – making a slow transition is simply less disruptive to your family life, job, etc. than making one huge, sweeping change.

The downside to the gradual approach, as we've already discussed, is that you might find yourself losing focus and taking longer to complete the transition to a completely meatless lifestyle. If you take too long, you never make it to your goal. Be honest with yourself – if it's been months since you started changing habits and you're still not there, you may want to take a hard look at where you are, where you want to be, and what steps you need to take to get there.

It's also possible, if you make changes slowly, you may get stuck in one place and stay in a state of semi-vegetarianism permanently. You might decide to stop eating red meat, but never move on to giving up fish and chicken. You might intend to eventually eat an entirely vegan diet, yet you never give up eggs and cheese, and end up feeling like a failure. So if you want to make a slow transition, plot out the changes you intend to make, set specific goals and follow a structured plan.

## **Your Ten-Point Plan to Becoming a Vegetarian**

For those craving guidance and structure, what follows is a simple ten-step transition from meat-eater to veggie lover. Of course, you don't have to follow this course of action to become a vegetarian – but sometimes having a carefully thought-out plan in place before beginning a major venture can make you feel more secure about the unfamiliar path you've chosen to take. You'll notice that, at the beginning, we're only making changes to your evening meals – dinner is perhaps the single most “planned” meal of the day, the time when families eat together and put thought into main course, side courses and dessert.

If you think about the variety in your current diet, you'll discover that you already draw from only a handful of recipes to make family favorites over and over again, relying on basic meals that you enjoy and have made before. You may go out to a new restaurant for a special occasion or try a new recipe now and then, but we all keep going back to tried-and-true favorites several times a month. Planning vegetarian meals is no different. During the steps of your transition, you'll discover a number of delicious new meals – and you'll revise current favorites to make them vegetarian – so that you have as many meal options at your disposal as you did as a meat-eater. Maybe more!

As you develop healthy new habits and learn more about nutrition, you'll find that your previous ideas of what constitutes a complete evening meal will change drastically. Ever since the era of “Ozzie and Harriet,” we've been told that an appropriate family dinner includes a large portion of meat, some veggies on the side, a starch of some sort and, often, a big glass of milk. Soon you'll be abandoning that idea –eating a healthy satisfying vegetarian diet isn't just a matter of replacing meat with something else while continuing the same old method of consuming “four squares.” A

quickly put together veggie stir-fry with a multi-grain roll is a fast, nutritious evening dinner – so is homemade macaroni and cheese accompanied by a green salad. The old ways of eating don't apply to you anymore, so go ahead and forget what you were taught about meal planning – you're about to develop your own rules, based on what your body needs.

**Step 1: Eat three meat-free dinners during the week that you already enjoy.**

Make a list of vegetarian main dishes that you and your family already like – macaroni and cheese, vegetable soup with bread and salad, cheese quesadillas, vegetable stir fry, quiche and cheese pizza are just a few of the meatless meals you already eat. This still leaves four nights a week that you can include meat in your meals – but you've taken the first step toward thinking differently about your eating habits.

**Step 2: Adapt three favorite recipes to make them vegetarian, and add them to your week's dinners.**

A wide variety of main course meals can be turned into delicious vegetarian fare, allowing you to enjoy healthier versions of foods you already love. Take a recipe for vegetarian chili and make it your own by using the same mixture of spices in your own ground-beef chili; leave the beef out of your lasagna and replace it with sauteed zucchini, eggplant and mushrooms; make your favorite soups and stews using coarsely chopped Portobella mushrooms; mix up a zesty taco salad with the usual lettuce, tomatoes, sour cream and salsa, but replace the ground beef with a mixture of black and kidney beans. The possibilities are only as limited as your imagination!

**Step 3: Add three brand-new vegetarian meals to your repertoire.**

During the previous two steps, you developed six vegetarian dinners that you and your family are happy to eat. Now it's time to do a little research and find a few new tricks to spice up your menus even further with some new recipes. Purchase a couple of vegetarian cookbooks, borrow them from friends or check them out of the library. We'll even provide you with some great recipes in Chapter Twelve, as well as a list of cookbooks to get your started. You can also search the Internet for recipes, and online vegetarian support groups are a terrific source for recipes from other veggie-lovers.



Find recipes that look tasty and give them a try. This is a time for experimenting – if something doesn't appeal to you after you've served it up, discard that recipe and try something else. No matter what your level of cooking expertise, there are recipes you can make, and you'll even find yourself becoming a better cook as you develop new skills.

#### **Step 4: Make all your dinners meatless.**

Once you've found three new dinners that you love, that's nine vegetarian dinners to choose from! That's a different meal every night, if you like, plus two alternates – which may be more variety than you had before you started transitioning to a meatless diet! Odds are good that, at this point, you'll be intrigued by the different flavors and textures of your vegetarian entrees and you'll keep on creating new menus. After all, you're not going to eat the same nine things for the rest of your life – but it's a great place to start! With so many dinners to choose from, it's time to ban meat from your dinner table entirely. You should feel secure that you're not going to be hungry with so many options, and inspire you to discover even more.

#### **Step 5: Lose the lunchmeat.**

Your next step, now that you've successfully given up eating meat during your evening meal, it's time to turn your attention to your lunches. If you're the sort who takes a lunch break from the office at a restaurant, look for places that offer meat-free pasta options, vegetarian (or vegetarian-friendly) cafes, and places that have well-stocked salad bars. Burger places probably won't have much for you to eat, but spots that specialize in sandwiches usually have vegetarian options. The downtown areas of many big cities also have street vendors offering Indian, Thai, Mexican and vegan specialties.

If you eat at home or take your lunch to work, you'll naturally have a lot more control over your meal planning. If you have a microwave at work, you can heat up a bean burrito, a frozen vegetarian meal or leftovers from your evening meals. A snack-ish meal of pita bread slices, hummus and fruit is nutritious and fun, and if you're lacto-ovo, there's always egg salad or grilled cheese.

#### **Step 6: Change your old breakfast habits.**

Breakfast doesn't have to be eggs, bacon and sausage. It can be anything you want it to be! If you want cheese enchiladas or leftover vegetarian chili, go for it. A fruit smoothie with a scoop of soy protein powder is a quick breakfast that'll give you the boost you need, or you can toast a couple of pieces of whole-grain bread and top it with peanut butter.

On weekends, when you have more time to cook and linger over breakfast, make an omelette stuffed with mushrooms, onions and cheese, or cook up a stack of blueberry pancakes. If you simply can't shake the craving for breakfast meats, there are vegetarian sausage links – even fake bacon, made from soy! – that can help satisfy it. Just remember that breakfast is whatever you want it to be – so long as you're getting the nutrition you need, you can eat anything you like.

### **Step 7: Get creative.**

If you've gotten this far, it's time to get serious about embracing the vegetarian lifestyle. Giving up meat in only the beginning – there's a whole world of foods to explore, from grains and seeds and nuts to vegetables you've never tried before. The more foods you're open to eating, the more creativity you can bring to your cooking.

At this point, you should be feeling pretty good about the meal choices you already have under your belt, so now is the time to start having fun and trying new things. As you thumb through vegetarian cookbooks, you'll find recipes that use "exotic" ingredients like quinoa, tahini and spelt. Try using soy milk as a replacement for cow's milk in recipes, and experiment with exotic spice combinations that you've never tried before. This is your chance to develop a broader, more interesting recipe repertoire. Enjoy yourself!

Take a trip to your local food co-op or health food store and spend awhile reading the labels on all the products you've never seen before. Don't be intimidated by the unfamiliar labels and ingredients – and don't be shy about asking the employees how to use foods you find intriguing, or for recommendations and recipes. Tell them up front that you're new to vegetarianism, and they'll be happy to point you towards foods you've probably never considered before.

### **Step 8: Giving up the eggs.**

During the last step, you may have noticed something – you’re now an ovo lacto vegetarian! Congratulations! You may also notice, though, that you’re eating a lot of eggs and cheese. This happens to most new vegetarians, actually, because cheese is tasty and eggs are inexpensive sources of protein. But both add the amount of fat and cholesterol in your diet and, if you think back to previous chapters, the practices of high-tech egg farms are barbaric.



But experienced vegetarians know how to replace eggs in recipes, and now that you’re an experienced vegetarian, it’s time you started doing it, too. You certainly don’t have to give up eggs entirely if you don’t want to – but there are a number of ways that you can at least cut back on the amount of eggs you eat.

If you’re a fan of egg salad, try replacing the eggs with tofu – use everything else you would in your favorite egg salad recipe like mayonnaise, celery, onion and mustard, and you’ll find you’ll never miss the eggs. Tofu also works as an excellent substitute for scrambled eggs when sauteed with onions, mushrooms, garlic and little salt. For a binding agent when making a veggie loaf or vegetarian burger, try some tahini (chickpea paste, available in the natural foods or ethic section of your grocery store), mashed potatoes or soft tofu.

You may find, after some experimentation, that you don’t want to give up eggs after all. But even then, cutting back on your consumption is a good idea for a number of reasons – and you can always seek out organic eggs from small, local farms that don’t indulge in the same abhorrent practices as the big operations.

### **Step 9: Find new ways to build your bones.**

When we’re kids, we’re all told over and over again to drink our milk. Even as adults, the milk industry keeps drumming into our heads that we have to drink milk and eat lots of dairy products to maintain strong bones and teeth. While it’s true that our bodies require calcium for good health, we don’t need to drink milk to get it.



Did you know that humans are the only animals who drink the milk of another species? Cow's milk is ingeniously designed by nature to provide the calcium, riboflavin, fat, protein and carbohydrates that a baby calf needs to grow into a huge cow – and even calves stop drinking milk once it develops past infancy. Humans have actually evolved over thousands of years so that many of us -- mostly Westerners -- can drink milk without getting sick by producing *lactase*, an enzyme that breaks down the sugars (lactose) in cow milk. But many non-Western cultures have never developed the ability to drink milk, and a large number of people of European descent are still lactose intolerant. Drinking milk as an adult is simply unnatural – people who can do so without suffering intestinal discomfort are benefitting from a genetic anomaly.

Yet, we still need calcium. If you enjoy eating cereal, try one of the many soy or rice-based milk replacements on the market. There are a wide variety of brands and they all taste different – so if you don't like the first one or two you try, keep experimenting until you find one you like. And make sure you add calcium-rich food to your meals like leafy green vegetables, and beans. We'll discuss this in further detail in the next chapter.

Once you find yourself enjoying a wide variety of foods that are rich in calcium, you'll find it a lot easier to eliminate dairy from your diet. After you become accustomed to eating calcium-rich foods drinking non-dairy milk supplements, you can move on to trying soy-based cheeses. And look for

nutritional yeast at your health food store – added to tofu dishes or sprinkled on popcorn, it adds a delicious, cheese-like flavor to recipes.

**Step 10: Become a savvy consumer.**

When you shop for food, examine the labels carefully for animal products you need to avoid. You'll be surprised by how many foods contain lard, dried milk, eggs and other animal by-products. It can be extremely challenging at first, but don't be discouraged – you'll soon find yourself becoming as familiar with the products and brand names that help you stay on course as you were with the products you used in your old life.

As you spend more and more time educating yourself about eating meat-free, you'll discover exactly how diligent you want to be about your new lifestyle. You may find that it's worth the effort you put into it, and you want to embrace a completely vegan way of life. Or you may find you are comfortable eating commercially made bread products that contain eggs while not cooking with eggs for your other meals. Don't allow politics to dictate your dietary choices, seeing a vegan diet as ethically superior to an ovo lacto one, and beating yourself up because you still eat cheese. You can be proud of yourself for adopting a vegetarian lifestyle, and even if you don't go 100 percent vegan you've still made a healthy, humane choice. Be proud of yourself!

## CHAPTER 5

### Vegetarian Nutrition

#### Getting Everything Your Body Needs

At this point you're probably starting to get worried about how you're going to make sure you get the right balance of nutrients that your body needs, and thinking that you'll need a spreadsheet to keep track of everything you eat. But it's not as difficult as it may seem from the outset – you just need to bone up on a few nutritional basics to keep in mind when you plan your meals.

Some people spend their entire lives studying the science of nutrition, but you don't have to make it your life's work. The truth is, despite what the meat industry repeatedly tells you, vegetarian diets aren't nutritionally inferior to meat-based diets. There's no need to worry that you'll be lacking the vitamins, minerals and protein that your body needs. Which isn't to say that it's not possible to eat badly as a vegetarian – many people have lousy diets, even vegetarians. But if you eat smart, your vegetarian diet can be the healthiest way you've ever eaten.

## **Protein – Am I Getting Enough?**

Your first concern on starting a vegetarian way of life is that, without meat foods in your diet, you'll lack protein. So you'll be happy to discover that it's almost impossible to eat too little protein on a vegetarian diet.



Protein is, of course, of the utmost importance to a healthful diet. Your bones, muscles and hormones all contain protein, and eating enough of it helps keep your body strong on the most fundamental level. Unfortunately, the importance of eating animal protein has long been made unrealistically important. Man once believed that eating the flesh of other animals would make him stronger and healthier – but now that we know what we do about cholesterol and the dangers of eating saturated fats, it's obvious that limiting animal proteins is the healthy choice.

Vegetarians can, of course, be protein deficient – but that comes from undereating, or relying too heavily on junk foods. In most case, any diet adequate in calories from a variety of healthful sources provides enough protein. Grains, vegetables, beans, seeds and nuts are all protein-rich foods, easily providing what the body needs.

Contrary to what many vegetarians believed in the last couple of decades, they don't need to weigh and balance arcane combinations of foods to get adequate protein. This myth goes back to Frances Moore Lappe's 1971 book "Diet for a Small Planet," in which she wrote that vegetarians needed to balance foods based on which amino acids they were lacking, creating "complementing proteins." For some time, there were even nutritionists who created complex charts to help vegetarians pick foods that went together, and concerned meat-free eaters made sure to combine beans and rice, or rice and corn, or grains and cheese ... and it was an awful lot to remember!

But we now know that combining types of protein isn't nearly as important as simply eating enough calories to maintain a healthy weight – Lappe even revised later editions of her book, admitting that she was wrong about the importance of food combining. No, if you eat enough food from different sources, you'll probably be getting plenty of protein.

If you want to get technical about it, health professionals recommend that you eat 0.8 grams of protein each day for every kilogram of body weight. A kilogram is about 2.2 pounds – so to find your recommended amount of daily protein, multiply your ideal weight by 0.8, then divide that number by 2.2. If you prefer a quicker method, just divide your ideal weight by 3. But even then, you don't need to eat that much protein to stay healthy – keep in mind that recommendations like these always err on the side of safety, so the number you get will actually be higher than what you realistically need.

But you, as a vegetarian, should strive to meet the recommended daily requirement of protein – because plant proteins are, unfortunately, less efficient foods for providing nutrients. For one thing, they're somewhat more difficult to digest than animal proteins, and they also lack the amount of amino acids present in meat. If you get most of your protein from beans and grains, this is especially true – ovo lacto vegetarians consume a similar amount of protein to omnivores, and vegans who eat a lot of soy products also get plenty of protein.



It'll always be true, however, that as a vegetarian you're eating less protein than people who eat both plant and animal proteins. A 1984 study found that a typical omnivore diet consists of between 15 and 17 percent protein, while lacto-ovo vegetarians generally eat about 13 percent protein and vegans around 11 to 12 percent. Despite needing more protein and eating less, the vegans still had an adequate amount of protein in the diets. So don't worry about doing anything fancy to meet your protein requirements – just eat from a variety of sources and get enough calories and you'll be fine.

You will, in fact, be better than fine – because meat-eaters generally eat too much protein! Studies have shown that replacing animal protein with plant protein in your diet can help lower your blood cholesterol levels, decreasing your risk of heart attack. Most people are by now aware of the danger of saturated fats in red meat and its effect on blood cholesterol – people recovering from heart attacks are prescribed diets which replace the beef with skinless chicken or fish. That is a good move, to be sure, but these people could lower their cholesterol even further by switching to a vegetarian diet and reducing the amount of fat that they eat. Plant proteins are lower in saturated fat than animal proteins and dairy products, and free of cholesterol.

There are also studies that show that eating slightly less protein than is optimal is far superior than eating too much – and in this era of supersizing, most meat-eaters eat far more than they need. When we eat too much protein, it's up to our kidneys to filter out the excess. In the process, calcium is lost, increasing the risk of osteoporosis. Since plant-based diets are lower in total protein, vegetarian diets are better for your bones! Excess protein is also, understandably, hard on the kidneys and unhealthy for people with kidney disease.

Plant proteins contain all the same amino acids, to differing degrees, as animal proteins, and eating enough of them gives you all the protein you need. Studies have shown that people can meet their protein needs just by eating rice, wheat or potatoes so long as they meet their caloric needs. By eating a variety of plant foods throughout the day and consuming enough calories, you'll be getting enough healthy plant protein. You'll have a lower risk of heart and kidney disease, and you'll be eating protein that's more efficiently produced besides, using less valuable resources than animal protein. It's what people call “win-win!”

## Boning up on calcium

Calcium is vital to avoid bone-threatening diseases like osteoporosis – yet in countries where residents eat the highest amount of calcium and protein, they also have the highest number of hip fractures, a symptom of osteoporosis. Because the truth is, scientists are coming to the conclusion that there's more to osteoporosis than just the amount of calcium we eat – overall lifestyle plays a large part, including physical activity levels and environmental factors. Just eating four to five servings of calcium-rich foods each day is no guarantee that you'll avoid osteoporosis – but it'll certainly be a step in the right direction.

Dairy industry propaganda tells us that “milk does a body good,” but that's simply not true. Over two-thirds of the people in the world are lactose intolerant, making it difficult to digest milk. The cause is an insufficient amount of lactase, the enzyme that breaks down the sugars in milk. Undigested, the mucous-y lactose coats the lining of the colon, bacteria interact with it to cause gas, and the result is cramps, flatulence and diarrhea. All mammals are born with a sufficient amount of lactase, but it decreases as we get older – once we're out of infancy, we're not meant to be drinking milk any longer.

But while we don't need to drink milk, we still need calcium. Almost all of the calcium in our bodies at any given time is stored in our bones and teeth, with about 1 percent in our bloodstream. And that's the calcium that's key to good health – it's needed to send messages between nerves, especially those that contract our muscles. It's also a vital component in the clotting of blood. Our kidneys filter most of our bodies' calcium and return it to the bloodstream, but some of it is lost in our urine. We also lose some through sweat and bowel movements.

Our bones are constantly breaking down (don't worry – they build back up!) replenishing calcium into our blood. Somewhere around the age of 30, our bones stop growing and reach maximum density. This is why calcium is most important when you're young – the denser your bones are when they reach this stage of development, the less chance you'll get osteoporosis when you're older. That's because after 45 our bones break down faster than they're rebuilt – at this point we start to lose as much as 0.5 percent of

our bone mass each year. So by the time we hit 65, bone loss can start to be a real problem. Women lose even more bone mass when they reach menopause, as they stop producing estrogen, the hormone that protects our bones.

We can't increase the density of our bones once they stop growing, but we can slow the rate that calcium disappears from our bones by making sure that we eat calcium-rich foods. This applies whether you eat an omnivorous diet, an ovo-lacto diet or a completely vegan diet – there is no firm evidence that vegetarians have stronger bones than people who eat meat, or weaker bones. But some nutritionists believe that vegetarians may actually need less calcium to keep their bones strong.

How can that be? Well, protein from plant sources are metabolized by the body in different ways than animal proteins. Meat contains more sulfur-containing amino acids than plant proteins, which makes the blood more acidic. To neutralize the acid, your body needs more calcium – and what it doesn't find in the bloodstream it pulls from our bones. That calcium then leaves your body in your urine, taking even more calcium from your kidneys along the way.

In addition, sodium takes a heavy toll on your body's calcium supplies, and along with table salt, sodium is added to canned foods, cured meats, soft drinks, condiments and snack foods. When you think of the amount of protein and sodium your average American eats during a day full of bacon cheeseburgers, ham sandwiches, sodas and french fries, it's not hard to see why they need more compensatory calcium than your average vegetarian!

So how much calcium do you need, then? Well, a good rule of thumb is to eat between two and five servings of calcium-rich foods – leafy green vegetables, broccoli, beans and, yes, dairy products are among your choices – while keeping your protein and sodium intake moderate. The recommended calcium-to-protein ratio is 16:1, so if you want to calculate your calcium needs, you'll need to estimate your protein consumption first.

Surprisingly, even bread can be a good source of calcium. It was once thought that fiber and phytates, substances found in grains and nuts, bind to calcium and make it unavailable to the body, which can't absorb it. However, when yeast is present, it breaks the bond between phytates and

calcium, allowing it to be used by the body – so yeast-raised breads, especially whole grain breads, can provide a degree of calcium. Also, some leafy greens are less effective sources of calcium than others – Swiss chard, spinach, beet greens and rhubarb contain substances called oxalates that limits the absorption of calcium (but they're still chock-full of iron, so eat them anyway!)



Eating a variety of foods every day makes for a more interesting, enjoyable vegetarian way of life, so it makes sense to get your calcium from many different foods.

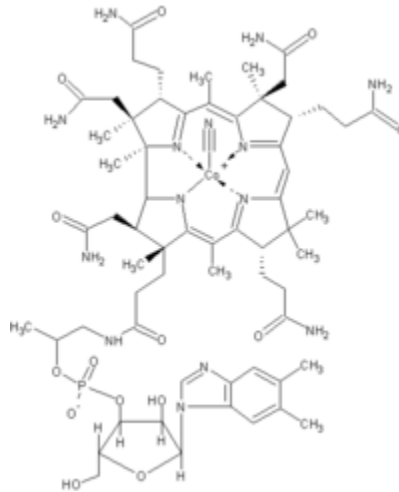
Adequate calcium is especially important for growing children – and we'll address vegetarian kids in Chapter 16 – so they build the strong bones they'll need when they're older. But you don't need to get your calcium from milk. As we've discussed here, milk isn't even good for you! Plant foods like leafy green vegetables, soy products, fortified orange juice and dried beans are loaded with calcium. And they make your menus much more fun!

## **Our friends, the vitamins**

There are 13 vitamins that have been determined as necessary to human health. They're divided into two classes – water soluble vitamins, the excess of which is excreted in the urine or through sweat; and fat soluble vitamins, of which our bodies store the excess. Vitamin C and eight B vitamins are water soluble, so if you take too much of these your body just gets rid of what it doesn't need. Vitamins B12, A, D, K and E are fat soluble – any excess of these are kept in our bodies for some time, and we can overdose on them if we take too much.

Fat soluble vitamins are called that because they need dietary fat to be absorbed by the body. A diet exceedingly low in fat makes it difficult to use these vitamins, although it's only a small amount of fat – vitamin absorption is only an issue in the most extreme cases. They're needed for a diverse array of bodily functions, from blood clotting to eyesight to the immune system. Water soluble vitamins already exist in the body's enzyme system, and are necessary to keep the body functioning smoothly. A handful of these vitamins are especially important to the vegetarian diet, and it's key that you know why you need them.

## Vitamin B12 – the Everything Vitamin



One of the most controversial nutritional elements is this little guy, of which you need only the tiniest amount – just 2 micrograms per day. One tiny pinch would be enough for you to meet your body's needs for your whole life. How small an amount do you need? Look at it this way – one microgram is one thirty-millionth of an ounce.

B12 is created by microorganisms that exist in the air, water and soil. Animals, including humans, have it in their bodies. We consume Vitamin B12 by eating the flesh of animals who pass it along, or by consuming animal products like eggs, milk, cheese and yogurt. Vitamin B12 is also produced in our own intestinal tracts, but scientists believe that it occurs past the point where we can absorb it into our blood streams – so we can't utilize the B1 we produce ourselves. We have to get it from somewhere else.

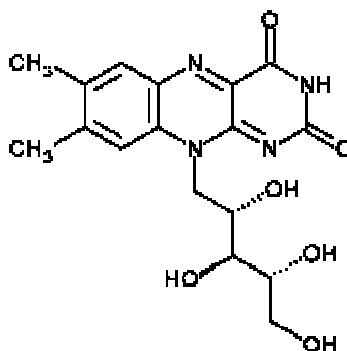
Plants only contain B12 through contact with them, passed on through the soil. So if you eat vegetables straight from the garden, you may pick up a little bit of B12 from soil present on the plant. But if you buy all your veggies from the grocery store, they'll have been cleaned well enough that there's probably not even the tiniest speck of B12. So where the heck do we get B12 from, anyway?

Coming as it does from minuscule bacteria, there are a number of forms of Vitamin B12. The one we humans need, the one our bodies can use, is

called cyanocobalamin. Other types of B12 – the types we can't utilize – are called "analogs." For years, nutritionists lectured that B12 was abundant in foods like nutritional yeast, tempeh and sea vegetables. But it turns out that, while there's lots of B12 in those foods, it's mostly of the type we can't use, despite the claims on the labels. Up to 94 percent of the Vitamin B12 in those foods is in analog form and not cyanocobalamin, making them essentially worthless as sources of B12.

The only sure way to add B12 to your diet is through fortified food products and vitamin supplements. Read labels carefully, and look for the word "cyanocobalamin" – you should be able to find plenty of breakfast cereals and meat substitutes fortified with the right kind of B12. If you decide to go with a vitamin supplement, choose one with the lowest dose available. Remember, you only need 2 micrograms a day, and most supplements contain much more than that. The reason to keep your daily dosage low is because your body actually adapts to the amount of B12 you get from supplements and your diet – it's going to absorb just what it needs and discard the rest. So why take a big dose when no matter how much you take, you'll only absorb 2 micrograms?

Also keep in mind that you really only need a B12 supplement if you're eating a vegan or near-vegan diet. If you're ovo-lacto, you'll get all the B12 you need from the foods you eat.



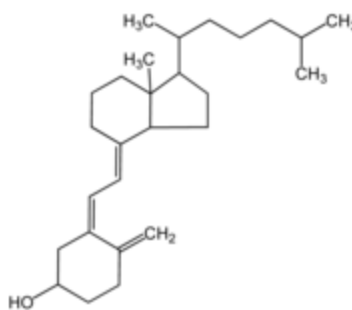
### **Riboflavin, your little yellow friend**

If you've ever taken a megavitamin and was alarmed later at the bright yellow color of your urine, you've met Vitamin B2, also known as riboflavin.

Like all of the B vitamins, riboflavin plays a part in the complex enzyme reactions that make everything in your engine work. Nutritional scientists believe that Vitamin B2 plays a part in more of the body's various functions than any other vitamin, so when you don't get enough it can cause a number of disparate dysfunctions – anemia, skin problems, a swollen tongue, dry cracks at the corners of the mouth or neurological problems.

Riboflavin is naturally present, in small amounts, in a number of foods, and the amount you need is directly connected to your energy intake – the more calories you need, the more riboflavin you require. The recommended daily requirement of riboflavin is 1.7 milligrams per day for men and 1.3 for women, but many experts now believe that number is high – many people eat far less than the RDA of riboflavin and never show any signs of deficiency.

A number of plant foods contain moderate amounts of riboflavin, making it easy to get the amount you need from the foods you eat. Leafy greens, broccoli, yogurt and avocados are sources of riboflavin, and enriched breads and cereals are good sources, and legumes like soybeans and soy food products are even better. You can make sure that your vitamin supplement contains Vitamin B2 but, as with so many nutrients, simply eating a healthy diet that includes a variety of foods will assure you that you're getting enough.



### **Vitamin D, the sunshine vitamin**

Vitamin D is a vitamin, of course, but it also falls under the same general classification as hormones – our body generates it for use by another part of the body later. In this case, we create Vitamin D through exposure to the sun, then it goes to our bones, kidney and intestines to regulate calcium

and strengthen our bones. Hundreds of years ago, people suffered regularly from diseases like rickets and osteomalacia when they received inadequate exposure to sunlight. Thankfully, these are rarely seen today.

To get enough Vitamin D from the sun, you need about a half an hour's exposure on the hands and face, three times a week with no sunscreen, to generate enough to help your body year 'round. If you have darker skin, you'll need more. Lighter skin, less. However much you need, the exposure you get during the summer and spring is supposed to carry you through the long winter. It's possible to not get enough Vitamin D, especially if you live in an area that has a heavy smog layer, spend all of your days indoors, or only go outside wearing heavy clothing or sunscreen. Older people are at a greater risk of Vitamin D deficiency, as our ability to manufacture it decreases with age.

The good news is that if your vegetarian diet includes dairy, you're probably getting enough. In the United States, dairy products are fortified with Vitamin D, and extra supplements aren't necessary. Vegans (and others who forgo dairy products) may want to take supplemental Vitamin D. If so, you may want to consult with a nutritionist or other health professional – excess Vitamin D is stored in the body, creating calcium deposits that can damage the kidneys and heart.

But the best solution? Get outside in the sun!

## **The rest of the best**

**Vitamin B1 (thiamin)** helps convert carbohydrates to energy, and we need about 0.5 milligrams for every 1,000 calories we eat to do the job. The



disease beriberi, famous from countless jungle adventure movies, is caused by a deficiency of thiamine and results in damage to the nervous system. Vegetarians generally get lots of thiamine in their diets – whole grains are loaded with it, enriched breads offer a lot of B1, and nutritional yeast is a good source, too.

**Vitamin B6 (pyridoxine)** is a component of in 60 different enzyme systems, most of which help your body metabolize protein – the amount you need is based on how much protein you eat. Vegetarians, who consume less protein overall than omnivores, need less B6. Since plant foods contain very high levels of B6 for the amount of protein they offer, vegetarians usually get plenty of B6. There's even more good news for vegetarians – studies have shown that animal proteins actually increase the need for B6 more than plant proteins, so people on meatless diets need about 25 percent less. It's also been found that the type of B vitamins offered by plant foods are less susceptible to destruction during cooking than those in meat, so vegetarians win there, too.

**Folic acid**, also called “folate,” is necessary for the body to metabolize protein and for efficient cell division. It works with B12 to create new material needed for the cells to divide and grow. The current RDA is 200 micrograms for men and 180 micrograms for women. Vegetables are great sources of folic acid, especially broccoli, leafy greens and asparagus. Legumes also contain a lot of folic acid, so eat your soy and your black-eyed peas.

**Vitamin C** was once believed to cure colds, but we now know that the best you can hope for is that large doses will reduce the severity of a cold if you catch one. Lack of Vitamin C also causes scurvy, once the scourge of sea-faring folk who lacked fresh vegetables on long voyages. Odds are, you're not a pirate or a merchant seaman, so you probably don't need to worry about your intake of C as it's abundant in fruits and vegetables, especially citrus fruits, strawberries, peppers, watermelon, potatoes – yes, potatoes! – and broccoli. Because of this, vegetarians get more than the recommended amounts from the foods they eat, and vegans get the most Vitamin C of all!

## CHAPTER 6

### Parasites

#### The Guests Who Came to Dinner

The intestinal tract is like a luxury hotel for parasites, bacteria and fungus. It's warm, it's moist, and oxygen is limited due to all the waste matter that's packed in there. The colon – one of the most important organs in the body – is a dumping ground for waste, the place where the body toxins and excess nutrients that could be harmful to the system. It's also where your body absorbs the nutrients that it needs in order to function and survive – so the health of your colon is mighty important. Parasites in particular can be dangerous to the health of the colon, leeching nutrients from the body and emitting harmful toxins that can further weaken the colon's integrity. This can lead to a number of problems, from the mildly annoying to the deadly, such as:

Blood sugar imbalances

Bloating

Sugar cravings

Fatigue

Insomnia

Weight gain or loss

Teeth grinding or TMJ

Diarrhea

Itching

Irritability

Malnutrition

Anemia

Immune deficiency

It's estimated that over 90 percent of Americans contract a parasite of some kind at some point in their life. They enter our bodies from a variety of sources, including pets, food and unwashed hands. You can pick up parasites from contact with pets and other people, or just by walking barefoot. Children are easily infected by being less aware of hygiene and playing with dirt and other possible contaminated substances. But meat consumption is probably the biggest contributor to parasites flourishing in our bodies.

Eating meat can cause constipation, and constipation creates the perfect environment for parasites to thrive. These unwelcome guests multiply in the *haustros*, the pouches in the colon where debris is stored. At their least offensive, they cause intestinal gas – but if you experience any of the

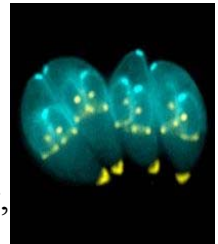
symptoms above, even something as seemingly minor as chronically itchy skin, you could very well be harboring parasites in your colon.

There are several families of parasites: Roundworms, Tapeworms, Flukes and Single Cell parasites. Each group has its own unique subset of parasites who do different things to your body. Let's look at some of the more common intestinal parasite and what you can do to avoid them:



**Giardia lamblia** are protozoan parasites that infect humans via consumption of contaminated food and water. It's commonly found in untreated water supplies, and is one of the most common causes of diarrhea in travelers, but people sometimes pick them up while swimming in ponds and lakes. Giardia is responsible for the condition known as *giardiasis* that causes diarrhea, bloating, flatulence, abdominal cramping, weight loss, greasy stools, and dehydration.

**Toxoplasma gondii** is another protozoan organism commonly found in the colon. Cats and kittens often carry it, and it can be transmitted to humans who handle of cats – especially their feces. You can also be infected with them by breathing in their eggs. Toxoplasma is responsible for the disease *toxoplasmosis*, which causes chills, fever, headaches and fatigue. If a pregnant woman contracts toxoplasmosis, it can lead to miscarriage, or birth defects such as blindness and mental retardation.



**Roundworms** are the most common intestinal parasite in the world, affecting over one billion people. They're also one of the largest parasites, and can grow to up to 30 inches in length. Humans can contract a roundworm infection by eating improperly cooked meat, or by handling dogs or cats infested with roundworms. Symptoms include loss of appetite, allergic reactions, coughing, abdominal pain, edema, sleep disorders, and weight loss.



**Hookworms** are able to penetrate the human skin, and often enter the body through the feet when people walk barefoot through contaminated areas. They can be all over the world, in warm, moist tropical areas, and can



live in the intestines for up to fifteen years. A hookworm infection may cause symptoms such as itchy skin, blisters, nausea, dizziness, anorexia, and weight loss.

**Trichinella** parasites, caused by the consumption of raw or undercooked pork, can mimic the symptoms of up to fifty different diseases. Possible symptoms of infection include muscle soreness, fever, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, edema of the lips and face, difficulty breathing, difficulty speaking, enlarged lymph glands, and extreme dehydration.

**Tapeworms** are the largest colon parasites that are known to infect humans. There are different types of tapeworms that infect different animals – there are beef tapeworms, pork tapeworms, fish tapeworms, and dog tapeworms. They can grow to several feet in length and live in the intestines for up to 25 years. Symptoms of a tapeworm infection are diarrhea, abdominal cramping, nausea, and change of appetite.



**Flukes**, or Trematodas, are small flatworms that can penetrate the human skin when an individual is swimming or bathing in contaminated water. Flukes can travel throughout the body and settle in the liver, lungs or intestines. Symptoms of a fluke infection include diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and swelling.

### Avoiding colon parasites

You can reduce your risk of parasitic infection through simple, common-sense behaviors. Becoming vegetarian is a good start! By not eating meat, you avoid the common parasites that are passed on through undercooked food, and you won't have all of that slow-to-digest meat hanging around your colon and providing a breeding ground for toxic bacteria.

**Wash Your Hands Frequently.** Carefully washing your hands several times throughout the day can remove the parasites and their eggs with which you may have come in contact. It's extra important to wash your

hands after using the toilet, handling pets, cooking, or changing a baby's diaper, and before before eating or handling food.

**Avoid contaminated water.** Unclean water is a common source of parasitic infection. Use bottled water for drinking or cooking if you don't trust the source of your water supply – and don't bathe in water that may be infested with parasites.

**Wear shoes outdoors.** Going barefoot is a pleasurable experience, but some colon parasites can enter the body through the soles of the feet. Be sure to wear shoes, especially if you are in an area like the beach or a park where there may be animal feces on the ground.

**Wash and peel all fruits and vegetables.** A quick scrub will remove parasites from fresh produce, and it's important that you do so before you eat them.

## **Brain-eating worms**

Some parasites can move to the human brain, and the results are quite horrible. It's not especially easy for a parasite to make it to the brain – brain parasite's life does have its hardships. To begin with, the parasite has to find a way into the brain – there's a protective barrier between the bloodstream and the brain fluid, called the *blood-brain barrier* that creates a tight seal so that substances from the bloodstream, including bacteria and parasites, don't leak into the brain. Even if a parasite does make it into the brain, it still has to battle the body's immune system, which attack foreign bodies to protect us from harm. But some very tenacious parasites have found ways to fight back, evolving as tough warriors that can overcome the immune system. And these are the parasites that also do the most damage once they beat the odds.

Millions of people around the world are infected by brain parasites, mostly in non-industrialized countries where sanitation is poor. Many of these brain parasites cause debilitating conditions and sometimes even death. One of the most debilitating of these is the pork tapeworm, *Taenia solium*, which is also one of the most common disease-causing brain parasites. Infecting

over 50 million people worldwide, *Taenia solium* is the leading cause of brain seizures.

Usually contracted from eating undercooked pork, the parasite attaches itself to the intestine and grows several feet long. The especially tenacious worms that make it to the brain don't grow nearly that large, but they can do irreparable damage, even causing death. The risk to the brain comes when the eggs of these worms are swallowed – if ingested during their larval stage, the worms attach themselves to the intestine, but if eggs are swallowed, they hatch in the stomach and – for reasons that are still a mystery to researchers – can break through the blood-brain barrier and enter the brain. Some scientists believe that the larvae release enzymes that are able to dissolve enough of the blood-brain barrier to create a passage into the brain.

Once they reach the brain, the worms attach themselves to either the brain tissue or to cavities through which brain fluid flows, causing a disease called *neurocysticercosis*. The disease is the result of cysts in the brain created by the parasites. The symptoms exhibited by victims of *neurocysticercosis* depend on the part of the brain in which the cysts form. When attached to brain tissue, then victims usually experience seizures. If the larvae attaches to the brain-fluid cavities, however, victims headaches, nausea, dizziness, and altered mental states – in addition to seizures! – because the flow of the brain fluid is blocked by the larvae. The lining of the brain-fluid cavities also become inflamed, further constricting the flow of the brain fluid and creating pressure on the brain. This increased pressure forces the heart to work in order to pump blood to the brain, which increases the pressure even more. If left untreated, parts of the brain begin to die from a deficiency of blood and serious brain damage occurs.

It can be a very slow process, often undetected for years – many people play host to brain parasites for a long time before showing any symptoms, as the worms have a sophisticated method of breaking down any antibodies in their vicinity and actually using them as a food source, effectively turning the body's tools for fighting them into a way for them to actually flourish!

One way to avoid contracting *Taenia solium* is to make sure that any pork you eat is thoroughly cooked. But an even better way to avoid these nasty, brain-eating worms is to become a vegetarian – why play Russian Roulette

with the health of your brain when you can simply skip eating animal proteins entirely and get all your nutrition from a plant-based diet?

## **Cleaning out the pipes**

One way to maintain colon health is to occasionally treat yourself to a colon cleansing. This can be administered by a professional, you can purchase herbal products designed for the purpose at a natural foods store, or you can ask a nutritionist to advise you on a good colon cleansing method.

A colon cleanse isn't the same thing as an enema or dosing yourself with laxatives. There are drawbacks to both of those practices. Enemas, while fine when administered correctly on an occasional basis, can actually create as many problems as they solve. If you use tap water, for instance, more problems than they solve. For example, if you use tap water, you may be injecting more parasites into your intestine. Enemas also only cleanse the larger, lower part of the intestine and do nothing to clean out the small intestine where many parasites dwell.

Laxatives may seem to be doing a great job of "blowing out the pipes" they're also ineffective at cleaning the small intestine, and irritate the sensitive lining of the bowels. Overuse of laxatives leads to inefficient absorption of important nutrients and acts as a diuretic, increasing the risk of dehydration. The body can also become dependent on laxatives, ultimately causing more constipation than before.

Talk to your nutritionist or ask at your natural foods store for recommendations on doing an herbal colon cleanse. After flushing the toxin-producing parasites from your body, you'll feel much better!



## CHAPTER 7

### The Happy Vegetarian

How a Meatless Diet Will Improve Your Health and Well-Being

Let's talk digestion. No, really, this is fascinating – and important. If you still have any lingering suspicions that humans are supposed to eat meat as a primary source of protein, you might want to take a look at the digestive tract of true carnivores.

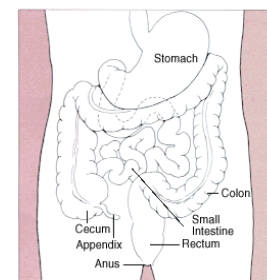
Meat is hard to digest, and it takes time for it to break down so that its nutrients can be used by the body. We've already talked about the differences between the teeth of carnivores (sharp and pointy for tearing flesh) and the teeth of plant-eaters (blunt and flat, like ours), and that's where digestion begins – in the mouth.

While you're chewing your food, the enzymes in your saliva begin the digestive process, the first step in breaking it down to its most usable form. After you swallow, the food moves on to your stomach, where it's dunked in a bath of hydrochloric acid that's breaks it down further into a substance called chyme. It travels from there to the digestive tract where it's slowly pushed through by contractions of the intestines called peristalsis. As it goes, tiny little hairlike fingers called villi absorb most of the nutrients from the chyme.

Finally, the almost completely digested food makes it to the colon, where water is absorbed from the chyme along with some more vitamins and nutrients before exiting through the rectum.

## **Meat – the protein that overstays its welcome**

Here's where it gets interesting. Looking at a true carnivore – like, say, that lion with his big sharp teeth -- we can see enormous differences in their digestive tract. Specifically, the lion's small intestine, where most of the nutrients are only about three times the length of his body. This means that the meat he eats moves through his system quickly, while it's still fresh. Humans, however, have much, much longer intestines, with food taking from 12 to 19 hours to pass through the digestive system. This is ideal for plant-based foods, allowing our intestinal tracts to absorb every little bit of nutrient available, but it also means that when we eat meat it's decaying in



a warm, moist environment for a very long time. As it slowly rots in our guts, the decaying meat releases free radicals into the body.

Free radicals are unstable oxygen molecules that are present to some degree in every body. When you hear advertisements trumpeting the importance of foods and supplements containing cancer-fighting “anti-oxidents,” it’s these free radicals that they’re battling.

Scientists only know a little bit about free radicals at this time, but what they do know is this: free radicals are connected with the aging process, and may play a part in heart disease and cancer. They are, essentially, the tiny mechanisms that break down our bodies so that, eventually, we die.

While they’ll always be a part of you – free radicals are built in to cells as part of their normal activities – you can do things to minimize their damage. Too much sunlight in the form of excessive tanning encourages the production of free radicals, which is why even though a little sunlight is important each day (remember our buddy, Vitamin D?). Using a good sunblock will not only help you avoid skin cancers, it’ll help keep you younger in general. But the biggest thing you can do to limit the free radicals in your body is to avoid eating meat. For the 12 hours or more that meat is rotting away in your system, those tiny, free radical time bombs are multiplying in your system.

Along with that, as meat protein breaks down it creates an enormous amount of nitrogen-based by-products like urea and ammonia, which can cause a build-up of uric acid. Too much uric acid in your body leads to stiff, sore joints – and, when it crystallizes, can cause gout and increased pain from arthritis. Carnivorous animals, interestingly, produce a substance called uricase, which breaks down uric acid. Humans don’t produce uricase, though – another clue that we’re not meant to be meat-eaters.

## **The raw and the cooked**

When you eat meat, how much of it do you eat raw? Well, Mr. Lion eats his raw, while its still brimming with enzymes that aid in digestion. Humans, however, cook their meat. In fact, we cook our meat to temperatures over

130 degrees Fahrenheit. This has the benefit of killing most disease-causing bacteria, but it also kills the enzymes in the meat.

Whenever you eat dead food – food lacking in the natural enzymes that help you digest it – your pancreas has to work extra hard to provide more so the food will break down for digestion. This puts strain on the pancreas that it wasn't originally designed to handle. Which isn't to say that you should eat raw meat, like the lion. But it's another consideration when we look at whether humans are designed to eat meat – when true carnivores eat raw, fresh meat, all the enzymes are present to help them garner the nutrients they need as it passes quickly through their short digestive tracts, and the nutrient-depleted waste is eliminated soon after.

When we eat cooked meat, though, our bodies have to work extra hard to digest it, using precious energy needed for other purposes, overtaxing the pancreas, and creating free radicals as the dead flesh decays in our intestinal tract. But when we eat a plant-based diet, we're feeding ourselves food that's abundant with living enzymes, which breaks down efficiently in our systems, and which provides extra energy by not demanding that our organs work overtime to use it.

## **The diabetic vegetarian**

The first line of combat when dealing with diabetes has always been diet. But research has been hit-and miss over the years, with nutritionists and doctors radically changing their opinions on diabetics' best dietary options. For a long time it was believed that carbohydrates were the culprit, with doctors advising diabetic patients to limit their carb intake to just 20 percent of their total calories. Yet many cultures that eat diets high in carbohydrates have much lower rates of diabetes than Western societies. So what's the deal?



Current research indicates that it's not carbs that are the problem, it the type of carbs we eat. Simple carbohydrates, like those present in sugar and processed flour, raise the blood sugar so quickly that the pancreas has to create the hormone insulin to process it; complex carbohydrates, the kind found in fruits, vegetables and whole

grains, take longer to break down into glucose, so the body doesn't have the extreme insulin-producing reaction as with the simple sugars.

The American Diabetes Association now recommends that diabetics eat a diet that features a generous amount of slow-burning complex carbohydrates – including lots of fiber – with a moderate amount of protein and a low percentage of fat. Well, guess what? The vegetarian diet fits that prescription better than any other! In a study at the Pritikin Longevity Institute, a diet with 10 percent fat and just three ounces of meat per week was shown to radically help patients with Type II diabetes, allowing many of the diabetics to stop using medication to treat the condition.

### **Slimming down on a meat-free diet**

Believe it or not, there are fat vegetarians – just as there are thin people who eat a lot of red meat. It's possible to have a terrible diet that just happens to preclude animal proteins, and then there are complex issues of body type and metabolism as well. But there's still some truth to the stereotype – a vegetarian eating a healthy diet consisting of a wide array of whole foods is unlikely to be overweight, and so are those who eat meat now and then but subsist mainly on plant foods.

If your omnivorous lifestyle has left you with more pounds than you're comfortable with, then your new vegetarian diet is a great way to lose the weight. We've already talked about how the foods you eat provide your body with the various nutrients it needs to build strong bones, organs, skin, etc. And plant foods are easier to digest than animal foods – so you're saving energy that you can use to be more active. Most people who switch to vegetarian diets notice that there's more pep in their step because of the more efficient manner in which they're fueling their body. So use that extra energy to get up and get moving – it's an important step in weight control!

You'll also find that your appetite is under control on a vegetarian diet. When you feed your body foods rich in the nutrients it needs, in an easily digestible form, you won't find yourself with those mysterious cravings for more and more food at inappropriate times. When we eat a lot of animal

foods, our colons become congested with mucous, toxins and the detritus of decaying flesh, limiting the absorption of nutrients from our food.

Removing that blockage from the lower intestine is why many people swear by regular cleansing of their colon, either through professionally administered therapeutic enemas or by treating yourself to a do-it-yourself colon-cleansing. Two or three weeks after transitioning to your vegetarian diet, mix a morning drink of apple juice with a tablespoon of aloe vera and liquid chlorophyll. Along with it, take two to four psyllium capsules and two capsules of cascara sagrada – everything you need is readily available where nutritional supplements are sold. Be warned, though – this will have a invigorating effect on your bowels, so do it on a day that you're at home and close to the bathroom!

### **It's not the quantity, it's the quality**



Weight loss diets for omnivores usually involving restricting something – fat, or carbohydrates, or calories. These diets are great for losing weight quickly, but most people gain weight back after their initial weight loss for two reasons – their diet wasn't something they could stay on for the rest of their lives, and extreme diets ultimately slow the metabolism.

Let's face it – anyone can lose weight by cutting back on the amount of food they eat. It's called starvation! If you've ever been on a severely restrictive diet and felt cranky, light-headed and low on energy, it's because your body isn't getting the nutrients it needs. Burning stored fat is necessary for weight loss, of course, but there's a lot of other things that you need from the food you eat just to get through the day. And eventually, restrictive diets actually have the result of making you fat.

Our bodies were ingeniously designed to survive in times of famine. When the eating's good, we store extra energy for use later in the form of fat. When the pickings are slim, however, and we're eating less than we need to survive, our bodies kick on the emergency backup system, burning the stored fat for energy. This worked brilliantly when man foraged for his food,

eating whatever he could find – when he went for long periods with nothing to eat, he got thinner but he didn't die because of the stored fat reserves.

Your body does the same thing, even though you aren't foraging for food and going through long periods of famine. Every time you go on a restrictive diet, your body thinks that it's starving. So your metabolism slows down, burning less energy, keeping you alive in the face of starvation.

When you try to go back to eating “normally,” your body leaps at the chance to store fat for the next time starvation comes – so you gain weight even faster than before. Your metabolism is slower, so you have less energy and you're less inclined to exercise and your body holds onto what you give it for even longer.

So what's the solution? Eating healthy foods, in moderation, to keep your metabolism chugging along like a well-oiled machine. And stay away from the junk food – just because those chocolate-covered granola bars and cheese puffs are meat-free, that doesn't mean they're good dietary choices.

Now that you've successfully given up eaten animal protein, take this opportunity to pick up other good habits, too. Drink water instead of sugar (or aspartame) loaded sodas. Satisfy your sweet tooth with fresh fruit instead of candy, eat whole-grain baked goods instead of white bread, and start using soy or rice milk instead of dairy. Your body will thank you!

## **Feeling good, looking good**

There's truth to the adage, “you are what you eat.” Once you start fueling your body with healthful foods, it'll show on the outside!

Take, for example, your skin. It's the body's largest organ, taking up about 12 percent of your body weight, and it's the first thing you present to the world. Your skin is alive – it breathes, it needs moisture and the right nutrients to keep it not just



blemish-free, but glowing and attractive. And its arguably your most important organ of all – it keeps your muscles and organs and bones protected from the elements.

The old, dry top layer of your skin sloughs off and it replaced every day or two. The body's system of self-repair when you damage your skin is remarkable – when you get a cut or scrape, blood flows into the wound to flush out any foreign particles, then your white blood cells go to work to fight infection. Then nutrients like zinc and calcium kick in to build new skin cells to repair the damage. It's pretty amazing when you think about it.

You can repay all the good things your skin does for you by feeding it foods rich in the nutrients it craves. All plant foods contain a substance called *bioflavonoids*, which give plants' cells the solid structure they need. In the human body, bioflavonoids serve the same general purpose, nourishing the cells of your own blood vessels. When these blood vessels, called *capillaries*, weaken and break they leak blood, causing "spider veins." These reddish splotches can appear anywhere on your body, particularly your cheeks, nose and legs. By eating foods rich in bioflavonoids, you'll help to keep your blood vessels strong. Besides spider veins, weak blood vessels also lead to a variety of circulatory problems, including the tendency to bruise easily.

When it comes to looking your best, healthy skin is of the vital. As an organ, one of skin's most important functions is to eliminate waste products through your perspiration. As with urine, the moisture that passes out of your body when you sweat carries with it the end product of the nutrients you didn't need for your bodily functions. Animal products contain very concentrated protein – when excess protein is filtered through the body, whatever your kidneys can't handle makes its way out of your body through your sweat. Some of it clogs your pores, making your skin dry and flaky, and can lead to increased blemishes.

By eating a meatless diet, you won't be making your kidneys work so hard, you'll have less impurities passing through your skin, and you're helping the blood flow freely through your blood vessels. That glow of good health is the mark of a vegetarian!



## The sweet scent of good health

We've talked about how eating meat clogs up the bowels and fills the body with toxins that it has trouble eliminating. Constipation is one side affect of this, when waste matter gets trapped in the intestinal tract. When that happens, toxins circulate throughout your body, looking for a way to get out, and many of them end up in the lungs, to be eliminated through your breath. This is called halitosis – and no amount of breath mints can help.

Believe it or not, chronic bad breath can be eliminated by paying attention to the other end of things. Colon cleansing, which you'll remember from the chapter on nutrition, often clears up halitosis. Not that this should be a problem if you're a vegetarian – all those healthy whole grains, fruits and vegetables are loaded with fiber, and clogged bowels are unlikely to be a problem.

But if you've yet to completely give up meat, you'll find your breath will be all the sweeter after its by-products are out of your body. And your whole body will smell better overall. When we eat meat, we're also eating whatever those animals ate, and the various toxins stored in their fat. When you work out and burn your own stored fat, these toxins are sweated out through your skin. The less toxins you have in your body, the less your sweat and breath will smell.

## Water in, water out

Almost every aspect of our body's functionality is regulated by hormones. When we eat meat, we ingest *protoglandins*, hormone-like substances present in animal products – including our own bodies. Excess protoglandins can cause an imbalance of your own hormone levels, causing water retention.



While nobody wants to be puffy – and when switching to vegetarian diet, most people quickly see an improvement in their appearance because of decreased water retention – this is especially unpleasant when a woman is having, or about to have, her menstrual cycle. Premenstrual syndrome, or PMS, is marked by inflammation, swelling and bloating due to an excess of prostaglandins. If you're a woman and you've begun a vegan lifestyle, you're almost entirely assured that you'll see your symptoms of PMS diminish. If you're an ovo-lacto vegetarian, try cutting out cheese and dairy during the week before you begin your period, giving your hormones a breather so you can have a less uncomfortable cycle.

What you'll find, as you get further into your vegetarian journey, is that you'll look better, feel better, and even smell better when you've stopped eating meat. You'll also have more energy, which will help you be more active – and the more exercise you get, the better you'll look and feel. It's hard to believe that we're attractive when we feel lousy, our sluggish, fatigued bodies just dragging along from meat-based meal to meat-based meal. But as a vegetarian, you'll have a spring in your step and a better outlook – how can you not feel good about yourself when you're eating healthy, socially responsible meals, and treating yourself in the best way possible? So along with your shinier hair, clearer skin and boosted energy, you'll radiate with the confidence that comes from taking excellent care of yourself – and that confidence is irresistible!

## CHAPTER 8

# “But I’m Not a Freak!” or, How to Cope in a Carnivorous World

Being new to vegetarianism, it's more than likely that you're the only person in your household going meatless. Whether you live with a partner, your parents, your children or roommates, sticking to your guns when everyone else is chowing down on meat loaf or cheeseburgers can be difficult. Even if they're supportive of your decision, you'll have to deal with them not understanding all the ins and outs of your new lifestyle – and if they're not supportive, you may find them ridiculing your food choices or even actively trying to sabotage you.

The first thing you need to accept is that it's not your job to make them change to suit your way of eating, any more than it's theirs to turn you back into a meat-eater. If they want to change, that's great – you can share this book with them and you can all work on menu-planning together! But the best way you can influence others in your household to adopt healthier habits is to be a good example – and not turning them off by lecturing them!

### **Meal time at an omnivorous dinner table**



What's the best way to deal with vegetarian needs when the rest of the family expects meat and potatoes for dinner? Should you just partake of the same meal as the others, only skipping the meat? Or should you make it clear that you have special needs, and eat a separate meal from everyone else? If you're the primary cook in your family, you may not want to prepare multiple entrees every night – and you might not want to cook a meat-based dish for others when you've given it up yourself. And if you're not the family chef, is it fair to ask them to go to extra effort for you, night after night?

Only you know the dynamic in your home, so only you can figure out the answers to these questions. One thing is certain, however – you need to sit down and talk to the people you live with about your dietary needs and figure out the most agreeable way to make it work for everyone. If you can't stand to have meat around you at all, this is a huge issue. You may have to

ask the others in your home to cook meat outside on a grill, and dedicate a special section of the refrigerator to meat storage, asking that it's wrapped in such a way that you don't have to look at it. If your feelings aren't that strong, you may simply want to negotiate who cooks what, and when – perhaps you can arrange to cook completely vegetarian meals for everyone three nights a week, and prepare your own entrée on the other nights. It all comes down to what your needs are, and the compromises you and your family are willing to make.

### **What about the children?**

A little patience and negotiation can overcome issues between a meat-eater and a vegetarian, but what if you have children? It's a little like a "mixed marriage" where you have to decide in which religion you'll raise your children! Few areas can lead to disharmony in a relationship faster than disagreements on how to bring up the kids, so sit down and negotiate this one with your partner before you go any further.

Raising your child to be vegetarian is certainly a healthful option – kids benefit from going meatless just like adults – and we'll discuss the how-to of that in Chapter 16. The most important thing right now is to figure out how you'll handle meals at home with your kids. Some families eat nothing but meatless meals at home, but allow the children to eat meat at school and at their friends' houses. Others create meals that offer options for everyone in the family, so that the omnivores and the vegetarians can choose whatever they like.

On the other hand, you may feel so strongly that your children become vegetarians that there may be no room for compromise. You'll need to lay this out for your partner in a kind, non-confrontational way and, even if you do, it may lead to conflict. It may seem like it's "just food," but it's an important issue – if you can't easily negotiate the issue, there's no shame in working it out with a family counselor. Remember, though, that no matter what their age, people like to eat good food – so if you put together tasty, attractive menus full of flavor, color and a variety of textures, you'll find that the kids and adults are more willing to try vegetarian meals.

## **Going your own way – and letting them go theirs**

If you're the main cook in the family, cooking multiple entrees for family dinners can be a huge pain. It's a lot of extra work, but it's also the easiest solution to making sure you get something to eat while keeping everyone happy. And it's also, you'll be surprised to learn, the best way to sway others to your side.

Look at it this way – your omnivorous tablemates can enjoy the meat-based portion of the meal while you eat your vegetarian option, and all of you share the (meatless) side dishes. Of course, your vegetarian food is going to look so good and smell so delicious, they'll want to try your food, too. So the next time, you just make the vegetarian dish, and chances are they'll never miss the meat-based dish! Pretty soon, you'll be making vegetarian meals almost every day of the week ... mission accomplished.

You can also make your meal out of all of the non-meat dishes on the table which, if you plan well, should be enough to fill up your plate and your belly. Steamed vegetables, roasted red potatoes, a salad and a whole wheat roll is a fine meal – let the others have the pork chops, because you've got plenty to eat. This is a good approach when you find yourself at a Thanksgiving dinner, office party or dinner at a friend's house and you can't dictate the menu – just eat what you can, without making a big deal out of your vegetarian lifestyle.

## **You and me against the world**

Right now, as you start your new meat-free life, you can decide what sort of a vegetarian you're going to be. And the best way to decide that is to think about all of the people you've known in your life who have tried to convert you to their personal way of living.

We all know the type. The two-pack-a-day smoker who gives up cigarettes and then lectures everyone within earshot on the dangers of second-hand smoke. The born-again Christian who drops the Lord's name into every

conversation and acts as a self-proclaimed expert on morality. The former boozehound that takes the 12 Steps so seriously that you can't even swallow an antihistamine in their presence without getting an earful about addiction.

And you know what? We really, really don't like those people. So don't become one!

You've made an important life choice that's going to improve most areas of your life, most notably your health. And it will be tempting to loudly proclaim to everyone around you about how great vegetarianism is – after all, you've made positive changes that would benefit everyone, right? The problem is, most people are turned off by in-your-face proselytizing, and you'll do more to drive them away from the idea of meatless eating than you will to convert them. That's not to say that you shouldn't be honest about your choices – but badgering your friends and family takes it a step too far.

Some of the most influential people in the world have been those who quietly live their lives by their own principles, inspiring others to choose similar paths as they lead by example. Others will ask questions about your vegetarianism, and you should definitely be prepared to answer those questions. But if you find yourself continually battling with other people, arguing with them about your choices and creating bad feelings, then you need to take a good, hard look at how you're getting across your message.

## **The big “why”**

Your co-workers, your family, your friends, and even people you meet socially will have questions about your vegetarianism. The questions are wide ranging, but they're probably all the same questions that you had when you first started this journey:

“How do you get enough protein if you don't eat meat?”

“What do you eat?”

“Do you eat chicken? (or fish, or eggs ...)”

“Don't you miss meat?”

“Can you still have dessert?”

“Why do you wear leather shoes?”

“Why can’t you drink milk?”

... and on, and on, and on. The best way to deal with these questions is to have a simple, honest answer ready. You’re not required to go into detail about every aspect of your diet, and it’s best if you don’t – unless someone is really, really curious about those details. Don’t try to sell them on vegetarianism. Just answer the questions, smile and move on.

There’s an old show business axiom that goes, “always leave ‘em wanting more.” When people ask you about your vegetarianism, they’re curious about what’s so great about it. The happier and more secure – and non-judgmental about their eating – that you are, the more they’ll suspect that there’s something valuable in it. Your answers will make them want to find out more, so they’ll seek out more information. You may even be the one they come to, looking for advice.

In essence, you’re an ambassador for vegetarianism. You know how superior your new lifestyle is, but that doesn’t mean you have to act superior. If you have a positive, happy, low-key attitude towards your food choices, that will affect the way that people see not just you, but vegetarianism, too.

### **Treading gently on the earth and on other people’s feelings**

You’ll have countless experiences in the coming years where you’re surrounded by people eating meat, and where maintaining a meatless lifestyle is a challenge. You may be on a road trip with friends, and the only place to eat is a fast-food burger joint. Or a family picnic turns out to be a non-stop barbecue with the main fare consisting of burgers, hot dogs and ribs. In these situations, your only option is to find whatever you can to eat – a glass of apple juice or diet soda, a handful of potato chips, some cole slaw – and make the best of the situation.

This won’t happen very often, because vegetarians really do have a wide range of food choices, but when it does it’s up to you to behave with dignity. Eat what you can, and show how adaptable you are. This will not only show them what a charming, adult, and flexible person you are, it’ll



also give them a good impression of vegetarianism as a whole – remember, most meat-eaters fear that switching to a meatless lifestyle will be boring and difficult! By showing them that it's not, you're soft-selling vegetarianism.

If you're going to be dining out with a mixed group of vegetarians and non-vegetarians, do what you can to get everyone to agree on a restaurant that has plenty of vegetarian options. If these are family members or close friends (as opposed to, say, a business function) you can even ask politely if everyone would be okay with eating somewhere that has menu items for vegetarians – it's likely that they'll accommodate you with a minimum of grumbling.

If you're vegan, the challenge will be even greater, and you'll find that you have to be the most adaptable vegetarians of all. While most restaurants today plan their menus with an eye towards offering vegetarian options, few offer much – if anything – for vegans. You'll find that you have to “make do” when dining out, especially with a mixed group that includes non-vegetarians. But the important thing is to do it with grace, not drawing undue attention to your special dietary needs.

In fact, some vegetarians make special allowances for times that they have absolutely no control over the food that's available and will eat foods made with eggs or dairy. This way, they can socialize with non-vegans without going hungry or risking negative interactions because of their dietary restrictions. It's not the ideal way to live as a vegan, of course, but we live in an imperfect world – the most important thing is to stay true to your principles as much as you realistically can, and inspire others to see vegetarianism as a positive, flexible lifestyle. Remember, the more attractive you make it look, the more likely it is that they'll want to try it themselves!

## **Allow yourself the time to healthy**

Hopefully, you haven't been overwhelmed by all the information you've read thus far. It's a lot to digest (so to speak) about nutrition. It's important to have a basic grasp of what your body needs to function properly, but it's

also important to remember that if you eat a variety of whole foods each day then you're undoubtedly getting enough nutrients. Feeling confident that you're eating well as a vegetarian will give you strength to deal with non-vegetarians who don't understand what your choice is all about – or, even worse, have a head full of misinformation that they're so convinced is the truth, they'll argue with you.

The first line of psychological defense in a world of carnivores is this one thought – vegetarian diets are not lacking in essential nutrients any more than non-vegetarian diets. Which isn't to say that all vegetarians eat well. Just like omnivores, some vegetarians have absolutely horrible diets. And the culprit in both cases is usually the same thing – junk food.

By switching to a vegetarian lifestyle, you've become much more thoughtful about what you eat. But that doesn't mean you're immune to the siren call of junk food – chocolate chip cookies, salty chips, soft drinks, etc. Even if you shop primarily at a natural foods store, you'll find the aisles are lined with convenience foods and snacks – there are even cookies, chips, etc. marketed to vegans! It's natural to want a treat every now and then, or to fall back on an easy prepackaged food when we're short on time. The problem is when you find that commercially prepared foods are equally or outnumbering the meals that you make from scratch.



It's easy to do. Our lives are all busy, and we have so much that we have to manage – family responsibilities, jobs, social obligations. Usually we place our own needs at the bottom of our list of priorities. Often, we feel selfish about taking time out for ourselves when we have so much to do, and so many places we need to be. Meals get short shrift because we just can't be bothered to chop and slice and simmer and bake. If you're not a naturally talented chef, you may not get pleasure out of cooking, and you just want to get it on the table so you can eat and get back to other things on your list.

Keep in mind that one of the reasons that you've chosen a new way of eating is to have more control over what you put into your body. Processed "health foods" from commercial vendors still contain salt, sugar and fat, and

when you rely on them you're losing a lot of control over what you eat. You also may find yourself buying foods based entirely on how good they taste rather than how healthy they are.

## **Tracking your success**

It's possible to lose track of what you're eating, especially if you're very busy. If you think that you may be relying too much on processed foods, carry a small notebook with you and make it your food diary for a week. Write down everything you eat, when you ate it, and how much. At the end of the week you'll have a good idea of where your "danger areas" are, which less-healthy foods you're eating too much of, and even what times of the day you reach for snacks. It's good information to have, and can help you change some potentially self-sabotaging habits.

Meanwhile, help yourself out by planning ahead. We'll talk about stocking your kitchen and planning meals in Chapter 11, but for now think about ways that you can streamline the system for cooking at home. Pre-packaged salads, fruits and vegetables are more expensive than those you buy in the produce section and prep yourself, but if you find yourself skipping these important foods – in the lunch that you bring to work, for example – because of the time it takes to prepare them, consider trading the extra money they cost for the time you'll save. Another solution is to take a little time when you grocery shop to wash and cut up a variety of fruits and vegetables as soon as you bring them home, and store them in airtight plastic containers and Ziploc bags so they're ready to go when you need them. Some companies make small "snack size" bags that are perfect for cut-up carrots, celery and fruit, so you can just grab a bag of snacks to take with you whenever you leave the house (and if you're concerned about adding plastic to the landfill, you can always rinse them out and reuse them later).

Of course, you're going to want cookies or cake or chips every once in awhile. You're only human! It's also possible to eat healthy by incorporating frozen vegetarian meals, vegan snack bars and vegetarian "cup of soup" type items into your diet. But if you look at your cupboards and see a preponderance of sweet treats, salty snacks and instant meals, it's time to

take a step back and reassess how much of your diet is made up of whole foods and how much is junk.

## **Hide and seek – identifying hidden animal products**

So you've stopped eating meat, and you're feeling good about being a vegetarian. You know that you've chosen an ethical, thoughtful, healthy way of life, and you've mastered the art of meatless eating. But are you really eliminating all animal products from your diet?

Many, many commercially produced foods contain ingredients from animal sources. Some of these ingredients can be produced from plant sources, but unless a manufacturer specifies the source on the label, you have no way of knowing if its origins are animal. Often, these are additives that are derived from eggs or dairy products, making them acceptable to ovo lacto vegetarians. But if you're vegan, you have to be especially careful about reading labels – animal products can be found in the most unlikely of places.

**Albumin** is the protein in eggs – specifically, egg whites. It's often used as a thickening agent.

**Anchovies**, those tiny, salty fish that you pick off your pizza, are an ingredient in Caesar salad dressing and Worcestershire sauce.

**Animal fats** like butter, lard and suet are used to make packaged crackers and cookies, as well as frozen pie crusts, refried beans and flour tortillas.

**Casein**, also listed as caseinate, is a milk protein added to cheese products and can even be found in some soy cheese.

**Gelatin**, used to thicken processed foods, is usually of animal origin, the product from boiling down bones and cartilage. It's found in gelatin desserts, yogurt, candies and sugar-coated cereals.

**Glucose and dextrose**, both simple sugars, can be derived from fruit but often comes from animal tissues and fluids. It's an ingredient in many soft drinks, baked goods, candies and commercial frostings.

**Glycerides** – listed as monoglycerides, diglycerides or triglycerides, can be derived from either animal fats or from plant sources. They're found in a staggering number of products, from processed foods and cosmetics to hand lotion, ink, glue and antifreeze.

**Isinglass**, a gelatin made from the air bladders of freshwater fish, is used as a clarifying agent in some gelatin-based desserts and alcoholic beverages.

**Lactic acid** is a milk-based bacteria used in cheese, yogurt, candies, jams and jellies, frozen treats and processed vegetables like pickles, olives and sauerkraut.

**Lactose**, sometimes listed as D-lactose or saccharum lactin, is the sugar found in milk. It's used as a sweetener in candies, over-the-counter medications, laxatives and baby formula, and as a culture medium in yogurts and sour cream.

**Lanolin** is the fat in sheep's wool, and it's present in a wide range of cosmetics and lotions, as well as chewing gum and fabric treatments.

**Lecithin**, a necessary nutrient, is derived from both plant and animal sources, but is most often derived from egg yolks. You'll see it in many products, including processed breakfast foods, margarine, baked goods, vegetable oil sprays and chocolate.

**Lutein**, a yellow coloring agent, is made from either plant sources (marigolds) or animal sources (egg yolks) and is used to color a wide range of foods.

**Oleic acid**, derived from sheep and cattle fat, is used in butter substitutes, cheese, vegetable oils, baked goods, candies, ice cream and beverages, as well as cosmetics and soap.

**Pepsin**, an enzyme from pig's stomachs, is used to make cheese.

**Stearic acid**, also listed as octadecanoic acid, is derived from animal fat, and is found in countless processed foods including baked goods, chewing gum, beverages, artificial vanilla flavoring, cosmetics and the outer coating of pills.

**Tallow**, the waxy solid fat from sheep and cattle, is an ingredient in waxed paper, soap, margarine, crayons and candles.

**Vitamin A**, also listed as retinol, can be derived from plant sources or from cod liver oil or egg yolks, and is used to fortify foods as well as being sold as a supplement on its own. It's also sometimes found in cosmetics.

**Vitamin B12**, another popular supplement, can be made from animal sources or synthesized. The synthetic version is vegan – look for “cobalamin” on the label.

**Vitamin D** comes in several forms, and is used as a fortifying supplement, and it appears in different forms. Vitamin D2, also listed as ergocalciferol, is derived from plant sources or yeast; Vitamin D3, also identified as cholecalciferol, is made from cod liver oil or lanolin.

**Whey**, the liquid that's separated from milk solids when making cheese, can be found in many processed foods, especially baked goods.

## **Marching to your own drummer**

You'll soon find, as you identify yourself to others as vegetarian, that there's a schoolyard-like rivalry among the meatless. Many vegans become stridently political about their lifestyle, and look down their noses at ovo lacto vegetarians, disapproving of their use of dairy and eggs, and recoiling at the thought of their leather shoes. Avid ovo lactos feel superior to semi-vegetarians who eat fish or chicken, and think they aren't “serious” enough about vegetarianism.

It's all very petty, and being judgmental doesn't do anyone any good. Really, how you choose to eat is a very personal decision, and so is everyone else's. You're taking the time to learn about nutrition and

vegetarian styles and figuring out what works for you – don't let anyone bully you into feeling like you're "not vegetarian enough." As you go along your vegetarian journey, you may find you want to become vegan, or semi-vegan, or whatever the next step is. Your diet will evolve as you go, depending on your needs.

As a vegetarian, whatever stripe you are, you're going to be in the minority. Nitpicking over which sub-category is "better" is silly. Take pride in your specialness – after all, unlike most omnivores you've put a lot of thought into this! You don't have to justify your choice to anyone. Be proud of yourself for deciding to feed yourself in a way that's healthier, more ethical, and more socially responsible. Being different doesn't mean you're a freak. You're smart! You've proven yourself to be someone who thinks about how their choices affect their body and the rest of the world. Stand tall!

## CHAPTER 9

### The Vegetarian Eats Out

Meals You Can Enjoy From Fast Food to Fine Dining



When you're making your own meals at home, it's easy to have complete control over every aspect of your eating. You stocked the pantry, you planned the menus, and you're whipping up tasty meatless meatless entrees for you and your family. But unless you're completely housebound, you have to go out in the world some time – and often, that requires eating in restaurants.

That doesn't mean you have to toss out all your vegetarian principles. More and more, restaurants offer vegetarian options, and even fast food outlets have food you can eat. Depending on where you are, you can find something to eat. The reason restaurants have become more sensitive to the needs of vegetarians has nothing to do with social consciousness – it has to do with money. Vegetarians (and friends of vegetarians) have money to spend, too, and restaurants that don't cater to meatless eaters lose business when those folks want to eat out.

Even if you end up in a restaurant that doesn't have anything vegetarian on the menu, you can always request something special. Remember, restaurants want your money – and they get that money by selling you food, and preparing it in a way you like! Salads can be made without the chicken or salmon that's listed on the menu. You can even ask your server if the chef can prepare something vegetarian just for you. Chefs often get a little bored making the same things day in and day out, and yours may welcome the opportunity to whip up something new! Just be polite, ask nicely, and your request will be seen as perfectly reasonable.

## **Think ethnic**

If you live in a big city, you'll probably be able to find vegetarian restaurants in your town. If you can't find any on the Internet or in the phone book, look for a natural foods store in your town – the employees there will be able to point you toward restaurants that are vegetarian-friendly. If both of those searches come up short, think ethnic! Chinese restaurants are great for vegetarians, offering delicious vegetable entrees, rice and noodles. Just take a moment to quiz your server about how the dishes are prepared – some dishes that sound vegetarian on the menu may contain meat or eggs.

Tell your waiter that you don't eat meat, and they'll make sure your meal comes the way you want it.

Indian restaurants are terrific for vegetarians, too, although not all cities have them. The Indian diet has a rich tradition of vegetarianism, and restaurants offer a selection of vegetable curries and dishes made with chickpeas, which are an excellent source of protein (and delicious). If you're new to Indian cuisine, you have a delightful adventure ahead of you – try dal, a traditional, spicy lentil dish, and samosas, delightful little pastries stuffed with meat, vegetables and spices (just make sure you don't order the ones with meat!) If you're avoiding dairy, though, be aware that many Indian dishes are prepared using clarified butter, called ghee – just ask that your meal be prepared with vegetable oil instead.



If your co-workers or family announce a trip to the Olive Garden or another Italian restaurant, don't fret – Italian restaurants are another great option for vegetarians, especially the ovo lactos. Pasta with meatless marinara sauce is a staple menu item, as is pasta primavera, which is loaded with vegetables. Many Italian soups, such as pasta fagioli, get their protein from rice and beans (just make sure that they use vegetable broth, and not beef or chicken). At the big chain restaurants like Olive Garden or the Spaghetti Factory, you'll find salad bar/bread stick combination meals that are perfect for vegetarians and easy on the wallet. And if the gang heads out for pizza, ovo lactos have lots of options, too. Plain cheese pizza, or even a cheeseless pizza topped with vegetables, are just as tasty as the meat-loaded kind.

Other ethnic options are excellent choices for vegetarians, as well. Hit a Greek restaurant and load up on hummus, dolma (stuffed grape leaves), baba ganouj (a delicious eggplant spread), spanikopita (spinach pie) and salad made with a grain called tabouli. If you like Mexican fare, you can have gazpacho (a cold vegetable soup), chiles rellenos (green peppers stuffed with cheese, the breaded and fried) and



bean-and-cheese versions of all the usual favorites – burritos, enchiladas, tostadas and tacos.

## **Eating with the common folk**

If you're an ovo lacto vegetarian, you'll be able to find lots of things to eat at family-style restaurants, no matter what time of the day you visit them. At breakfast, you can enjoy waffles or pancakes, omelettes and egg "scrambles." Other times of the day or night, there's grilled cheese sandwiches, salads, french fries, egg salad and other items. It gets harder, however, if you're vegan. In fact, despite the size of the menus in these restaurants, vegans will find little that they can eat. This is where it pays to be creative and flexible. Ask your waitress if the kitchen will top a baked potato with steamed vegetables, or ask if you can just side dishes and have a small salad, some veggies and rice. It may not be the most delicious meal you've ever had, but it's an adequate meal until you can get something tastier.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, your better restaurants will have menu items designed with vegetarians in mind – and even if there's nothing that's just what you want, the chef will probably be amenable to customizing a dish to your liking. Most of the time, though, you'll find delicious vegetarian appetizers – you can even make a meal out of two or three of those if there's no entrée that appeals to you. But you'd be surprised how creative a chef can be when asked to come up with something new on the spur of the moment, and your meat-eating friends will be jealous of the special attention you receive!

## **Vegetarians on the road**

Traveling can be a special sort of challenge when you're vegetarian, since you don't know what will be available to you ahead of time. It helps to be prepared for the worst and anticipate how you'll eat if there's little or

nothing available for vegetarians – and you'll need to be adaptable no matter what happens.

Car trips can be difficult if you rely on restaurants and fast food as your primary dining options. A much better idea is to pack a cooler with your own food, so that you can control what you eat and when. Besides saving you the time you would spend looking for a vegetarian-friendly restaurant, you're assured that you can eat foods that fit with your vegetarian lifestyle. And you'll save money, too – packing your own food is always less expensive than eating out.

Take a look at the foods you have on hand and consider how well they would travel on a road trip. Bring a cooler for the perishable items and pack up a small box with the rest. Just be careful if you're eating while driving, so you don't cause an accident! Here's some foods that are as good on the road as they are at home:

- Whole grain muffins, rolls and cookies
- Carrot sticks and celery
- Snack-size containers of yogurt, applesauce and breakfast cereal
- Juice boxes
- Peanut butter (or almond butter) sandwiches
- Pasta salads
- Egg salad sandwiches
- Bagels
- Hummus and pita chips
- Trail mix
- Fresh fruit
- Vegan snack bars
- Bottles of mineral water

When you're packing for a car trip, don't forget the little extras that will make your roadside meals hassle-free. Get a bag or box and stock plastic utensils, paper plates, napkins or paper towels, a bottle opener, a knife for slicing fruits and vegetables, ziploc baggies for leftovers, a gallon jug of water for rinsing off food and your hands, and some disposable wipes for easy clean-up. Consider keeping your toothbrush and toothpaste easily accessible so you can brush after your meal!

Remember that the key to a healthy vegetarian diet is variety. Every meal doesn't have to be an entrée and side dishes – some granola, a single-serving container of soy milk, fresh fruit and a whole-grain muffin makes a great meal! Munch on foods that you like during the day and then spend your vacation money on a nice meal at dinner time.

## **Flying high and meat-free**

Depending on what airline you fly and how long your trip is, your in-flight meal is likely to be a cellophane-wrapped package of crackers or a bag of pretzels. But some flights still serve meals and offer the option of requesting a vegetarian option. If you travel frequently and use a travel agent, you can let them know that you're vegetarian and they'll make the request for you every time they book your flights. If you book your own flights, you simply need to make the request when you make your reservations, or call the airline's customer service number (you can also visit their website) and make the request at least 24 hours before you're scheduled to fly.

If you're unsure if your flight will serve a meal, call and ask an airline representative – if you're vegan, make sure to specify no eggs or dairy. Once you've made the request, call the day before your flight just to be certain that they have you down as vegetarian. When you board the plane, let the flight attendant know as soon as you can that you're getting a vegetarian meal – as with any bureaucracy, information is sometimes inefficiently communicated.

Occasionally, planes are changed at the last minute due to mechanical issues, and that can mean that your meal isn't loaded on the right plane! Then same holds true if you upgrade to first class just before you board – they may have your meal ear-marked for your original seat assignment. Requesting a vegetarian meal is no guarantee that you'll get one – but by politely reminding the flight crew that you've made the request, you increase the odds that you'll get it.

## Emergency rations – the vegetarian’s safety net

Anyone who has special dietary needs, vegetarian or otherwise, should know how to put together a small pack of “just in case” food for those times when you’d otherwise be unable to get a healthy meal. This is a great idea for vegetarians, but it’s vital for people with insulin issues – diabetics, pre-diabetics and hypoglycemics – so they can keep their blood sugar in check.

Small, insulated lunch bags are ideal for this purpose. You want to be able to take it with you in your carry-on bag on air flights (check the current FAA rules regarding what you can, and can’t, take on a plane) or toss in the car when you’re going to be away from home all day.

Some things you can consider emergency meal rations:

Pre-sliced vegetables like celery, carrots, bell peppers and jicama

Single-serve boxes of soy milk, rice milk and/or fruit juice

Sliced cheese

Protein bars

Apple slices

Trail mix

Snack packs of hummus and pita chips

Bottled water

Small container of peanut butter

Chips or pretzels

Bagels

If you’re traveling, make sure you restock your emergency pack as you go along. Pick up granola bars, nuts and chips from convenience stores and vending machines. If your hotel has a free continental breakfast, nab a piece of fruit for the bag.

Keeping your “just in case” bag stocked will save you time looking for something to eat, the money you’d spend for a restaurant or fast food meal, and it’ll be a life-saver if you’re stuck somewhere without anything available.

## You want fries with that?

Speaking of fast food, it's difficult to avoid. Unless you live in a remote location miles from civilization or you never leave your house, you drive past fast food outlets several times every day. And if you're out and about – or on the road in a strange town – they're an attractive option for a quick meal. But do they have anything that you can eat?

Thankfully, the answer is yes. Several of the larger chains now offer veggie burgers on their menus, and also offer fresh salads (simply ask for yours without chicken). And if you know the secret password, you can get vegetarian sandwiches at McDonald's and Burger King – request a Big Mac without meat, and they'll be happy to comply. Ask for a “veggie burger” at Burger King, and you'll get the tomato, lettuce, cheese (if you're ovo lacto) and the condiments on a bun.

Some chains, like Wendy's and Arby's, offer baked potatoes and lunchtime salad bars. And Taco Bell is a surprisingly good option for vegetarians – they use only vegetable oil in their cooking, even in their refried beans, and have a number of menu items that are good for ovo lactos. Other chains have pita sandwiches and breakfast items like French-toast sticks and scrambled eggs.

If you have concerns about what's in the food provided by your local fast-food purveyors, check out the nutritional information on the company's website. You might be surprised to learn that those French-toast sticks are made without eggs or milk, and that McDonald's chocolate chip cookies are vegan. It pays, however, to check in occasionally and make sure menu items still contain the same ingredients, because if the company changes suppliers the formulation may change, too. The French fries at most fast-food restaurants is vegetarian, since they've pretty much all switched to 100 percent vegetable oil in response to public demand.

For your heartiest fast-food meal, look for restaurants that offer both salad bars and baked potatoes – not only is that a great meal combination, you can use salad bar toppings to customize your baked potato however you like!

## Healthy lunches at school or work

If your school or workplace has a cafeteria, you may be in luck and they offer vegetarian options. More and more, institutional cooking has become somewhat health-conscious, although it can still be a challenge if whoever plans the menu still believes in meat-based nutrition.

The option offering the most control for vegetarian children and teens is to brown-bag it and take their own lunch to school. If you're packing your own (or your kids') lunches, make sure to offer the same variety that you'd demand for yourself. Good lunch items include peanut butter or almond butter on whole wheat bread, carrot or celery stick with hummus spread, containers of fruit, pudding or yogurt, baggies of dried fruits and nuts, cartons of soy or rice milk, string cheese, and protein bars.

Most schools send home schedules of what meals are planned for the week, so you can figure out ahead of time what hot meals can be eaten in the cafeteria and what days lunch should be brought from home. Sometimes, the ideal option might be to eat some of the cafeteria meal, like macaroni and cheese, and supplement it with fresh fruit, whole grain crackers and soy milk from home.



If you're a college student, you'll probably find that your food service options include vegetarian meals – college is a time of experimentation and most universities bend over backwards to accommodate vegetarians (who are probably quite vocal about their needs!). They also have bigger budgets and don't have to comply to the same food service restrictions as public schools, so you'll find a much wider range of healthy meal alternatives.

If you work for a big company, you may have a company cafeteria at your disposal. That may be great – they may have a salad bar, or be vegetarian-friendly in their menu options – or it could be a hellhole that only offers greasy burgers and soggy fries. It all depends on who's doing the cooking.



Some company cafeterias have their own in-house chefs, in which case you can request that they provide some vegetarian menu items – or even make you something special. Other companies contract out their food service, and it's made off-site.

The same strategies that apply to dealing with public school cafeterias can be used with your workplace cafeteria. If they offer a weekly menu, you can plan which days you'll eat in the cafeteria and when you'll bring your own lunch or eat out. You can also bring your own food and buy a couple of things in the cafeteria. One great advantage to being an adult employee is that, if you're dissatisfied with the vegetarian options in your company's cafeteria, you can meet with whoever coordinates the food service and ask if they can provide ovo lacto or vegan options on a regular basis.

## **Restaurant dining with style**

No matter how well you plan ahead, there will be times when you're in a restaurant and there's almost nothing on the menu that fits your vegetarian lifestyle. That doesn't mean you should throw a hissy fit and pout – it means that you need to get a little creative.

Scan the menu and look at what they offer. By examining their menu items, you can figure out what ingredients they use most frequently and ask for something combining ingredients that they have on hand. If they offer spaghetti or fettuccine and steamed vegetables as a side dish, you can ask your server if the chef could put together a vegetarian pasta dish for you. If you're really stuck, you can make a meal of bread and salad, or ask for a baked potato.

But before you give up and make a meal of side dishes, ask your server nicely if the chef can accommodate a strict vegetarian. Odds are, they'll say yes – then nicely tell them what you can and can't eat. Make sure you specify that you don't want any animal products, and let them know if that includes fish, cheese, eggs or milk (surprisingly, even some chefs don't know what qualifies as vegetarian cuisine). If it turns out that they can't, thank your server for trying – after all, it's not their fault – and make do with what's available.

It pays, however, to understand a little bit about how the restaurant business operates. The wait staff and cooks at diners and family-style restaurants will be less flexible when it comes to accommodating your off-menu requests. This isn't because they care less about their customers – it's because they are, due to the nature of their establishment, less flexible and creative. 99 percent of the customers who eat in such restaurants order straight off the menu, sometimes asking for simple adjustments like no butter on the toast or a side of sour cream. The wait staff is accustomed to taking orders and getting food out fast, and the line cooks have mastered the standard menu items, rarely offering off-the-menu specials. Most of the time, the staff members at family restaurants simply don't know how to accommodate special dietary requests because they don't get those requests very often.

Fine dining establishments and neighborhood restaurants, though, are almost always better at handling special requests. The chefs are used to improvising, creating new menu items based on fresh local ingredients. The waitstaff knows that customers need to be catered to, so they'll keep coming back – the big chain restaurants care less about cultivating regulars because they know they'll still get lots of business no matter what.

Another advantage to eating in better restaurants is that, if you know in advance you'll be dining there, you can call ahead and let them know that there will be a vegetarian in your party. If you have a chance to look at their menu ahead of time, great – many restaurants now have the menus on the websites. But you can also call the day before, ask to speak to the manager or the chef, and specify that you'll be coming in at a certain time and tell them what your needs are. Don't just say, "I'm a vegetarian" – tell them that you don't eat any animal flesh (and eggs, cheese, whatever your restrictions are) and you can even ask them if they can make sure your food isn't flavored with chicken or beef broth. For best results, don't dictate to them what you need – tell them politely, and ask for recommendations. If you're talking to the chef, he may come up with something terrific that isn't on the regular menu because it wouldn't normally sell well to their omnivorous clientele.

Even if something on the menu looks like it's probably a good choice, don't be shy about asking how the dish is prepared. It pays to know what certain cooking terms mean – "au gratin" usually means that it's topped with

cheese and “scalloped” potatoes are made with a cream sauce. It’s better for you, your server, and the chef if you make sure that you can eat something before you order it, rather than sending it back after it’s been prepared because it turns out to contain ingredients you can’t eat.

Also – remember those foods that often contain animal products like Caesar salad dressing, pie crusts and tortillas. In restaurants, you’ll also find that vegetables are sauteed in butter, spinach salad comes with bacon bits, split pea soup contains bits of ham and potato salad has hard-cooked eggs. So ask your server about these things before you order – and then tip them accordingly for going the extra mile to make sure you get what you want!

## CHAPTER 10

### Balancing the Scales

#### Losing Weight on a Vegetarian Diet

Americans spend over \$30 billion each year on weight control products, programs, gym memberships and gizmos. And yet, 25 percent of Americans are overweight, with about half the women on weight-loss diets. The industries that make Americans fat, slim them down, and then fatten them up again – from the supersized fast-food corporations to the “systems” that are really just packaged food purveyors – get rich by advising people to eat irresponsibly. They’re abetted by government agencies like the FDA and the USDA, which still promote their meat and carbohydrate heavy food pyramid while chiding everyone for getting so fat.



The diet industry rakes in the enormous profits that it does for one simple, yet ingenious, reason – the diets they promote don’t work. Whether it’s meal replacement shakes, prepackaged microwave meals, appetite suppressing pills or the elimination of one major nutrient category (usually fat or carbohydrates), they all have one thing in common. That is, that while they’re designed to take off weight in the short term, they aren’t a lifestyle that you can adapt for the rest of your life. Sooner or later (usually as soon as about half the weight you wanted to lose has melted away) you go back to eating real food instead of shakes, pills, bars or boxed dinners, and the weight all comes back. Then you pronounce that diet a failure and jump on a different one!

This merry-go-round makes the diet industry very happy, and they’re thrilled when a new fad comes along that they can exploit. When it was diet shakes, a hundred companies made diet shakes. When the boxed-meal diets became popular, five more “programs” opened franchises. The same company that was making low-fat meal replacement bars five years ago also turned out low-carb bars when the Atkins diet was all the rage – and switched back to making low-fat bars as soon as the fad started to fade. If the next big fad turns out to be an all-fish diet, you can bet those same companies will be manufacturing Cod Munchies and Halibut Delight Cookies.

The secret to successful weight control – the secret that the diet industry doesn’t want you to figure out – is eating a moderate amount of a variety of nutrient-rich foods. Because if you’re eating whole foods, there’s nothing for them to sell you! And the ideal weight control diet is a vegetarian diet.

Vegetarians are, overall, thinner than meat-eaters, despite eating everything that the diet programs forbid.

## **Rethinking the concept of dieting**

Going by conventional wisdom, it doesn't make sense that vegetarians can be slender when they eat potatoes, pasta, bread, beans and rice. Which is the first clue that the conventional wisdom is wrong. Popular fad diets insist that starchy foods will pack on the pounds, and insist that you limit carbohydrates to a small green salad and maybe one piece of fruit each day. But vegetarianism is a naturally slenderizing diet, and one that makes sense when you understand just how it fuels the body.

If you want to lose weight permanently and stay off fad diets forever, the first step is to jettison everything that the diet gurus have told you. Starvation diets – and really, that what all fad diets are – don't keep weight off in the long term.

A realistic diet is one that contains whole, healthful foods and doesn't involve buying special products and supplements. You don't need to count calories or "points" or talk to a diet counselor every week. You just need to change the way you eat, replacing bad old habits with good new ones.

Face it – if you're fat, it's because of the way you eat. And the only way to change that is to revamp your diet and have some patience. It took a long time to gain all that weight, and it's going to take a long time to get it off. If you want to lose weight and keep it off for the rest of your life, you have to find a way of eating that you can live with even after you're at your ideal weight. There are no quick fixes – not if you want permanent results.

## **It's a lifestyle, not a diet**

Throughout this book, we've referred to the vegetarian diet, with "diet" being used in its original context – diet being your overall system of

nourishing yourself. As a vegetarian, you're changing your diet but you're not on a diet, a significant difference. But they both come down to one thing – calories. A healthy diet, however, doesn't involve counting calories and withholding food so the body starves. No, a healthy diet allows the body ample calories so that it every one of its functions hums along like a well-oiled machine, burning fuel as it goes along.

Calories are units of energy, like the gallons of gas you use to fuel your car. You consume calories when you eat, and your body burns the energy to fuel all the things that your body needs to do. Whether you're running around the block or sitting on the couch watching television, your body is burning energy to keep your heart pumping, your lungs and kidneys functioning, your brain working and your muscles contracting.

The pace at which your body burns calories when at rest is called “basal metabolism.” That's when you burn most of your calories, actually – when you're sleeping or just sitting around. You burn them at a faster rate when you're exercising and digesting food, but your basal metabolism determines how many calories you need to function, with the excess being stored as fat.

As you're no doubt aware, some people have faster metabolisms, while others have sluggish metabolisms. Men usually have higher metabolisms than women, -- they burn more calories than women because they have more muscle mass. People who exercise regularly can raise their metabolism, so they burn more calories even when they're at rest.

Whatever the speed of the metabolism, though, it's fuel is calories. Foods that have a lot of calories are loaded with fuel from protein, carbohydrates and fat. If you eat the same amount of calories that you need to fuel your body, you can maintain your ideal weight. Take in more calories than you burn, and you store the excess calories as fat. Weight loss occurs when you consume less calories than your body needs to burn for energy.

**NUTRITION**

TYPICAL VALUES	PER 100 g SERVING (1/10 OF THE PACK)	
Energy Value (Calories)	1480 kJ 350 kcal	
Protein	9 g	MEDIUM
Carbohydrate (of which Sugars)	76 g 0.4 g	HIGH LOW
Fat (of which Saturates)	1 g 0.3 g	LOW LOW
Fibre	1 g	LOW
Sodium	Trace g	LOW

**GUIDELINE DAILY AMOUNTS**

Each 100g serving provides 350 Calories, 1 gram of Fat and no Salt.  
Use the following table as a daily guideline:

Each Day	Women	Men
Calories	2000	2500
Fat	70g	95g
Salt	5g	7g

If you eat fewer or more Calories, adjust the Fat and Salt accordingly.

Needing fuel, the body turns to the stored fat, breaking it down into usable energy. You can make this happen on purpose by either exercising – burning a lot of calories – or eating less.

As you'll remember from previous chapters, our bodies are amazing evolutionary machines, designed to survive when there's no food available. When you drastically cut back on the calories you eat, your body thinks that you're in danger of starving and slows down your metabolism so that you aren't burning as much energy. This is why most people on calorie-restrictive diets lose quickly at first and then slow down to a crawl – or plateau, at which point they aren't losing at all even when they're hardly eating anything at all.

Many people believe that exercise is the answer to boosting metabolism, but it's only part of the equation. If you're eating a very low calorie diet and exercising a lot, your body is still going to believe that it's starving so the weight loss will be very, very slow. That's not to say that exercise isn't important – maintaining strong muscles helps you stay active and keeps you burning fat, no matter how slowly. But to keep your metabolism functioning well so that your body doesn't go into starvation mode you still need to eat a moderate amount of calories, and finding the right balance can be frustrating to dieters to want to see big results quickly.

## **Not all calories are alike**

Despite all the advances in nutritional science, most people still believe that losing weight is merely a matter of eating less food. Even a lot of doctors believe it and they, of all people, ought to know better! But in truth, many overweight people eat less than thin people – they just eat the wrong things.

Of the three main categories of nutrients – protein, carbohydrates and fat – it's the fat that contains the most calories. Protein and carbohydrate contains four calories per gram; a gram of fat, on the other hand, contains nine calories. So while fat is an important nutrient for many reasons, keeping your hormones regulated, your skin and hair healthy, and giving you a feeling of satiety when you eat, it also provides over twice as many



calories as protein and carbs. And what foods are the highest in fat? Animal foods.

Plant foods, though, are rich in complex carbohydrates, so you can eat more food while ingesting less calories, making you feel fuller and more satisfied. Naturally, you can gain weight while eating carbohydrate-rich foods – remember that excess calories, no matter what their source, are stored as body fat. But studies have shown that, while people eating low-fat, high-carb diets eat more than people on higher fat diets, they're eating less calories! In a study at Cornell University, people who ate a diet restricting their fat intake to 20 to 25 percent of their calories ate more food than the subjects eating a diet of 35 to 40 percent fat, but never ate as many calories as the high-fat group.

But there's more to the story than just calories. While doctors and nutritionalists have always advised that dieting is strictly a lower-your-calories endeavor, current research is revealing that it's far more complicated than that. The way the body uses the calories from protein, carbs and fat varies depending on the calories' source. The human body is designed to store energy from fat and proteins while it burns carbs for immediate energy. We're just not meant to store carbohydrates – for every 100 calories that you eat, 23 of them are burned just converting the carbs to usable energy! The fat we eat is a double-whammy – not only are there more calories per gram of fat, only three of every 100 calories are burned during conversion, meaning that it's later to burn as energy and stored as excess body fat more easily.

The nature of carbohydrates, that they're the first type of energy that our body turn to, makes it actually difficult to store carbs as fat. In a 1991 clinical study, only 2 percent of the calories eaten by subjects were converted into fat. So while calories are important, it's the fat calories that are best cut back on.

Now, it's also possible to lose weight on a high protein, low fat diet, but there are reasons why it's a bad idea to do so. For one thing, it isn't easy – the whole foods highest in protein are animal foods, so they're also high in fat. Perhaps you've tried one of these diets in the past and discovered that eating scrambled egg whites, skinless chicken breasts and dry, broiled fish gets very boring, very quickly. But another reason to steer clear of high protein diets is the difficulty, discussed in an earlier chapter, that you body

has processing protein. Too much protein overtaxes your kidneys, and it builds calcium deposits in your bones and urinary tract. So the best overall weight-loss plan is one that gives you energy from healthy, complex carbohydrates from plant sources.

## **Natural, plant-based weight control**

By switching to vegetarianism, you've probably already noticed a boost in your health, and may have already lost a few pounds without even trying. The standard vegetarian diet is naturally high in complex carbohydrates and lower in fat – a vegan diet, with all the nutrients coming from plant foods, is the lowest in fat of all.

But it's still possible to eat too much fat. Nuts, seeds, avocados and olives are all high in fat, and soy – including tofu, that staple of the vegetarian diet – are about half fat. And as we've already mentioned, just being vegetarian doesn't guarantee that you're eating a healthy diet if you're constantly munching on fries, chips and cookies. So while you've got a good head-start on weight control by becoming vegetarian, you still need to give your diet some thought.

We'll discuss meal planning – and give you some great recipes! – in the next two chapters, but for now, let's take a look at the basics of your vegetarian choices with an eye towards weight control:

**Vegetables** are, of course, the mainstay of your daily diet. Use fresh whenever possible, frozen if you have to, and stay away from canned vegetables (canned products usually contain a lot of sodium and, well, they just don't taste very good). Steam them and squeeze some lemon juice on them, or eat with non-fat dressing. If you insist on sauteeing them in fat, use olive oil.

**Fruit** can be fresh, frozen or, if necessary, canned (beware of sugary syrups, though). Fruit juice has more calories than whole fruit, and you're missing out on the fiber, so eat whole fruit whenever possible.

**Grains** should be processed as little as possible – go with whole grain products for better texture, more fiber and more nutrients. For breakfast, hot cereals are usually higher in fiber and lower in fat than cold cereals, and keep an eye on how much fat is in favorites like muffins, pancakes, snack crackers and biscuits.

**Legumes** are excellent sources of high protein, low fat nutrition. Beans are loaded with nutrition, although if you use canned beans watch out for added salt. Soy products like veggie burgers and tofu hot dogs are healthier options than their meat-based counterparts, but they can still add a hefty amount of fat to your diet if you rely on them too much. Read labels, and make processed foods a small part of your diet.

**Nuts and seeds** are good sources of important nutrients, but contain up to 70 percent fat. Limit the amount of these that you eat while trying to lose weight to one serving each day. You can increase the amount when you're at the point of maintaining your weight – but still watch those portions!

**Dairy products**, remember, are derived from milk – a substance high in both fat and sugar so that it'll fatten up baby cows. If you're ovo lacto, drink 1 percent or skim milk. If you use soy milk, keep in mind that it has about the same amount of fat as cow's milk, and usually has sugar added to it. Rice milk is tasty, and lower in calories than soy milk – although non-fat soy milk is available. Cheese, even soy cheese, is very high in fat and should only be used in very small amounts when trying to lose weight.

**Fats** must be used sparingly, if at all, when cooking on a weight loss diet. Whenever possible, use olive oil, but eliminate them by steaming, broiling or baking foods instead of frying or sauteeing. If you're eating a well-balanced diet, you're getting all the fat you need to keep your body healthy, so don't add more!

## **Skinny vegetarianism**

Carbohydrates have gotten a bad rap in recent years, but the biggest sin isn't how many carbs we eat – it's the manner in which we eat them. We dunk perfectly good potatoes in hot oil, or soak them in butter, or cover

them with cream sauce. We spread an inch of butter on our whole wheat rolls, and cover our broccoli with cheese sauce. No wonder we're fat!

Transitioning to a plant-based diet is about thoughtful, healthful eating. That holds true for the way you prepare the food that you eat, too. Many people think they don't like vegetables when, in fact, they rarely taste the vegetables they eat because they're drowning in a puddle of butter sauce. Give your food the same respect that you give your body, and enjoy it without disguising it under a high-fat coating.

**Choose healthy substitutions when snacking.** Instead of reaching for greasy potato chips or an order of fries, grab a handful of fat-free pretzels or popcorn. Dip celery and carrots into hummus, salsa or black bean dip instead of guacamole.

**Lower the fat in your baked goods.** Almost any cookie, cake or muffin recipe can be made with less fat, and there are recipes for low-fat baked goods using applesauce, tofu or mashed bananas as a fat substitute. Whole wheat pastry flour has less gluten than all-purpose flour, and will make a more tender product when cutting down on fat.

**Learn to love the spud.** As the basis for a meal, it's hard to beat a baked potato – with less than a gram of fat, just 95 calories and loaded with vitamins, it's an almost perfect natural food. But once you've piled on butter, sour cream and cheese, it's a nutritional nightmare. But there are lots of things you can use to top your potato. Vegetarian chili, vegetable curry, baked beans and steamed vegetables are all great potato toppers, low in fat and loaded with vitamins and minerals.

**Add flavor, not fat.** Think about the flavors in the foods you're cooking and consider ways to enhance them without added fat. Saute vegetables in dry wine, use fresh herbs and garlic, and freshen up vegetables with lemon juice.

**Avoid the dairy trap.** Lacto ovo vegetarians often make the mistake of leaning too hard on eggs, cheese, milk, yogurt and other dairy products when they first start out, and these foods are all rich in fat. Go easy on the cheese and drink skim milk, and limit eggs to just two or three meals per week.

## **Snacks – the bad and the good**

Not everything that's vegetarian is low in fat. Eat the following in moderation when trying to lose weight:

- Almond butter
- Avocados
- Coconut
- Falafel
- French fries
- Hummus
- Olives
- Packaged vegetarian meals
- Peanut butter
- Potato chips
- Tahini

There are, however, lots of snacks that fit into your vegetarian eating plan and are great for weight loss diets, too. When you want something between meals, reach for one of these:

- Air-popped popcorn
- Bagels
- Bean soup
- Fresh fruit
- Fresh vegetables
- High-fiber cereal
- Nonfat crackers
- Pita bread or chips
- Potatoes – baked, broiled or grilled
- Pretzels
- Rice cakes
- Whole grain rolls and muffins

**Healthy doesn't always mean skinny**

Your body type is dictated by your genes – some people are naturally small and slender, others are destined to be thicker of build. If you're a woman, this may mean that you're a little heavier in the thighs or that your general build is athletic, even if you'd prefer to be lithe. The truth is, there's little you can do about that. And you may have a genetic tendency to be overweight, passed on from your parents and grandparents.

Eating well and exercising will get you into better shape no matter what your body type, but you may never be truly thin without starving yourself. If you're fixated on a specific number on the scale but you can't reach it no matter how much you work out and how little you eat, it may be time to accept that you're where you're supposed to be.

That's not to say that, if you have either a moderate amount to lose or a lot, you should give up and accept your overweight state. If you come from a family of overweight people, genetics is only a small part of the picture – do you have the same eating habits as your parents? Were they sedentary, spending all their free time on the couch, eating fatty snack foods?

By developing healthy eating habits now, and exercising, you can break the cycle and become the best you that you can be. There are no guarantees where weight loss is concerned – but a low-fat vegetarian diet can get you to where you'll be healthier and happier, whatever your weight.

## CHAPTER 11

### The Meatless Kitchen

#### Buying Food and Planning Menus

Ever visit the kitchen of an avid cook? It's organized, clean, well-stocked and ready for whatever creative menus strike their fancy. Eating well isn't just about the food you eat – it's also about having the tools you need to make great meals. Organization, planning and cleanliness will make cooking in your kitchen a pleasure rather than a chore.

## Managing your workspace

Whether you enjoy spending hours in the kitchen chopping, stirring and mixing or just want to get in, get out quickly, it pays to make your kitchen somewhere that you enjoy spending time. That means that it's clean, organized and has the equipment you need to do the job.

Step one to organizing your kitchen is to go through your cupboards and get rid of all the accumulated stuff that you don't have any use for. That means broken appliances (and the ones you got as Christmas gifts that you've never used), old paper plates from kids' birthday parties, half-full bottles of hot sauce that you've had for six years and those empty jars that are gathering dust on the top shelf. If you're not going to use it, toss it out, give it away or sell it online – just get it out of your workspace.



Take your kitchen, one section at a time, and clean off the shelves. Wipe them down with cleanser, maybe lay down some fresh shelf paper. Do the same with your drawers. You don't have to do it all in one night – take it a little at a time with the goal of getting all your shelves and drawers sparkling clean. Scrub down the stove and clean your refrigerator – inside and outside. Throw away food that's gone bad or have just been sitting there for ages because you'll never eat it. Toss out the foods in your cupboards that are going to waste, too.

Right now, there's probably a haphazard plan, at best, to the way your kitchen is organized. Your pots and pans are a jumble in one cupboard, your wooden spoons, spatulas and knives all tossed in the same drawer, and your cookie sheets are leaning against the wall. The dry goods on your



shelves – cereal, pasta, and the like – are probably stuck on the shelves with no regard for organization. It takes time to find things when you want to use them, and there's an attitude of disrespect when you treat your food and your tools this way – your new lifestyle is about healthy habits, right? So develop good organizational habits, too!

Start by organizing things by type. Put all of your fats, oils, salad dressings and condiments together. Pasta, rice and other uncooked grains should be together, too. Think of how they're stocked when you go to the grocery store – there's an intuitive design behind the methods that grocers stock their goods. The same rules make sense in your kitchen, too. Organize your spices, as well. You don't have to be quite so anal retentive as alphabetize them, but you can find an organizational system that works for you, like putting the things you use the most in the front, or separating the herbs and the spices.

## **Handling the hardware**

There are tools that you'll need to cook with, but not as many you might think – and possibly not even as many as you already own. If your countertop is cluttered with a coffeemaker, a mixer, a blender, a toaster oven and microwave, be honest about how often you use these items. Do they need to be there all the time? If you rarely bake, store the mixer under a counter until you need it. Ditto the blender. If you only make a pot of coffee on the weekend, think about store it out of sight during the week. This will give you more space to work and make your kitchen look less cluttered.

If you don't cook much, you may find yourself lacking some basic kitchen essentials. Most can be purchased inexpensively at stores like Target or Wal-Mart, but you can find a lot of them for almost nothing at thrift stores. The basics for any home kitchen include:

Measuring cups and spoons  
Bowls in various sizes for mixing and serving  
Wooden spoons

Rubber spatulas

Whisks

Baking pans and cookie sheets

Pots and pans in assorted sizes

Good, sharp knives – a paring knife, a chef's knife and a serrated bread knife

Bigger items that you'll probably want:

A mixer, either countertop style or handheld

Heavy duty blender

Food processor

Slow cooker (usually called a crock pot)

Rice cooker

The vegetarian pantry

Grains are versatile, have a long shelf life and are inexpensive, making them the perfect pantry staple. Store them in airtight containers in a cool, dry place away from sunlight, and they're good for months. If you have the space in your fridge or freezer, they'll last longer if you store them there – just make sure they're well sealed to keep out moisture.

Most of the grain products you'll want to stock are already familiar to you – whole wheat breads and pancakes mixes, breakfast cereals, pasta, tortillas, and bulk grains like rice and oats. But now that you're going to be eating a diet rich in plant foods, this is a good time to learn about new grains you've never tried, as well as educating yourself about your old favorites.

**Barley** is a grain that's gone out of fashion, although it's been a staple food for generations. It's great in vegetable soups, giving them a nutty taste and delightfully chewy texture. You can buy it as a whole grain at your health food store, which is loaded with nutrients but takes a long time to cook. Pearl barley has had the tough outer bran shell removed, so it offers less fiber –



but it cooks faster and is still delicious. Add it to your soups, stews and vegetarian chili, use it in casseroles and saute it with veggies.

**Cornmeal** is dried, ground corn that, if you've ever used it all, you've probably only used to make corn bread. Now is the time to introduce yourself to polenta, a delicious, savory Italian porridge that can be eaten hot or cold (look for a recipe in Chapter 12). Add it to your homemade breads for great flavor and texture.

**Rice** is an old standby, but there's more to it than the basic white stuff you get with your Chinese food. A good rule of thumb to remember is that the shorter the grain, the starchier the rice. Long-grain rice stays fluffy with separate grains, and it's the choice for pilaf. Medium-grain rice – the kind found in most American kitchens – is soft and fluffy when cooked but gets stickier as it cools. Short-grain rice is the starchiest, the thick, gluey kind served with Asian and Indian cuisine. There's a world of different rices available in these three types – *arborio* is a very short-grained rice used to make risotto (although any short-grain white rice can be used; *basmati* is an aromatic long-grain rice, available as either brown or white rice, that's imported from India and Pakistan (although it's also grown commercial in Texas); *japonica* rice is a very sticky Japanese rice; *brown rice* is whole kernels of rice with the nutty outer shell still intact; and *jasmine* rice is a yummy, highly aromatic long grain rice that's great for cold salads, as it stays fluffy long after cooking. There's also *wild rice*, which isn't actually rice at all – it's a grass seed that grows wild in the Midwest and is usually combined with other rices as it's somewhat expensive.



**Quinoa** is an ancient food staple that dates back to the Incas. It's great in cold salads or seasoned with herbs and served with potatoes.

**Buckwheat**, when toasted, is called *kasha* and it has a strong flavor. Untoasted, it's decidedly mellower, and a welcome addition to pancakes and breads.

**Legumes** – beans, mostly – are also a great food to always have in stock, either dry or canned. Dried beans have a long shelf life, and they're both versatile and nutritious. Rinse canned beans well before you use them to remove the excess sodium. Like grains, there are many, many different

types of beans, good in all sorts of different dishes. And they're inexpensive, so you can experiment without breaking your budget:

**Kidney beans** are the traditional white or red beans used in soups, stews and chili. You should always have these on hand, because you'll find hundreds of uses for them.

**Navy beans** are the small, pale beans used in that old favorite, navy bean soup. You can also use them to make your own vegetarian baked beans.

**Split peas** come in green or yellow varieties, and are some of the fastest cooking of the legumes. Use them to make old-fashioned split pea soup, or branch out and make some of the many delicious Indian dishes that use them.



**Black-eyed peas** aren't peas at all but beans, brought to America from Africa by slaves, and a staple in Southern cooking. Unlike most beans, these don't need to be soaked first – they cook quickly, and they're great in spicy main dishes.

**Black turtle beans** hail from Central America and the Caribbean, and they're delicious in spicy dishes like chili and burritos.

**Cannellini beans** are small white beans used in Italian soups and other dishes. Use them in soups or salads.

**Chickpeas** are also called garbanzos, and are a common ingredient in Mediterranean cuisine. These are the soft, round, light brown beans you find at salad bars – learn to use them in cooking and you can make your own hummus, tahini, and vegetarian curries.

**Great northern beans** are big, white beans with a very subtle flavor. They're great for soups.

**Lima beans**, also called butter beans, are wide, green soft beans with a delicious flavor. Eat them on their own with just a little salt and pepper, or use them to make succotash, a traditional Southern dish.

**Lentils** are one of the oldest foods known to man, a staple of Indian and Middle Eastern cuisine.

**Soybeans** are high in protein and low in fat, and can be included in any dish that traditionally uses beans. They take a while to cook and have a subtle flavor. Use them in baked beans, spicy soups and ethnic dishes.

## A well-rounded larder

Stocking a variety of nuts, soy foods, vegetables and condiments can help you keep your diet interesting and inspire you in your cooking. In no particular order, here are foods that ought to be on every vegetarian's shopping list:

**Nuts, seeds and nut butters**, like cashews, walnuts, hazelnuts, pecans, pine nuts, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, almond butter, cashew butter and peanut butter. Nut butters should be stored in a cool, dry place; nuts and seeds can be frozen for longer shelf life.



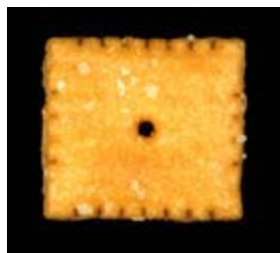
**Soy foods** are a key ingredient in the vegetarian diet, and take a variety of forms. Tofu comes in different textures – use extra-firm for stir-fries and as an egg substitute in egg salad recipes, soft tofu can serve as a substitute for sour cream or combined with chocolate for a protein-rich, dairy-free pudding (we'll talk more about the many, many uses of tofu in Chapter 12). *Tempeh* is fermented tofu, and it has a mushroom-like flavor. Soy milk, soy cheese and soy yogurt are non-dairy alternatives to cow's milk products – keep in mind that soy cheese is usually made with the milk protein casein, so it's not appropriate for vegans. Soy nuts are actually roasted soybeans, and are terrific for crunchy snacks or as a salad ingredient. *Textured vegetable protein*, or TVP, a dried soy product that, when reconstituted, resembles ground beef – it can be used in soups, stir-fries, burritos and any other recipe in which you'd use ground beef.

**Dried fruit** – apples, apricots, raisins, dates, figs, banana chips – are good for a quick snack or to combat low blood sugar, but should be eaten in moderation as they're very high in calories.

**Condiments** and other ingredients like barbecue sauce, catsup, mustard and egg-free mayonnaise are obvious pantry staples. But also consider stocking nutritional yeast, an inactive, vitamin-rich yeast that can be mixed with grains or sprinkled on popcorn; canned coconut milk for making curries; marinated artichokes for salads and casseroles; *hoisin* sauce, a sweet Chinese condiment made from soybeans; fresh garlic and ginger; curry paste; olives and pickles; dehydrated sun-dried tomatoes, *wasabi*, a very hot powder made from a Japanese radish; vegetarian Worcestershire sauce; and *tamari*, traditional, fermented soy sauce.

**Vinegars** for cooking and homemade salad dressings, including apple cider vinegar, balsamic vinegar, raspberry vinegar, red and white wine vinegars, and herb-infused vinegars.

**Processed grains** are necessary for baking. All-purpose whole wheat flour is the most obvious, but you'll want higher-gluten bread flour for breadmaking and low-gluten pastry flour if you'll be baking muffins, cakes and cookies. Other grains that are good for breads are rye flour, oat flour, wheat bran, and wheat germ.



**Cereals, bread and crackers** are as basic to a vegetarian diet as it is to the omnivore's. You'll want whole-grain bread and rolls, oatmeal (good for hot cereal and for cookies), ready-to-eat whole grain cereals, graham crackers, pita bread, rice cakes, and whole grain crackers.

**Canned foods** aren't ideal, but sometimes you need to make a quick meal you can throw together in a flash. Keep on hand cans of beans, pumpkin, tomatoes (crushed, diced or whole), tomato paste and spaghetti sauce.

**Beverages** like coffee and tea are probably already on your shelves, and you should also try different soy and rice milks, and almond milk.

**Meat substitutes** like veggie burgers and tofu dogs should be a small part of your diet, but keep some in the freezer for fast meals.

**Baking ingredients** like baking soda and baking powder are standard kitchen fare, but also pick up *arrowroot*, a thickener that can be used in place of corn starch, and dairy-free egg substitutes.

**Sweeteners** should be used sparingly, but there are a few that offer slightly more nutrient value than refined white sugar (a product that many vegans reject because it's sometimes processed using animal products). Honey offers trace nutrients, but it can't be used by vegans; maple sugar has a characteristic maple flavor and is good on cereal or in baked goods; barley-malt syrup is extracted from roasted barley and is excellent in baked good; *stevia* is a sweet herb whose dried, powdered leaves are made into a low-calorie sweetener that's 300 times sweeter than sugar.

**Herbs and spices** are a given, and what you want to keep on your shelves depends on your menu plans. The basics are basil, bay leaves, oregano, rosemary, sage, tarragon, thyme, allspice, cardamom, cayenne, chili powder, cinnamon, cloves, coriander, cumin, garlic powder, ginger, nutmeg, paprika, and turmeric.

## **Planning your meals – Breakfast**

You've heard your whole life that breakfast is the most important meal of the day, and it's true. After eight hours of sleep, you want to jump-start your brain and body with a carbohydrate-rich meal, getting your engine revving for the rest of the day. If you're not a fan of breakfast, this is a good time to make the meal a part of your new, healthy habits. And if you do enjoy an early morning meal, you'll probably find that your vegetarian breakfast is your favorite meal of the day.

For traditionalists, you can easily modify basic fare to meet ovo lacto or vegan needs. Vegetarian sausage or soy bacon is a fine substitute for the

real thing, and a tofu scramble offers the same protein boost as eggs. Round it out with whole wheat pancakes and coffee, and all you need is the morning newspaper.

Breakfast doesn't need to involve cooking. A bowl of cereal, hot or cold, with soy milk and a glass of juice is a balanced breakfast. A slice of toast with peanut butter and a piece of fruit is a quick meal, too. Many people prefer something simple and quick in the morning – just because you've gone vegetarian doesn't mean that you have to turn every meal into a production!

Anything you like to eat can be breakfast. Leftover lasagna, a slice of cold pizza or reheated Chinese food is as good for you in the morning as they are at night. Microwave a frozen vegetarian entrée, or have some lentil curry. It's your diet, so eat whatever you like best.

Have breakfast any time – the same “eat what you like” rule applies at lunch or dinner. There's no rule that says you can't enjoy pancakes and vegetarian sausage for your evening meal.

## **Planning your meals – Lunch**

Lunch is a great meal, because you can eat just about anything you want, from breakfast foods to sandwiches to soup and salad. Borrow ideas from other meals for your midday repast – waffles with fruit compote, or a bowl of chili and a whole wheat muffin.

If you take your lunch to work or school, invest in a small insulated lunch bag. Pop in a reusable freezer insert and keep your cold stuff cold all day. Or freeze a bottle of water and place that in your bag – it'll be thawed in time for lunch, and serves double-duty by keeping your lunch chilled!





You know how great those big salads are that you buy in restaurants? You can make your own fabulous salad, to eat either at home or at work – you just need the right ingredients! Mixed greens, romaine, butter lettuce (or a combination) is your base. Add tomatoes, shredded soy cheese, sunflower seeds, sliced red pepper, or any other thing that sounds appealing. If you take it to work, put a serving of salad dressing in a separate container so your salad stays crisp until meal time.

If you miss favorites like tuna or chicken salad, make vegetarian versions using soy or tempeh. Load them into a pita pocket with some lettuce and tomatoes, and you have a hearty meal.

If you forget to bring your lunch and know there won't be the time or the opportunity to get something on your work break, pick up something on the way to work. Most fast food restaurants are open quite early in the morning, so stop in and get a bean burrito, big salad or veggie burger during your morning commute. Stash it in your desk or the office fridge so that it's there when you finally stop for lunch.

Stock up on some of the great instant soups, stews and curries available at your natural foods store. These "cup of soup" style products are often surprisingly tasty, and all you need is hot water from the water cooler in your office or dorm. Just don't make a steady diet of them – they're usually loaded with sodium.

Have dessert with your lunch! Enjoy leftover bread or rice pudding from last night's dinner, or a couple of vegan chocolate chip cookies. Always include a piece of fresh fruit for a sweet treat.

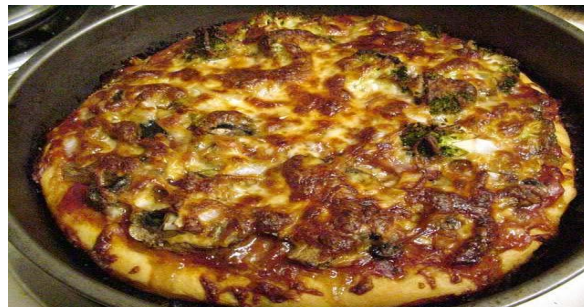
Any combination of foods you like as snacks can add up to a great lunch. Try two or three – or more – of the following:

hummus and carrot sticks  
veggie and soy cheese wraps

trail mix  
soy yogurt  
granola bars  
muffins  
leftover spaghetti or lasagna  
veggie hot dogs  
bean burritos  
whole wheat bagels baked tofu  
vegetarian sloppy joes  
pasta salad  
sushi  
cereal and milk  
potato salad or coleslaw  
popcorn with nutritional yeast seasoning  
black olives  
leftover Chinese food  
bean dip with tortilla chips

## **Meal planning – Dinner**

Dinnertime is one of the most squandered parts of our day. We're tired, we've been busy, we may not have a lot of time, so we grab something to eat and eat in front of the TV or computer. If you have roommates or live with your family, try making meal time a ritual of togetherness – work together to prepare it, sit down and savor it, and use this time to catch up



on your day,

Use dinner time to experiment with new twists on old favorites. Substitute portobella mushrooms and sauteed onions for the ground beef in your

favorite lasagna, make a great vegetarian chili, or have an indoor "picnic" of tofu dogs, corn on the cob and cole slaw.

Make a big pot of soup on the weekend and refrigerate or freeze portions of easy weekday meals. By cooking more elaborate dishes when you're relaxed and have the time, you can prepare for a hectic week by stocking up on homemade, heat-and-eat dinners.

Once a week, make a list of the dinners you'd like to have during the week, buy all the ingredients during one trip to the store. Be realistic – on nights that you know you'll be working late or extra tired, choose meals that are easy to prepare. Then post the list on your refrigerator, so you're committed to making that meal! This will keep you from grabbing a peanut butter sandwich because you "don't know what to eat!"

## CHAPTER 12

### Delicious Vegetarian Recipes That Everyone Can Enjoy

There are tons of great recipe books for vegetarians – among the most popular are *The Moosewood Cookbook* and its sequels, and the classic *The Vegetarian Epicure*. It's not difficult to find recipes, and you can always adapt your favorites to your new lifestyle.

Here's some recipes to get you started. All of them are good for ovo lacto vegetarians – the vegan recipes are noted as such, and ovo lactos can enjoy them, too!

## ***Breakfast***

### **Old-Style Potato Pancakes**

Serves 8

4 medium baking potatoes, peeled and coarsely shredded  
1 medium onion, coarsely shredded  
4 green onions, chopped  
1 egg, beaten  
salt and pepper to taste  
vegetable oil for frying

In a large bowl, mix the potatoes and onions. Wrap the mixture in cheese cloth or paper towels, and squeeze out the excess liquid into another bowl. The starch from the potatoes will settle into the bottom of the bowl – pour off the water and save the remaining potato starch.

In a large bowl, combine the potato mixture, green onions, egg, salt and pepper, and reserved potato starch. Coat a nonstick 12-inch skillet or griddle with a thin layer of oil, heat skillet over medium-high heat. For each pancake, press together about 2 tablespoons of the potato mixture with your hands, place on skillet and flatten with a heat-proof spatula. Cook for about 8 minutes, turning once, until brown on both sides. Serve hot.

### **Savory Breakfast Flan**

Serves 6

**Ingredients:**

6 oz. grated cheddar cheese, plus two tablespoons  
8 oz. frozen corn  
10 eggs  
1 teaspoon salt  
½ teaspoon pepper  
¼ teaspoon nutmeg  
Dash cayenne  
1-¼ cup skim milk  
¾ cup half-and-half

Spray a 9"x13" baking pan with cooking spray. Spread half of the cheese in the bottom of the pan. Layer half of the corn on top of the cheese layer. Repeat with layers of cheese and corn. Combine all remaining ingredients except the 2 tablespoons cheddar, and pour over corn and cheese. Bake at 325°F for 1 hour, or until puffy and lightly browned. Sprinkle with remaining 2 tablespoons shredded cheddar and return to oven for 1 minute. Run a sharp knives around edges to loosen, cut into rectangles and serve.

**Mediterranean Tofu Scramble (vegan)**

Serves 2

1 Tbsp. olive oil  
1 package (14 oz.) firm tofu  
4 oz. sliced mushrooms (I use half of a pre-sliced 8 oz. package)  
1 small can (2.25 oz.) sliced black olives, drained  
2 Tbsp. chopped sun-dried tomatoes

¼ tsp. oregano  
½ tsp. garlic powder  
½ teaspoon salt

Add oil to medium skillet over high heat. Crumble the tofu into the pan, add remaining ingredients. Cook about 10 minutes until mushrooms are soft.

**Oatmeal Spice Breakfast Bars (vegan)**

Makes about 10 bars

2-2/3 cups rolled oats  
1/3 cup flax seed meal  
2 med. bananas, mashed  
1/3 cup canola oil  
1/2 cup dried fruit, in any combination (raisins, dates, cherries and cranberries are good)  
2/3 cup chopped nuts or sunflower seeds  
1 1/2 tsp. cinnamon  
1/4 tsp. nutmeg  
1/4 tsp. ginger  
2 Tbsp. sweetener, or more to taste (non-vegans may use honey)  
Vegan egg substitute product to equal one egg

Combine all the dry ingredients and mix well. Add bananas, egg substitute, oil and sweetener; combine until blended and mixture is sticky. If the mixture appears to dry, add a small amount of water. Shape dough into 1/2-inch thick bars on a greased cookie sheet. Bake at 350F for 15 minutes.

### **Easy Vegan Pancakes**

Serves 4 to 6

2 cups whole wheat flour  
1 tsp. baking soda  
1 tsp. baking powder  
2 cups vanilla soy or rice milk  
1/2 tsp. cinnamon  
2 Tbsp. vegetable oil



Combine flour, baking soda and baking powder. Add milk and oil, stirring until just mixed (it should still be a little lumpy). Heat skillet until a drop of cold water dances across the surface; grease pan with spray oil and drop 1/4 to 1/2 cup batter onto skillet for each pancake. When the edges look brown and the air bubbles appear on the top of the pancake, turn and cook other side. Serve with syrup or fresh fruit.

### **Carrot Breakfast Muffins (vegan)**

Serves 6 to 8

1 cup whole-wheat flour  
1 cup oat bran  
1 Tbsp. cornstarch  
1 tsp. baking soda  
1 tsp. baking powder  
1 tsp. Cinnamon  
½ tsp. Nutmeg  
1/3 tsp. Ginger  
2/3 cup grated carrots  
1/3 cup maple syrup  
1 cup water  
1/4 cup canola oil

Preheat the oven to 375F. In a large mixing bowl, combine all of the dry ingredients and the grated carrots. Add all of the wet ingredients. Mix well. Pour the batter into a lightly oiled muffin pan and bake for 25 to 30 minutes, or until an inserted toothpick comes out clean.

Other breakfast options:

**Breakfast Burritos:** Eggs or extra-firm tofu scrambled with onions, peppers and chopped vegetarian sausage, topped with soy cheese and rolled up in a warm tortilla.

**McVegetarian Sandwich:** Place scrambled eggs (or egg substitute or tofu), vegetarian faux-Canadian bacon and soy cheese in a sliced English muffin. A great take-and-eat breakfast!

**Cereal Free-For-All:** Mix two, three or more of your favorite cold cereals in a bowl for a different twist on your usual breakfast.

## ***Lunch***

### **Quinoa Salad**



Serves 4 to 6

- 1-1/2 cups quinoa
- 3 cups water
- 2 bell peppers (green or red, or combination), diced
- 1/2 cup diced red onion
- 1/2 cup finely chopped fresh dill
- 1/4 cup balsamic vinegar
- 2 1/2 Tbsp. Sweetener, or to taste (non-vegans may use honey)
- 1 1/2 Tbsp. Dijon mustard

Rinse the quinoa well to remove outer coating. Add quinoa and water to medium saucepan. Bring to a boil, cover and simmer over low heat for 15 minutes, or until all the liquid has been absorbed. Combine peppers, onion and dill in a medium mixing bowl. Add cooked quinoa. In a separate bowl, combine remaining ingredients. Add to quinoa mixture and toss gently. Add salt and pepper to taste. Cover and chill for 2 hours before serving.

### **Cheese-Free Mac 'n Cheese** (vegan)

Serves 4 to 6

- 1 pkg. (16 oz) elbow macaroni
- 2 cups vanilla soy/rice milk
- 2 tablespoons soy margarine
- 2 tablespoons vegan mayonnaise
- 1 cup nutritional yeast
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. White pepper
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. hot sauce (optional)
- 1 tsp. turmeric (optional – adds yellow color)



Cook pasta according to package directions; drain. In a large bowl, combine pasta with other ingredients. Mix thoroughly. OPTIONAL: For more flavor and an added nutritional boost, add 1 cup of steamed broccoli.

### **Sloppy Faux-Joes** (vegan)

Serves 4 to 6

1 large onion, diced  
2 medium green peppers, diced  
3 Tbsp. olive oil  
1 ½ cups boiling water  
2 ½ cups tomato purée  
freshly ground pepper, to taste  
1 Tbsp. soy sauce  
1 ½ Tbsp. mustard  
1 Tbsp. sugar  
1 ½ cups dry textured vegetable protein (TVP)  
2 tsp. chili powder  
vegan buns

In a large skillet, sauté onion and green peppers in the olive oil until soft, about 12 minutes. Add the remaining ingredients (except buns) and simmer over low heat for 20 minutes, stirring often. Serve in buns for sandwiches, or spooned over bread for less sloppy eating with a fork.

### **Hummus Garden Pita**

Serves 1 or 2

1 medium firm ripe tomato, finely diced  
1/4 cup seeded cucumber or bell pepper, diced  
1 cup shredded lettuce  
Creamy vegetarian salad dressing (your favorite)  
1/4 cup hummus  
1 regular-size or 2 mini pita breads, cut in half



Combine the tomato, cucumber or pepper and lettuce in a medium bowl. Add enough dressing to moisten and toss. Spread the inside of the pita with hummus, then fill with salad. To take with you to school or work, wrap first in foil, then in plastic zipper bags.

### ***Dinner***

## **Black Bean Burritos (vegan)**

Serves 4

- 1 15-ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed well
- 1/4 cup salsa
- 1 cup cooked brown rice
- 4 flour tortillas (vegetarian style, of course)
- 1 cup shredded leaf or spinach
- 1 tomato, diced
- 1 avocado, diced or mashed

Combine the black beans, salsa, and rice in a saucepan and simmer for 3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat, cover, and let sit for 5 minutes. In an ungreased skillet, heat a tortilla until warm. Spread a line of the bean mixture down the center. Top with lettuce, tomato, avocado and more salsa, if desired. Roll up. OPTIONAL: Non-vegans may add sour cream.

## **Vegetarian Moussaka**

Serves 8 to 10

- 1 eggplant, thinly sliced
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 large zucchini, thinly sliced
- 2 potatoes, thinly sliced
- 1 onion, sliced
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- 1 Tbsp. white vinegar
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can whole peeled tomatoes, chopped
- 1/2 (14.5 ounce) can lentils, drained, juice reserved
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 2 Tbsp. chopped fresh parsley
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1 cup crumbled feta cheese
- 1 1/2 Tbsp. butter
- 2 Tbsp. all-purpose flour

1 1/4 cups milk  
black pepper to taste  
1 pinch ground nutmeg  
1 egg, beaten  
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Sprinkle eggplant slices with salt and set aside for 30 minutes. Rinse and pat dry. Preheat oven to 375F. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Lightly brown eggplant and zucchini slices on both sides; drain. Adding more oil if necessary, brown potato slices; drain. Saute onion and garlic until lightly browned. Pour in vinegar and reduce. Stir in tomatoes, lentils, half of the juice from lentils, oregano and parsley. Cover, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer 15 minutes.

In a 9x13 inch casserole dish layer eggplant, zucchini, potatoes, onions and feta. Pour tomato mixture over vegetables; repeat layering, finishing with a layer of eggplant and zucchini. Cover and bake in preheated oven for 25 minutes. Meanwhile, in a small saucepan combine butter, flour and milk. Bring to a slow boil, whisking constantly until thick and smooth. Season with pepper and add nutmeg. Remove from heat, cool for 5 minutes, and stir in beaten egg. Pour sauce over vegetables and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Bake, uncovered, for another 25 to 30 minutes.

### **Easy Vegetarian Chili (vegan)**

Serves 6

1 small onion, chopped  
1 large green bell pepper, seeded and chopped  
3/4 cup chopped celery  
3/4 cup dry red wine or water  
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
2 (14.5-ounce) cans diced tomatoes, undrained  
1 1/2 cups water  
1/4 cup tomato paste  
3 tsp. vegetable bouillon granules  
1 Tbsp. chili powder  
1/2 tsp. ground cumin  
1 tsp. cinnamon  
2 tsp. paprika



1 tsp. cayenne (red) pepper  
2 (15-ounce) cans kidney or pinto beans, rinsed and drained  
Sour cream (optional)

Combine onion, bell pepper, celery, wine and garlic in large saucepan. Cook over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, for 6 to 8 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Add tomatoes with juice, water, tomato paste, and bouillon; bring to a boil. Reduce to simmer and add chili powder, cumin, cinnamon, paprika and cayenne. Stir in beans. Reduce heat to low; simmer, stirring occasionally, for 45 minutes, adding beans during the last 15 minutes of cooking. Non-vegans may serve with sour cream.

### **Other great dinner ideas:**

**Vegetarian Tofu Lasagna:** Adapt your favorite homemade lasagna recipe by adding a package of frozen chopped spinach (well-drained with moisture squeezed out) to the ricotta layer. Use vegetarian marinara sauce and, in place of the lasagna noodles, layer on slices of extra-firm tofu.

**Layered Crock Pot Dinner:** Layer veggies in the crock pot in this order – sliced potatoes on the bottom, then sliced onions, sliced carrots, sliced bell pepper, sliced zucchini, 1 cup each of corn and peas. Gently pour over this a sauce made from 2 ½ cups tomato sauce, ¼ cup low-sodium Tamari soy sauce, and 1 tsp. Each of thyme, dry mustard, basil, chili powder, cinnamon, sage and parsley. Cook for six hours on low or 12 hours on high. A great meal to come home to at the end of a busy day!

**Artichoke Pate:** Toss a jar of marinated artichoke hearts into the food processor with a cup of walnuts, a clove of garlic, 3 oz. olive oil, 2 Tbsp. Lemon juice and a teaspoon each of salt, pepper, rosemary and basil. Process until smooth and serve on cracker or whole wheat bread.



## CHAPTER 13

### Shopping the "Health Food" Aisle

### Solving the Mysteries of Seeds, Soy and Stevia

We've talked a little bit about meat substitutes, tofu, and grains like quinoa ... but what are they? What do you use them for? And where the heck do you get them? Luckily, as more and more people become vegetarian (and non-vegetarians cut back on animal foods) more co-ops and whole foods stores keep cropping up, even in smaller towns. Mainstream grocery stores keep expanding their "natural foods" sections because customers are demanding soy products and whole grains. It's just a matter of knowing what you're buying, and all the delicious ways you can add variety to your vegetarian diet.

## Tofu for you



The two most common meat-substitute protein foods you'll find in vegetarian cooking are tofu and tempeh. They're both soy-based foods, but they're very different.

Tofu is a smooth, almost flavorless curd made from soybeans. While Westerners still think of tofu as exotic or as a strictly vegetarian food, it's been a staple in other countries' cuisine for thousands of years. The Chinese have been eating tofu since at least 200 B.C., and it's used every



day in Asian homes. "Bean curd" is another term for tofu, so keep an eye out in Chinese restaurants for menu items that feature curd – that's tofu!

Tofu is made from soy milk in a similar manner to the way cheese is manufactured from animal milk. A curdling agent is added to the soy, causing the solid matter to clump into curds. The curds are then pressed into a solid block.

The flavor-free quality of tofu is precisely what makes it so versatile – tofu is spongy and porous, and absorbs other flavors very well, so it can be adapted to almost any kind of dish. It comes in a variety of textures, from extra-firm to soft, so it can be used as a meat substitute, and egg substitute, or it can stand in for dairy in fillings, sauces, dips and puddings. Recipes will tell you which type to use, and once you get used to cooking with it you'll come up with countless ideas on your own.

For a meat substitute, firm or extra-firm tofu is usually cut into cubes and added to stir-fry dishes, or marinated in soy sauce (or other flavorful liquid) and cooked in big chunks. If you freeze tofu and then defrost it, the texture becomes more chewy – ideal for people who miss the texture of meat.

Silken tofu, combined with melted chocolate (vegan or otherwise) makes an excellent chocolate pudding or cream pie filling. Soft tofu can be used to make creamy sauces – just puree cooked vegetable in a blender or food processor and add tofu. This same method works to make creamy, dairy-free soups.

Whatever form it takes, tofu is a marvelous source of nutrition. Primarily eaten as a high-quality source of protein, tofu that's been processed with calcium salt is also a great source of calcium (another reason you don't need dairy!) It's also loaded with iron and other minerals. People on a low-fat diet should remember that tofu is fairly high in fat, but it's free of cholesterol and generally lower in fat than animal proteins – and there are also lower fat tofu products on the market. Firm tofu is usually higher in fat than soft tofu.

Because of its soft consistency and bland taste, tofu is a good source of nutrition for babies or older people who have difficulty chewing hard foods. It's most commonly sold in tubs or vacuum packs and can be found in either the dairy case or produce section of your supermarket. Once

opened, leftover tofu may be stored by rinsing, covering with fresh water daily and stored in the refrigerator, where it will keep for up to a week. Tofu can be frozen for up to five months.

## **Giving in to tempeh**

Tempeh is a more strongly flavored soy product made from fermented soybeans, and sometimes containing other grains like rice or millet. Like tofu, it's another ancient food, with uses dating back to Indonesia some 2,000 years ago. It's not as creamy or as versatile as tofu, and comes in patties – it's recognizable by its pale brown, rough texture.

But don't let tempeh's forbidding appearance stop you from trying it. It's great as a substitute for meat on dishes that traditionally call for animal proteins. It has a delicious nutty flavor, and you can crumble it into pita sandwiches or chili, or make "chicken" salad with tempeh in place of poultry. If you're feeling creative, it can also be grilled, baked or barbecued, or skewered with veggies for a tempeh-kabob. It's also great in soups, stews or casseroles.

Tempeh is generally available in shrink-wrap packages or reusable plastic bags. Like tofu, it's high in protein and fat, but also cholesterol-free.

## **Seize the seitan**

Seitan is a brown, chewy protein food (pronounced SAY-tahn) that's made from gluten, the protein portion of wheat. If you live on a small town, it may be difficult to find – it's usually only available in natural food stores. It can be purchased as a mix, but it's most commonly purchased ready-made.



If you've never had seitan, try it the next time you're at a Thai or Chinese restaurant, served in a stir-fry or other dish. It's delicious, and a terrific low-fat source of protein. Once you try it, you'll want to use it sandwiches, simmered in vegetable broth or baked in the oven – the texture is different depending on how it's prepared. It's also excellent as a substitute for beef in stroganoff.

### **TVP in the house**

Textured vegetable protein (TVP) doesn't have a very appetizing name, but it's a terrific meat substitute. Made from soy flour, it can be purchased in bulk or in small packages, and has the same chewy texture as beef. Crumbled into spaghetti sauce, sloppy joes, or used as taco filling, with the right seasoning it's a dead ringer for ground beef – so it's not for use by people who find the texture of meat disgusting, but vegetarians who miss beef's chewiness enjoy it immensely.

TVP is used extensively in Europe, though it's not used as widely in the U.S. You'll find scores of recipes for TVP in British vegetarian cookbooks, while most American cookbooks lean more towards tofu recipes. Crumbled into chili or made into Shepherd's Pie, it'll even fool meat-eaters into thinking they're eating ground beef.

## Those great grains

As you stroll the aisles of your natural foods store, you'll find a treasure trove of grains that you never ever knew existed, with exotic names and a wide variety of textures. Whole grains are a vital part of the vegetarian diet, and learning how to use different grains in your cooking will add variety and excitement to your menus.

Just the different types of rice take up several shelves at a good health food store – short, medium, and long-grain white and brown rice, arborio rice, sushi rice, jasmine rice, sweet rice, and white and brown basmati rice. Then there are the whole grains – amaranth, barley, buckwheat, bulgur, cornmeal, kamut, millet, oats, quinoa, spelt and more. All have different tastes and textures, and all deserve a chance to shine on your dinner table.

Before cooking whole grains, rinse them thoroughly to remove dirt and debris, especially if you are buying from bulk bins (and you should buy in bulk whenever you can – it costs less!) Some grains like quinoa, need to be rinsed to remove their bitter outer coating. To cook them, use a heavy non-aluminum pot (some grains interact with the aluminum) with a tight-fitting lid. Cover the grains with cold water and stir gently to separate the grains. Bring the water to a boil – with a pinch of salt, if you like – then lower the heat to a simmer and cook, covered, until done.

### Cooking times (by grain)

GRAIN (1 cup dry)	WATER (salted) (cups)	COOKING TIME (minutes)	YIELD (cups)
Amaranth	2	25-30	2 to 2 ½
Barley, whole/hulled	3	90	3 ½ to 4
Barley, pearled	3	45	3 ½ to 4
Buckwheat groats	2	15	2 to 2 ½
Corn grits	3	20	3 ½ to 4
Kamut	3	120	2-3/4

Millet	2 ½	25	3 ½ to 4
Oats, whole	3	60	3
Oats, rolled (oatmeal)	2	15	1 ½ to 2
Quinoa	2	20	3 to 3 ½

#### RICE:

Arborio	2 ½	30	2 to 2 ½
Basmati, brown	2	45	3 ½
Basmati, white	1-3/4	15	3 ½
Brown	2	45	2 ½ to 3
Sushi	2	45	2
Sweet	1 ½	45	2
Spelt	3	90-120	2 ½

#### WHEAT:

Whole berries	3	90-120	2 ½
Bulgur	2	15	2 ½
Couscous	2	1	2 ½ to 3

Grains are delicious, nutritious and versatile foods, and great sources of fiber. Because of this, they're very chewy – so make sure you eat slowly, thoughtfully, and thoroughly for proper digestion. Grains rushed through the system can cause gas and bloating – so slow down and enjoy your food!  
Nuts about nuts – and seeds

**Almonds** come on two varieties, the bitter almond and the sweet almond. Both are native to the Middle East, but are also grown widely in Europe and the Americas. The Romans considered almonds a sign of fertility and prosperity, and gave them as wedding gifts – remember that the next time you get that little bag of Jordan almonds at a reception! In cooking, bitter almonds are used to manufacture almond oil, while sweet almonds are used for cooking and eating raw. They're very nutritious, loaded with



magnesium, phosphorous, zinc, calcium, folic acid and vitamin E.


The **Brazil nut** is the big one in your grandmother's nut bowl, the one that's a challenge to crack open. They're actually the seeds of a tree that grows up to 5- feet tall in the Amazon jungle, and they're harvested from seed pod clusters that look a little like coconuts. Commercially, Brazil nuts are still harvested from wild trees, so keep that in mind when you buy them – some environmentalists believe they're being over harvested. Shelled brazil nuts are tasty snacks, and they can be used in dessert recipes, too.



**Cashews** grow beneath a fleshy plant called the "cashew pear" whose fruit can be used to make juices, syrups and liqueurs. Eaten alone or in savory dishes or candy, they're a great source of Vitamin A. Hazelnut

**Hazelnuts** grow in Europe and the U.S., although most of the world's hazelnuts come from Turkey. Round or oval with a very hard shell, they grow in clusters, partially enclosed in a husk. Hazelnuts are a very nutritious snack, as they're high in fiber, potassium, calcium, magnesium and vitamin E. Used in candies, baked goods and savory dishes, they can be a bit of chore to cook with – the raw hazelnuts must be roasted in the oven first to loosen their papery skin, then rubbed inside a clean kitchen towel to clean them.

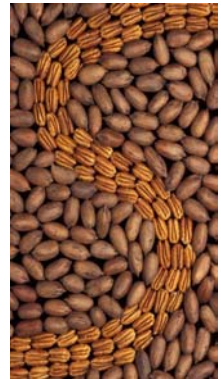


and  **Macadamias** originate in Australia, but are now grown commercially in Hawaii for the American market, where it's widely used in cookies, candies ice cream, and sold as a salty snack food. Commercial cultivation of macadamias began in 1858, and are named after John McAdam, who first cultivated it. Low in carbohydrates but quite high high in fat, they're a good source of calcium and other minerals.



**Peanuts** really are members of the pea family and aren't actually nuts at all, as they grow in the ground instead on trees. Also known as "groundnuts," peanuts are very nutritious, with a high protein and oil content plus lots of vitamins B and E.

**Pecans** are native to North America, and were an important food source for the native Indian tribes. They belong to the same family as the walnut, but are slightly sweeter. And they're good for you, rich in vitamins A, B and E, calcium, phosphorous, magnesium, potassium and zinc. Use them in cookies, cakes and other baked goods, eat them alone or chop them up and add them to hot cereal.



**Pine nuts** (also called pignolas) are the seeds of a of the stone pine tree and are widely used in Mediterranean cuisine. As a source of protein, the pine nuts are used in many different dishes, most notably pesto sauce – a processed combination of fresh basil leaves, olive oil and pine nuts.

**Pistachios** were first cultivated over 100,000 years ago in Iran and Syria, then brought to Europe. Because of its open shell , pistachios are easily roasted and salted, and are usually eaten as peel-and-eat snacks. Pistachios were originally dyed red by importers to hide imperfections on their shells that occurred when they were picked by hand. The scare over Red Dye #2 in the 1970s put a stop to that



practice for awhile, allowing customers to realize that pistachios aren't naturally red in color. They're harvested by machine now, so the dye is unnecessary – but some companies use a harmless red color on pistachios' shells because customers expect them to be red! Pistachios are rich in calcium, magnesium, phosphorous, potassium, iron, folate and protein.



**Walnuts** come in over 15 different varieties, but the most popular is the English walnut. Walnuts originated in southeast Europe and central Asia, and are now grown commercially throughout Europe and the Americas. Historians believe that there was a walnut grove in the famed Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Because of the walnut's resemblance to a human brain, it was once believed to cure headaches. And maybe they helped, at that – they're a great source of phosphorous, potassium and magnesium as well as proteins and vitamin E. Walnuts are a classic addition to countless sweet and savory recipes, can be eaten raw and can even be pickled, when harvested while still green.

**Pumpkin seeds** can be eaten raw or used in a variety of sweet and savory recipes. They're rich in protein, iron, zinc and phosphorous. During the fall when they're in season, you can dry your own pumpkin seeds. They're delicious roasted and sprinkled with salt or soy sauce while hot, served on salads, or added to baked goods.



**Sesame seeds** originated in Africa but are now commonly grown in many tropical and sub-tropical areas. Oil is extracted from the seed and used for cooking, salad oil and in commercial margarines and salad dressings. Toasted sesame oil, available in Chinese markets and the ethnic aisle of your supermarket, is a tasty addition to veggie stir-fries and rice dishes. The seeds are used in cakes, cookies and candies (as well as the ubiquitous sesame seed hamburger buns), and are often sprinkled as a garnish on



oriental foods. Sesame seed paste (tahini) is a must-have food for the vegetarian, and it's an ingredient in hummus. The delicious sweet treat *halva* is made from sesame seeds.

Sesame seeds are a particularly good source of protein and calcium.  
Sunflower seeds



**Sunflower seeds** are widely available, and a popular snack item. The sunflower is a member of the daisy family, and originated in North America or Mexico, where native Americans cultivated them over 2,000 years ago. They're a fine source of potassium and phosphorous, and contain protein, iron and calcium. The seeds can be eaten whole, raw or cooked, and they're a crunchy addition to breads and cakes, or sprinkled over salads or breakfast cereals.

### **Low-calorie sweetness the natural way**

Chances are you've never heard of stevia or, if you have, you know little about it. For people dedicated to eating well, it's a valuable tool – but there are powerful people who would rather you were kept in the dark.

Every year in the United States, over 5,000 food products are sold which are artificially sweetened. If you're diabetic, hypoglycemic or trying to lose weight, you probably buy these products. The sweeteners most commonly used are saccharin, acesulfame k, and aspartame. These chemical sweeteners are in everything from chewing gum and soft drinks to children's multivitamins. Designed in laboratories, made in giant chemical

factories and sold by multibillion-dollar conglomerates, they go by innocent-sounding names like NutraSweet, Sweet 'n Low and Equal, and they carry almost no warnings about their possible dangers.

If you look closely at packages of aspartame, you'll see no warning that the substance has caused brain tumors in laboratory animals. And the National Cancer Institute has increase in the incidence of malignant brain tumors in Americans since the introduction of aspartame in the early 1980's. Many people complain about headaches after eating foods sweetened with aspartame. Coincidence? In fact, thousands of people have registered over 92 different side effects related to aspartame with the FDA and the Centers for Disease Control, including headaches, menstrual irregularities, nausea, dizziness, skin lesions, rashes, hyperactivity, heart palpitations, gastrointestinal disorders, blackouts, numbness, memory loss, blindness, seizures, and suicidal depression. And those are just the ones that have been reported – a small percentage of the number of people who experience these symptoms.

There's a lengthy history behind the FDA's approval of aspartame, but the condensed version is this – despite there being a lot of tests that showed that aspartame was potentially dangerous, it was approved for sale. And despite the attempt by Ohio Senator Howard Metzenbaum in 1985 to pass a bill requiring studies into the safety of aspartame, that bill was killed by the Labor and Human Resources Committee. And despite there being strong evidence to suggest that aspartame works like a neurotoxin, actually changing brain chemistry and interacting with other drugs, there's no regulation on it – and it's present in thousands of products consumed by men, women, children and the elderly every day.

On the other side of the low-calorie sweetener issue, let's take a look at stevia.

*Stevia rebaudiana Bertoni* is a perennial shrub native to Paraguay, and it's been used as a natural sweetener has been used by the Guarani Indians for hundreds of years, who use it primarily to sweeten their herbal *mat* tea. South American settlers in Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil began using it in the 1800's, and around 1908 plantations started cultivating stevia for commercial purposes. Over the next several decades,



botanists and businessmen attempted to interest the U.S. government in cultivating stevia for the domestic market, but sugar producers managed to keep them from making any headway.

In the 1970's the Japanese, who had already banned aspartame, discovered stevia, and some American companies used it in their herbal teas in the 1980's. It looked like stevia was finally poised to reach the American consumer – except that the FDA began taking action against companies that were using stevia, including embargoes, search and seizures, and calling for an "import alert" on the sweetener. Stevia was denied the all-important FDA "generally recognized as safe" status, despite it's long history of scientific studies supporting its safety. At about the same time that the FDA was granting the corporate giant G.D. Searle's request to allow aspartame to be used in dry foods and beverages, stevia – a completely natural and safe substance with no side effects whatsoever – was classified as an "unsafe food additive," and Celestial Seasonings and other companies were forced to stop using stevia.

Despite the FDA's long-held opposition to stevia – and a bizarre period in 1998 when the FDA actually demanded that a Texas importer destroy a warehouse full of stevia-recipe cookbooks! – it has been allowed to enter the U.S. as a food supplement. This completely natural, non-toxic, non-caloric sweetener, that's enjoyed by people all over the world, is a threat to the big corporate chemical sweetener companies for several reasons:

**Stevia actually balances blood sugar levels**, and is safe for use by both diabetics and hypoglycemics.

Unlike aspartame, there are **no reports of adverse effects** from stevia's use, and scientific studies throughout the world prove out its safety.

Unlike aspartame, stevia **reduces the craving for sweets**, making it ideal sweetener for people trying to lose weight.

Unlike sugar, stevia **reduces cavities** by retarding the growth of plaque.

Still not convinced? Pick some up at your health food store – it's available in powder or liquid form.



## CHAPTER 14

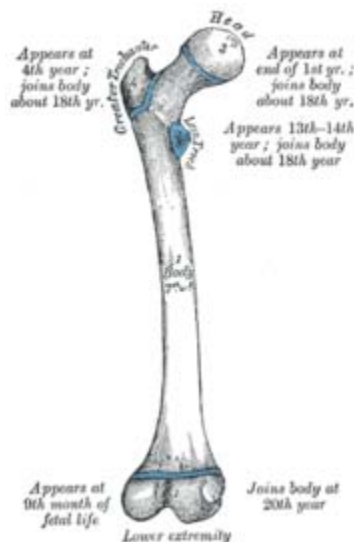
# The Pros and Cons of Milk, Cheese, Yogurt and Other Dairy Products

We've already discussed many of the problems associated with consuming dairy, from the horrible practices of factory farming to the difficulty the body has digesting cow's milk. Well ... we're going to do it again! Because while you may choose to be an ovo lacto vegetarian – and that's a great step towards eating a healthy, socially responsible diet – there are still some very good reasons to limit the amount of dairy products you eat.

## The truth about osteoporosis

You probably believe that osteoporosis, the crippling disease that results in weak, brittle bones, is caused by a deficiency of calcium. For pretty much your entire life you've heard that "milk does a body good" and that the only way to prevent osteoporosis is to drink lots of milk, and to eat plenty of cheese and yogurt. You know, "for healthy teeth and strong bones!"

And yet, Americans and Canadians eat more dairy products than any other country while having the highest incidence of osteoporosis. In fact throughout the world, the level of hip fractures (a symptom of osteoporosis) rises in direct relationship to how much calcium the people consume!



The truth is that, like heart disease, cancer, obesity, diabetes and a host of other ailments, osteoporosis is the by-product of affluence, not of calcium deficiency. As scientists study osteoporosis, they're discovering that it's the result of a bad, overall lifestyle, including diet. Calcium certainly plays a

part in building strong bones – as we discussed earlier, however, bones only build their density in our younger years, so by the time we reach adulthood that die has been cast. Consuming a lot of calcium as an adult simply has no bone-building effect.

Animal protein is high in sulfur-containing amino acids, which requires the body to find a way to offset the effects of those amino acids. Our bodies do this by first using the small amount of calcium in our food, then by taking it from our bones – after which point it exits the body through our urinary tract. The more meat and dairy products you eat, the more calcium you need to process them through the body. A researcher at the Creighton University School of Medicine named Robert Heaney – an advocate of dairy consumption – found in his research that the single most important factor in the rate of bone growth in young women is not how much calcium they consume, but how much calcium they consume *in relation to animal protein*. The more protein eaten, the more calcium must be consumed to offset the calcium drain. Most people in the U.S., Canada and Northern Europe eat more than twice the recommended amount of protein, and more than four or five times the amount of protein actually needed, with 70 percent of it coming from animal sources. Osteoporosis is not a result of calcium deficiency – it's a result of eating too much animal protein!

## **That burning feeling**

Have you ever downed a glass of milk to sooth an upset stomach, only to find an hour later that your stomach feels bad all over again? That's because milk actually *causes* the stomach to become more acidic. Here's how it works: animal products are more difficult to digest than plant foods, which means that your stomach needs to produce more hydrochloric acid (HCl) to break them down. So let's say that you had a bowl of cereal with milk for breakfast, a little cream in your coffee and a slice of toast with melted cheese. All that dense protein needs plenty of acid to digest it, so HCl is produced. You feel that familiar burn of acid indigestion a few hours after you ate, so you drink a glass of milk to settle your stomach. And it does, temporarily, by neutralizing the acid. But you you've just added *more* animal protein to your stomach, and now your stomach has to produce even more acid to digest it! Milk is a highly alkaline substance, so

whenever you drink milk with a meal, you're actually hindering your body's ability to digest your food properly.

## **The hormone factor**

If nothing else has convinced you to get your calcium from rich plant sources like broccoli, tofu, nuts, seeds and leafy green vegetables, try this on for size – your ingesting antibiotics and hormones every time you consume dairy products.

They don't the meat and dairy industries "agribusiness" for nothing – they're businesses, and their primary goal is to make a lot of money. They make that money by selling lots and lots of animal products, and that means keeping animals healthy and growing them big/ To do this, they pump them full of antibiotics and hormones.

Just like a nursing baby ingests whatever its mother has eaten, you consume the cow's diet when you eat animal foods. That means that you're getting hormones in your food, hormones that were used to fatten pigs, make cows give more milk, hormones to force chickens to produce more eggs and for turkeys to grow massive drumsticks.

Hormones regulate every aspect of the human body, from how much weight we gain or lose, to our sex drives and our moods, to how much hair we have. They influence your sleep cycle, your complexion, your reproductive cycle and your brain functions. When cows are given excessive, unnatural levels of artificial hormones to produce more milk, what affect do you think it might have on you when you drink the milk they produce?

If you've ever taken any sort of a hormone for medical purposes – steroids, birth control pills, cortisone shots – then you know how quickly that small amount of hormone introduced into your body makes dramatic changes. An imbalance of hormones in your body can make you grow hair in unexpected places, create accelerated maturity in children and adolescents, cause you to feel anxious, depressed, angry or overly emotional, and cause your face to erupt in blemishes.



## Antibiotics for breakfast

Another cause for concern are the antibiotics found in eggs and dairy products, another by-product of factory farming. Over half of the antibiotics produced in the United States go to treat livestock. Certainly, these drugs keep the animals healthy – but are they something you want to be consuming in your food?

The biggest problem with antibiotics is that they're all-purpose bacteria killers. Yes, they kill the viruses and bacteria that can cause disease, but they also kill the good bacteria that we need to keep our body's delicate systems in balance. Good bacteria, like acidophilis and bifidophilis, live in your intestinal tract and on your skin, and they do battle with bad bacteria that can cause you harm.

Taking antibiotics on a regular basis, whether by prescription or inadvertently through processed foods, lowers your resistance to bacterial illnesses like salmonella, which is found in small amounts in eggs, poultry and meat. Normally, your body should be able to fight off the lesser bugs that it ingests but, if you build up a tolerance to antibiotics through constant exposure, your natural immune system is weakened, leaving you more susceptible to illnesses like food poisoning.

On top of that, you may be taking antibiotics prescribed by your doctor, in a carefully measured dose. If you then eat eggs that contain salmonella, when it hits your small intestine it suddenly finds no good bacteria waiting to kill it – they've all been done in by the prescription antibiotic. So the salmonella has a nice, warm, moist, antibody-free environment in which to incubate, and you find yourself sick as a dog for a week. Then your doctor prescribes more antibiotics, and the merry-go-round continues.



## Dumping the dairy

Dairy products are so much a part of so many recipes, it may seem like a huge challenge to replace them. Not so! The variety and quality of dairy substitutes has improved greatly in the past decade, and you have a lot of options. If you don't like the taste of one style of non-dairy product, just try another – you're bound to find one that works for you.

Cow's milk can be replaced in recipes by soy milk, rice milk, potato milk, almond milk or even oat milk. The quantities are the same (1 cup cow's milk = 1 cup rice milk, etc.) the only difference is the taste. Oat milk is very mild, and lacks the sweetness of both cow's milk and other replacements – you may find you prefer it, or you may choose to add more sweetener to compensate. Either way, you have all the control! The nut milks, like almond milk, are quite sweet, and both soy and rice milk are available with flavors already added. You may find that vanilla soy or rice milk tastes better to you than cow's milk ever did, especially for lightening your coffee or on cereal.

Soy milk is manufactured by cooking soybeans and then compressing them to remove the liquid. In one of his television specials, comedian Lewis Black riffed on the term "soy milk," saying, "There's no such thing as soy milk. It's soy juice. But they couldn't sell soy juice, because every time you say 'soy juice' you actually start to gag." Nut milks – or, nut juices, if you prefer – are made in a similar manner to soy milk.

Remember that soy milk is actually far better for you than cow's milk (and other alternatives, like rice and almond milks) for a lot of reasons – fortified soy milk has extra calcium, plus Vitamins A, D and B12.



All the milk substitutes can be found in shelf-stable, aseptic boxes at natural foods stores and, increasingly, in supermarkets. This is another advantage over cow's milk – you can save money by purchasing it by the case, if you like, and stock your milk right on the pantry shelf without worrying about it expiring in the fridge (you will want to refrigerate them once opened, however). Soy milk can also be found in powdered form, too, although you'll probably find that the liquid product tastes better.

Vanilla soy milk works great in desserts – use it to make puddings and custards, on your cereal, in baked goods and processed in the blender with fresh fruit for smoothies. Plain soy milk works well in savory dishes like casseroles, soups and sauces. And if need buttermilk – say, to make buttermilk pancakes – you can create a substitute by adding 2 teaspoons of vinegar or lemon juice to 1 cup of soy milk.

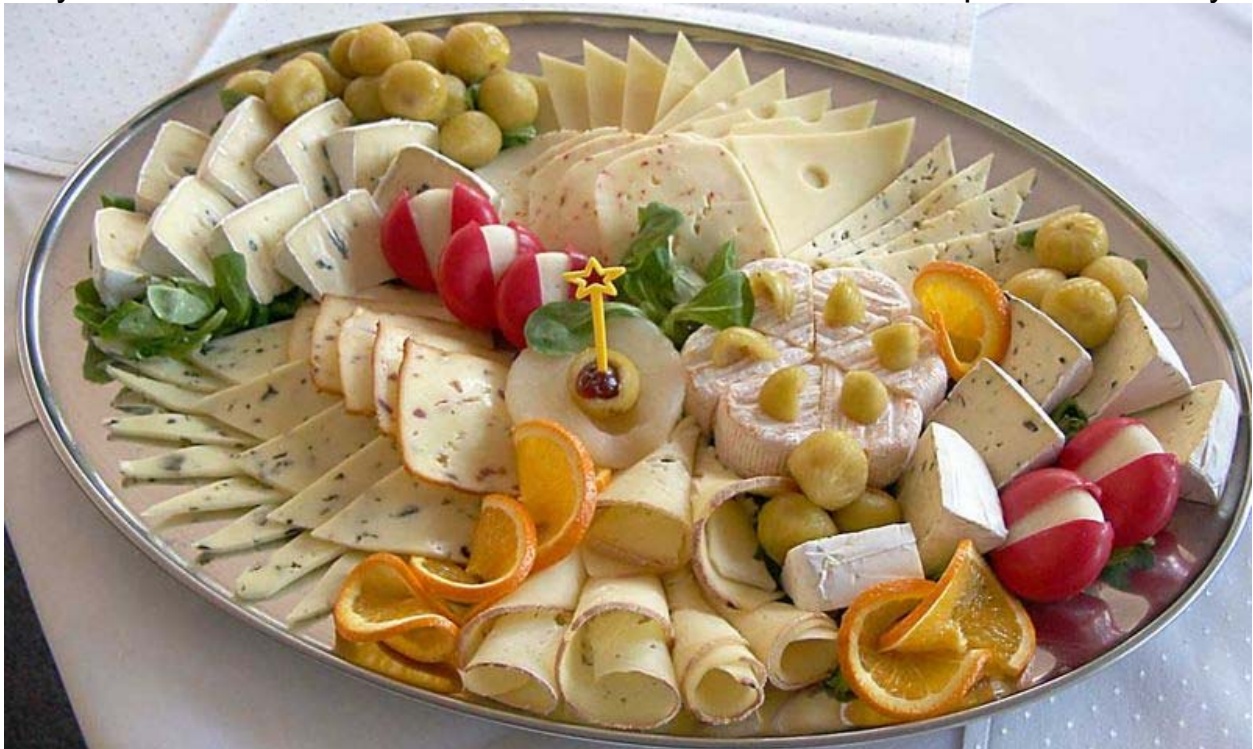
## **Saying goodbye to yogurt and cheese**

Yogurt is yummy. Yogurt is healthy. Yogurt is, of course, a dairy product. Because of the active culturing agents in yogurt, it's easier to digest than other types of dairy, but all of the other reasons for giving up this cow's milk

product still apply. Fortunately, delicious soy-based plain and flavored yogurts are available at your natural foods store. They're cholesterol-free and lower in saturated fat than cow's milk yogurt, so it's even better for you than the dairy version.

Soy yogurt – and soy sour cream! – can be used in almost every recipe that you would use dairy yogurt. They're great in sauces and dips, baked goods and topped with granola for a quick breakfast. The downside is that they don't work well in hot foods, because they tend to separate when heated.

But what about cheese? Most new vegetarians lean on cheese rather heavily. It provides protein and, let's face it, cheese tastes really good. But it's also loaded with cholesterol and saturated fat, and like all dairy products is difficult to digest. If you're ovo lacto but trying to watch your fat intake, you've probably tried low- or non-fat cheeses, and found them lacking – they taste awful, don't melt well, and have the texture of a plastic chew toy.



Even if you're not vegan, you should try then many varieties of non-dairy cheese on the market. Usually soy or nut based, they come in many of the same styles as dairy cheese, like cheddar, mozzarella, jack or cream cheese. They aren't usually as tasty as the real thing, but they're a close enough approximation that they work well in sandwiches or recipes.

When cooking with soy cheese, you'll find that they don't melt as well as full-fat dairy cheese (but they're better than non-fat cheese!) even though they're fairly high in fat. Some separate a bit when melted, although the oils can be blotted with a paper towel before serving. For Italian dishes like lasagna and manicotti, you can make your own substitute for ricotta or cottage cheese by mashing some soft tofu with a fork and adding a little lemon juice. For that cheesy, dry Parmesan taste, try sprinkling some nutritional yeast on spaghetti, casseroles, popcorn or potatoes – it has a savory taste much like cheese, and it's good for you!

As with milk substitutes, there are many different brands and styles on the market, so if you don't like the first soy cheese you try, experiment with a few others until you find one that you like. Remember that most cheese replacements work better as ingredients in recipes and sandwiches than eaten on their own – but there are so many healthy snacks that you can munch on, you don't need to eat straight cheese, anyway.

### **Who's got the butter?**

That vegetable-based margarine in your grocer's cold case isn't dairy-free – it's made with casein, a milk protein, and probably has other animal products in it, too. If you're ovo lacto, you may not care too much, but if you're vegan then there's soy margarine available at your natural foods store.

But for most purposes, look to olive oil. Even non-vegetarians are better off stepping away from butter because of its high cholesterol, and steering clear of margarine because of the trans fats. Margarine, made from vegetable oil, is semi-solid because of the way it's produced – the molecular composition of the fats are altered to create *trans fatty acids*, making them solid enough to spread on bread or form into sticks for commercial sale. While many people long assumed that margarine was healthier than butter because of its low cholesterol and vegetable origins, scientists now know that trans fats are even more dangerous than the saturated fat of butter, and can lead to clogged arteries and heart disease.

Olive oil, though, is good for you. Studies into the health benefits of olive oil have found that it can actually reduce blood cholesterol levels, this lowering the risk of coronary heart disease. In one study, the subjects' risks of fatal heart attacks were cut 50 percent in two to four years when they started eating the so-called "Mediterranean diet" – a diet which, interestingly, prescribes increased consumption of fruits, vegetables and whole grains, limited animal foods, and the use of olive oil as the main source of dietary fat.

In addition, a 2006 study at the Monell Chemical Senses Center in Philadelphia found that olive oil has anti-inflammatory qualities – the active ingredient in olives and olive oil has a similar effect on the body as aspirin and ibuprofen! So use more olive oil, feel better and be healthier!



## CHAPTER 15

### Special Needs

How To Live a Meatless Life and Still Make Your Doctor  
(or Coach) Happy

If you have an ongoing health concern like diabetes, or if you're pregnant (or trying to conceive), or if you're an athlete in training for a sport, you naturally have concerns about whether a vegetarian diet is your best option. The answer is – yes, if you're eating enough of the right foods. Vegetarianism is great for keeping blood sugar under control and getting the body in peak shape, whether you hope to run a marathon or have a baby.

## **Doing vegetarianism as a diabetic**

For diabetics, diet is the first line of defense, literally the difference between life and death. Left untreated, diabetes can cause blindness, kidney failure and even loss of the hands and feet, and it affects people of all ages. If you're a diabetic, your doctor has already told you that your diet is the single most important weight you can manage your diabetes – a low fat, high carbohydrate and high fiber vegetarian diet is an excellent option.

Worldwide, over 30 million people suffer from diabetes. Essentially, the condition is one in which the body is unable to process nutrients efficiently. In a "normal" body, the food we eat is converted to usable energy in the form of glucose, a sugar that's carried by the blood to all of our various functions with the help of the hormone insulin. Diabetics, however, have an imbalance of insulin – either too little or none at all – which means that the body has difficulty converting blood sugar to usable energy. This means that the glucose remains, unconverted, in the bloodstream and never gets where it's needed, leading to fatigue, muscle pain loss of concentration and coordination and blurry vision. When someone has a hypoglycemic episode, that's what's going on – the amount of usable sugars in their bloodstream is too low. In extreme cases this can lead to the person lapsing into a coma, or even dying.

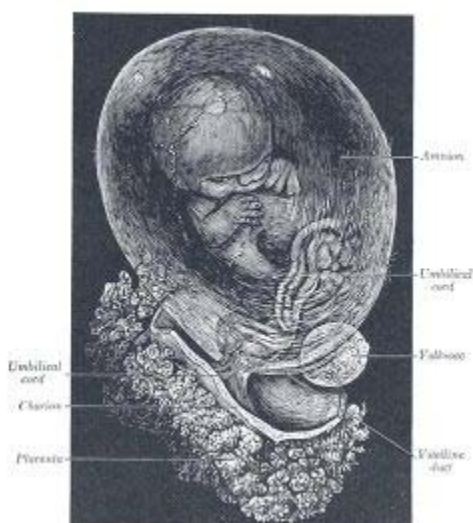
As a matter of controlling their blood sugar, diabetics have to keep a close eye on their diet, eating a wide variety of foods and making sure they sit down to regular meals. Carbohydrates must be watched carefully – at least half of the recommended diabetic diet must include complex carbohydrates from sources like baked potatoes, whole grain breads, vegetables and legumes. Sounds like a vegetarian diet, doesn't it?



The vegetarian diet is so good for diabetics, in fact, that some vegetarian diabetics can transition off medication, including many who previously had to inject insulin. The level of control that vegetarianism allows diabetics allows them to feel confident that they're eating for optimal health.

### Adding a third vegetarian to the family

If you're hoping to get pregnant, both you and your doctor want you to be in the best possible condition to insure that both you and your baby are healthy. Eating well is important before and during pregnancy – and the more of a head start you can get on good health before you conceive, the better.



Vegetarians may eat a healthier diet than omnivores, but you'll still need to follow the same advice as meat-eaters in many respects. Take a daily multivitamin and mineral supplement for several months before you get pregnant, and make sure it offers plenty of B12 and folic acid, or folate, a B vitamin that helps prevent birth defects of the spine and brain. Get plenty of physical activity and drink lots of water, and avoid alcohol, tobacco and caffeine. Eat nutritious foods and cut back or eliminate junk food and refined sugar.

As a vegetarian, you'll probably be in better shape than if you were eating

meat, and closer to your ideal weight. You'll also have a strong immune system now that you're avoiding animal foods, which you'll pass on to your baby. Just make sure that you're getting plenty of iron – many women begin pregnancy deficient in iron, and as your body grows and you store more blood to nourish your baby, you don't want to risk becoming anemic.

## **Enough protein for two**

Once you've conceived and you know that you're carrying a child, you'll probably start to worry about getting all the nutrients you need for you and your baby. But protein really isn't your biggest concern – as we've already covered, most people already eat too much protein. If you're eating a healthy diet consisting of a variety of foods, you're probably getting plenty of protein from whole grains, beans, legumes and either dairy or soy milk.

A greater concern is that you get enough omega 3 fatty-acids – a nutrient that plays an important role in brain function and development – as well as calcium, folic acid (folate), iron, zinc, and vitamins B12 and D. If you're a pesco vegetarian (one who eats fish), you can get plenty of omega-3s by eating fatty fish like salmon. If you don't eat fish, add ground flax seed (found at natural food stores or your supermarket) to your meals, or take a supplement. The rest of the important nutrients should be plentiful, if you follow some simple recommendations:

Eat four servings of cooked dried beans and peas each day – they're full of zinc, iron and protein. Munch on nuts and seeds, but be careful of eating too much fat.

Include four servings of calcium-rich foods. Read labels on dairy and milk substitutes, and try to get 30 percent of the RDA of calcium – that's 300 mg of calcium per serving. Use soy and rice milks that are fortified with Vitamin D, which helps your body process calcium.

Eat from five to seven servings of vegetables and three to five servings of fresh fruit each day, for energy, vitamins, fiber and antioxidants.

Include six to eleven servings of whole grains, like bread, cereal, brown rice

and oatmeal.

Get your vitamin B12 by eating at least one serving each day of or more servings of B12-rich foods like milk, fortified soy milk, miso and tempeh.

If you find yourself eating too little and you need to consume more calories, shakes and smoothies are tasty, easy to digest and full of nutrients.

High performance from plant foods

If you actively train for a sport, you've probably already heard that you can't reach top performance on a vegetarian diet – and a vegan diet, well, that's right out! But it's not. Many world-class athletes are vegetarians, including some very famous names. Baseball legend Hank Aaron, exercise guru Jack LaLanne, professional skateboarder Steve Berra, football player Jopw Namath, three-time Ironman champion Ruth Heidrish, Olympic track star Carl Lewis, and tennis greats Billie Jean King and Martina Navratilova are among thousands of pro athletes who built their bodies in vegetarian and vegan diets.

Athletes are among the few vegetarians that actually need to worry about getting enough protein in their diets. When animal products are removed from the diet, considerably less protein is being consumed, and a highly active body requires more protein than that of the average person. When there's too little dietary protein, carbohydrates enter the bloodstream faster, causing insulin levels to rise quickly, and then plunge a short time later. This is the dreaded "sugar crash" that we've all experienced, and it's a killer for athletes who depend on a steady supply of usable energy. Additional protein in the diet balances the carbohydrates, heading off the sugar crash by releasing energy into the bloodstream at a more efficient rate.

Protein is also important to athletes as it's used to rebuild muscle tissue during training. The way in which muscles are grown and strengthened is an ongoing process of breaking down tissue and then building them back up again – without enough protein, the taxed muscles won't rebuild themselves.

It's a simple matter to add protein to a vegetarian diet. You've already read about the amazing variety of plant foods that provide adequate protein. Adding one or two protein rich snacks each day can boost your protein intake by 10 to 25 grams – a cup of vegetarian chili over rice, a bowl of whole grain cereal with soy milk, a whole-wheat roll with peanut butter, a

large baked potato and a cup of soup are all great protein-rich snacks.

Scientists, physicians and sports trainers all know that a high-carbohydrate diet is best for athletes, as the carbs provide necessary energy and stamina. Sugar that's stored in the muscles for their use is called *glycogen*, and your body uses these stored sugars when performing both endurance activities like running, swimming and biking, and lower-intensity activities like sprinting, skiing and snowboarding. The vegetarian diet, with its emphasis on whole grains, legumes, fruit, and vegetables, offers the necessary high intake of carbohydrate.

A vegetarian diet should provide all the vitamins and minerals that athletes require, but if you're training hard you should make sure you eat enough foods that provide vital nutrients like iron and zinc (found in fortified breakfast cereals, legumes, nuts and seeds) and vitamin C to enhance the absorption of iron.

There is some concern that vegetarian or vegan diet puts female athletes at a higher risk for amenorrhea (irregular menstrual cycles) and osteoporosis. Some studies have associated high-fiber, low-fat vegetarian diets combined with extremely high levels of exercise with reduced estrogen levels. The consensus among scientists, though, is that the fault lies in low energy intake – not eating enough calories – rather than being a problem with the vegetarian diet. These same studies have found that female athletes have normal menstrual cycles when they increase their caloric intake.

## **Aging gracefully – and meat-free**



Gerontology – the study of old age and aging – is a relatively new science, and little is known about the specific nutritional needs of older people as compared to children and younger adults. Many people live out their seniority with vigor, but even they notice that certain health problems increase as they get older. One thing that scientists know is that much of how we age is genetic – there are certainly patterns to how all humans change as they age, but those changes come at a different pace for different people. Some of that difference is genetic – and some of it due to diet and lifestyle.

As we've already discussed, the right diet can improve your health and allow you to live longer. Research into the health and longevity of vegetarians has shown that those who eat a vegetarian diet that's lower in calories, saturated fat, and protein, and higher in fiber and phytochemicals suffer from less obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and some forms of cancer than non-vegetarians – and they tend to live longer, too.

Good eating habits in the years that lead up to old age will not only help your current health but will help to minimize the various ailments that plague the elderly. Your genes will play a part in how you age – but a healthy vegetarian diet will help, no matter what genetic cards you've drawn.

One thing that researchers agree upon is that older adults need less calories as they age. Part of that is due to the inevitable decline in the rate of metabolism – like it or not, your metabolism will slow as you age, meaning you need to consume less energy to keep your body functioning. You'll also, in most cases, become less physically active, another reason

you'll need less calories. And yet, you'll still need the same amount of various nutrients that you always did – in some case, you'll need more.

As people age, it becomes more likely that specific medical problems that require a special diet. Those with diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease will need to plan their diets according to their physician's recommendations. Most conditions, however, benefit from a diet that's high in fiber from whole grains, fruits, and vegetables, and low in animal products, and we already know that a vegetarian lifestyle can help to keep blood sugar levels in check. If you follow a special diet, consult with a nutritionist or dietitian for help with vegetarian meal planning.

You may also be hoping that a healthier diet will help with arthritis but, so far, there is no evidence that one kind of diet is better for the treatment of arthritis than another. A low fat vegetarian diet will help you maintain optimum weight, though, which has been proven to lessen or even prevent some symptoms of arthritis.

There are a number of factors that can affect the eating habits of older adults. Sometimes money plays a part – many elderly people are on tight budgets and they undereat because of financial distress. Others find it difficult to tolerate a lot of foods as they age, or they're unable to shop and cook for themselves, so their diet suffers. Older people with diabetes or high blood pressure have to modify their diets significantly, and sometimes there are problems with chewing or swallowing that keep them from eating as much as they should.

The most important thing to remember as you age – and this applies to anyone who's over 40 and notices their metabolism slowing – is that you need to get as much nutrition from the food you eat as possible while keeping an eye on caloric intake. That means cutting out the empty calories that come from junk foods – consuming less sweets, chips, soft drinks and alcohol, while eating more nutrient-dense foods that give you real bang for your caloric buck.

The basic recommendations for all adults are even more important for older people. In a nutshell:

Limit your intake of:

- sweets
- regular coffee and tea
- greasy or fatty foods
- alcohol
- oil, margarine, and "junk" foods
- other added fat
- salt

Eat plenty of:

- fruits
- whole grain breads and cereals
- vegetables

Drink plenty of fluids, especially water

## Special problems of older adults

The biggest source of discomfort in older adults is digestive problems. Unfortunately, this often causes people to avoid foods that are rich in nutrients that they need – flatulence, for example, may inspire them to cut out foods like beans and cabbage, both of which are rich in vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Sometimes, the answer is to add other foods to the diet to compensate.

Let's look at some common problems that affect us as we age:

**Constipation** is a common complaint, usually caused by not drinking enough fluids and by not eating enough fiber. Some medications, like antacids made with aluminum hydroxide or calcium carbonate, can increase the risk of constipation, and habitual use of laxatives actually makes the problem worse. The first step in avoiding constipation is to eat a diet that includes lots of whole grain breads and cereals, and plenty of vegetables and fruits. Many people find that eating dried fruits like prunes or figs helps, as they have a natural laxative effect for many people (your grandpa drank all that prune juice for a reason!) Make sure you drink plenty

of fluids, especially water, and limit foods that are high in fat, including high fat dairy products, oils and margarine, and fried foods. Regular exercise helps, too.

**Gas and heartburn** often plague older adults, especially after eating. The symptoms are both uncomfortable and embarrassing – belching, intestinal gas or flatulence, bloating, and a burning sensation in the stomach and chest. They're caused by a number of different things, including overeating, eating too many high-fat foods, and drinking alcohol or carbonated beverages. Lying down to rest right after eating and taking certain drugs – including aspirin – can contribute to the problem, too. Eating a high-fiber diet often works, although sometimes the symptoms return when the body adjust to the increased fiber intake. To battle indigestion, try eating smaller, more frequent meals instead of one or two larger meals. Eat slowly and chew food thoroughly before swallowing. As with constipation, regular exercise can help minimize problems with gas.

**Chewing and swallowing problems** are an unfortunate way of life for many older adults. Raw foods may be a problem, so cooking vegetables and fruits may be necessary, even though the foods lose some of their nutrient value in the process. Cutting your food into smaller pieces and taking extra time to chew, not rushing meals, may be helpful. If you wear dentures, check with your dentist to make sure that you have the proper fit – our mouths change as we age, and they may need to be replaced. Make sure to drink plenty of fluids, especially water, and keep it on hand during meals – some medications contribute to "dry mouth," and could be adding to the problem.

**Loss of appetite** is a common problem for the elderly, and it's sometimes caused by depression. Depression is common in older people, because of changes in their living conditions, the loss of beloved companions, side effects of some medications, and difficulty in caring for themselves. Eating a number of small meals throughout the day may help, and it's also good to seek out opportunities to socially over meals. Your nearby senior center probably offers regular meals, and you can discuss your vegetarian needs with their dietitian. You can also contact your local vegetarian groups and ask in they sponsor restaurant outings or potluck dinners, which can give you the chance to get out, have a nice meal with good company and make some new friends!



## **Meal planning for older adults**

Seniors often find that meal planning is a challenge, especially if it's difficult for them to shop and cook. Arthritis can make it tough to manage a trip through the grocery store, open bottles or handle cooking utensils. Impaired eyesight may make it difficult to drive to the store and read food labels or package instructions, and it's sometimes hard to be motivated to cook when you're only making meals for yourself.

If this applies to you, you'll need to plan meals that are simple, quick, and easy to prepare. Ready-to-eat breakfast cereals are a great snack or easy meal, and hot cereals like oatmeal can be cooked in a microwave in just a matter of minutes. Canned fruits and vegetables have a long shelf life, and will keep for months in the pantry. Whole grain breads, muffins, tortillas and bagels can be stored in the freezer, so you can thaw just enough for one meal at a time. Also stock your pantry with frozen vegetables, whole grain crackers, peanut or almond butter, canned beans and shelf-stable cartons of soy or rice milk.

If you're able to cook, make a full recipe that normally serves six or eight people and then freeze individual servings to be eaten later. Veggie lasagna, casseroles, cheese enchiladas, vegetarian chili, whole grain cookies and muffins or pancakes all freeze well, and can be reheated as needed for a quick meal.

## CHAPTER 16

### Veggies for Kids

#### How to Raise a Happy, Healthy Vegetarian Child

We all start out life as lacto vegetarians. Our first food is our mothers' milk, made just for us and full of all the nutrients we need. Infant formula, the alternative to breast milk, is made as close as possible to that of mother's milk, and it's all we require or should eat for the first four to six months of life. The good news is, if you're a vegetarian, your breast milk is superior to that of meat-eating mothers – you're not passing on any of the antibiotics, pesticides or other contaminants that you would if you were eating meat. (And if you're a vegan and you breast feed, your child is still a vegan, too – breast milk is a natural food for humans while cow's milk is not).

Whether or not you breast feed is entirely your decision but, for most babies, breast milk is the optimal food. In addition to the sugars and other nutrients, scientists believe that there are other, as yet unidentified, substances in breast milk that make it superior to infant formula. Should you decide not to breast feed, choose a soy-based formula – soy is less likely to cause allergies than cow's-milk-based formulas. But don't give regular soy milk to a baby less than a year old, as it's not designed to meet their nutritional needs.

Cow's milk should never be fed to babies under one year old, as it can cause intestinal bleeding and lead to anemia. Also, studies have shown a link between infants drinking cow's milk and their increased risk to become diabetic later in life.

## **Meat-free infants**

At the four-to-six month mark, it's time to introduce your baby to solid foods. The timing varies from baby to baby – when your child reaches 13 pounds or double his birth weight wants to breast-feed eight times or more during a 24-hour period, and when she takes a quart or more of a formula per day and still acts hungry, it's time to transition to solid foods.

You'll want to introduce solid foods slowly, so that their systems can get used to the change in diet. Start with cooked grains – rice cereal is best, as almost every baby can digest it easily and unlikely to cause an allergic reaction. Once your baby eats cooked cereal, begin to slowly introduce other foods. You can buy commercial baby foods or puree your own fruits and vegetables in a blender. If you buy prepared foods, buy ones that are

free from added sugars, preservatives and any other additives that your baby doesn't need. Start with raw, mashed fruits and move on to cooked vegetables like mashed sweet potatoes. It's smart to introduce new foods one at a time, so if your baby has sensitivity to a food you can easily identify it.

When your child starts teething (somewhere between 12 and 24 months) they can move on to foods that need to be chewed. Raw vegetables can be introduced then, starting with veggies that are easy to chew and unlikely to present a choking hazard. When giving babies "finger foods," take care that the foods aren't too hard, large, sharp, or round. Good choices are carrot sticks, lettuce and other leafy green vegetables, and lightly blanched and cooled broccoli. As long as it's safe for the baby to chew, an vegetables that adults eat are fine for a child.



Follow the same feeding schedules and advice that you would for any other baby, except for not feeding them meat. Adapt the guidelines in the baby books to the vegetarian diet. Just make sure that you don't let other people convince you that you should be allowing your baby to drink cow's milk – once your child is old enough to transition off formula, you can give him water, regular soy milk or rice milk, juice, regular soy milk, or any other nutritious liquid.

At seven to ten months, start introducing high-protein legumes to the baby's diet. Slowly add tofu into their meals and snacks, as well as soy cheese and soy yogurt – two servings per day, about a half-ounce per serving. Most babies are very fond of lentils, which can be cooked until fairly soft and have a pleasant, bland flavor. Nut butters should not be fed until after 12 months.

## Toddler time

As you ease into the toddler/preschooler years (ages 1 to 4), you can start offering your child some vegetarian versions of classic kids' favorites. Vegetarian and vegan children are just like any other kids – they'll be a bit fussy sometimes, but there are a wide variety of nutritious foods that children universally enjoy:

- Spaghetti with meatless sauce
- Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches
- Baked french fries with ketchup
- Veggie burgers, hot dogs and sandwich slices
- Whole wheat bread and rolls
- Grilled soy cheese sandwiches
- Veggie pizzas with soy cheese
- Pancakes or waffles, with fruit or maple syrup
- Vegetable soup
- Baked potatoes with non-dairy sour cream
- Rice and beans
- Spinach lasagna
- Calcium-fortified soy milk and orange juice
- Cold cereal with vanilla soy or rice milk
- Chicken-Free nuggets (soy protein nuggets that taste just like breaded chicken)

### Snacks:

- Fruit, cut up into bite sized pieces
- Raisins and banana chips
- Trail mix
- Applesauce
- Fruit smoothies
- Popcorn
- Vegan cakes, cookies and other baked goods

Vegetarian diets feature a lot of bulky, filling plant foods, and since small children have equally small stomachs, they sometimes don't get all the calories they require. Make sure to include a lot of calorie-dense foods in

your child's diet so that they get all the energy their growing bodies require – add avocado, which is calorie-dense and full of good fats, to sandwiches. Peanut and almond butters are excellent sources of calories for kids, too. Very young children also need to eat more than three meals each day. So be generous with the snacks featuring grains, fruits and vegetables to add lots of necessary nutrients to their diet. Don't worry about a vegetarian diet affecting your child's growth – a 1989 study of children living in a vegan community in Tennessee found that while they were slightly shorter than average at age 1 to 3, they caught up by age 10, when they were actually taller than average, and weighed slightly less than children raised on an omnivorous diet.

### **School-age vegetarians**

While most vegetarian children have traditionally been raised as such since birth, more and more kids as young as 8 or 9 are choosing the lifestyle for themselves. This is great! And despite concerns, they usually don't find themselves suffering socially because of it. A lot of children have to avoid various foods due to allergies – like dairy, nuts and chocolate – and vegetarian/vegan kids are no different.



You'll probably have to provide them with school snacks and lunches from home, though, as school menus usually offer few vegetarian choices – although they may offer juice, vegetables and fruits, dairy free breads, baked potatoes and even bean burritos. If your child's school offers a weekly menu, you can plan ahead of time, discussing with your child what

they will or won't eat, and what you can supplement from home, This is also a great opportunity to get your child involved with making responsible food choices! choices.

During the teen years, a lot of kids choose vegetarian diets themselves for moral and ethical reasons. This is terrific – but teenagers are still teenagers whether they eat meat or not, and you'll find your teen gravitating toward cookies, chips, french fries and candy, and away from salads and raw vegetables. Work with your child, and patiently try to get them to eat less empty calories and more nutrient-dense foods.

Teens with eating disorders often latch onto a vegan diet as a socially acceptable way to control their food and undereat, so if your child is losing a great deal of weight and shows other signs of anorexia or bulimia, deal immediately with the problem. Vegan diets do not lead to eating disorders – it's a serious mental health problem that may need professional intervention. If your teen appears to be seriously underweight, first talk to her about their diet and work with her to make changes so that she's getting the nutrition she needs. But if the problem persists and you suspect your child has an eating disorder, seek professional help.

## **Nutrition for all ages**

Because children are growing – and growing rapidly – they need a lot of nutrients to fuel their growth. Calcium is especially important, as bones are growing during this period. So make sure they eat plenty of leafy green vegetables, legumes and drink calcium-fortified orange juice. Calcium-rich foods are usually full of iron, too, which is great because children need a lot of iron – make sure they also get plenty of Vitamin C to help absorb the iron.

The vitamin family should be represented, too - if they're eating a variety of foods, they should be getting enough B12 and D, but if you're concerned about their nutrient consumption there are vegan multivitamins for children available at your natural foods store.

Kids are notoriously fussy, but when presented with a variety of tasty, appealing and convenient foods, they'll have no trouble enjoying a vegetarian diet. By keeping your cupboards free of empty-calorie foods and providing an array of healthful snacks – baby carrots, fresh fruit, hummus and whole wheat crackers, and whole grain breads – you'll encourage your kids to eat healthy foods, setting the stage for their healthy adult diets.

And, of course, you can do your part to make them feel good about their vegetarian lifestyle by setting a good example with your own eating habits. That means making delicious meals for the entire family, and turning meal time into a pleasant, bonding experience. Try not to nag them about their food choices – they're kids, and they're still learning about what they like to eat. If your shelves are full of healthy, tasty foods, that's the first thing they'll grab when they get hungry. And if you raise them to enjoy fresh fruit, vegetables and whole grains as toddlers, they're less likely to go overboard on junk foods when they hit their teens.



## CHAPTER 17

### The Social Vegetarian

#### Connecting with Meat-Eaters and Others at Work and at Play

People are less inclined to look down their noses at vegetarians than once was the case, but there are still social challenges to living a meatless lifestyle. Some people will believe that you're making an in-your-face political choice and have a negative reaction for no good reason. A lot of people will wonder if you've gone all hippy-dippy, patchouli-scented goofball on them, and treat you with condescension and scorn. Even the most supportive of friends will misunderstand what "vegetarian" means and offer you fish or eggs without ever asking you for the particulars of your diet. And you're going to have to take this all with good humor and flexibility. The level of acceptance you find depends, of course, on where you live, where you work, and what sort of people you hang out with. But even in the most accepting of environments, you're going to have challenges.

Explaining yourself, even though you shouldn't have to

As we've discussed, you'll need a supply of quick, polite answers to handle the questions people will have about your diet. Don't get cranky – sure, they're nosy, but isn't it nice that they want to know more about vegetarianism? If you already know what to say, it'll be easy to give them an answer without turning the conversation into a lengthy debate. Some of the most common questions you'll field are the same ones you had when you first started out – except now you know the answers:

Why are you a vegetarian?

If you don't eat meat, how do you get enough protein?

Can you eat chicken? How about fish?

Is this some sort of a religious thing?

Is it hard to never eat meat?

Why do you wear leather shoes if you won't eat animals?

Isn't vegetarian food boring?

Can you eat at McDonald's?

If you already know the answers, you won't mind the questions so much!

Dining gracefully with meat-eaters

Dinner parties – both attending them and hosting them – can be problematic for people on special diets. If you're the host, you can make sure that you have a tempting variety of delicious foods, dazzling your

guests with such tasty choices that they'd be foolish to miss the meat. But what if you're the guest?

Often, even if your hosts know that you're vegetarian, they may not know how to feed you. They may think that by serving grilled salmon instead of meat loaf they're offering a vegetarian-friendly entree. Or you may end up in a situation where your hosts simply have no idea of what your needs are.

In those cases, you need to make the best of things. Etiquette is, fundamentally, about behaving well under challenging circumstances. If all there is on the table that you can eat is bread and salad, do so – and, if you're questioned, smile and say that they're so delicious that you're happy to enjoy them. Even if it's disappointing, remember that's it's just for one meal – chat with your tablemates, enjoy the company and have a good time anyway!

If there's absolutely nothing on the menu that you can eat, or your hostess sits a plate of animal food in front of you, do what children do – squish things around and mess up your plate. Hide the meat under some lettuce, and leave some empty space so it looks like you ate something. If the conversation is compelling, most people won't notice how much you did, or didn't, eat.

Whatever happens, don't make an issue of your diet. To be blunt, no one is really interested in what you can't eat, and it's considered rude to draw all of the conversation to yourself in such a manner anyway. If someone asks, tell them you're vegetarian and steer the conversation to something else.

If you're headed to a big social event like a wedding or a family dinner, and you think there might be challenges finding something to eat, then eat a light meal before you leave the house. Even under the worst circumstances there will be something for you to snack on, but you won't be suffering from hunger pangs throughout the evening.

## **Being a great, meat-free hostess**

Part of being a terrific host is anticipating your guests' needs. Think about

how you'd like to be treated when you go to dinner at a friend's home – how about offering the same courtesy to them? When you invite guests to dinner, ask them if they have special dietary needs, or if there's anything they absolutely hate. You'll be surprised at what people have to say – some are allergic to bell peppers, or peanuts, or dairy. If you accommodate their needs that same way you'd like yours accommodated in a similar situation, you can make them feel extra welcome in your home.



One sure way to make everyone happy is to serve a variety of different dishes buffet style, allowing guests to fill their plates only with what they want. It helps them to feel comfortable if they don't want to eat something – no one will be looking at their plate and wondering why there's still food there – and it'll save you the effort of serving, so you have more time to enjoy your guests.

Only serve meat if you genuinely feel comfortable doing so. Some people will cook a chicken or fish dish for guests, but not partake of it themselves. If you're happy doing this, then go ahead. But if you aren't, then make them the best vegetarian meal they've ever tasted, and show them how delicious eating meat-free can be!

## **Meat and the vegetarian single**

If you're single and dating, you've probably already figured out that it's a special sort of challenge. Do you date people who eat meat? Or are you only interested in dating other vegetarians?

Vegetarian singles who choose to date those who aren't vegetarian or vegan diet may find themselves at a disadvantage. Many vegetarians can't stand to watch people eat meat, and going out to dinner with a potential romantic partner who's chewing on a big, rare steak is a disaster waiting to happen. Dating meat-eaters can be stressful for vegetarians – after all, you may find yourself repulsed at the thought of kissing someone who just ate a cheeseburger!

On the other hand, you may not have any problem dating omnivores. If you're vegetarian strictly for health reasons, it may not bother you that your partner's eating meat. If you're vegetarian for moral reasons, however, you're going to have a hard time dating people who indulge in a practice that you find unethical.

It's no wonder that vegetarians often choose to only date other vegetarians. But that in itself brings its own set of drawbacks. For one thing, you're seriously limiting your dating pool. For another, what if they're a different sort of vegetarians than you are? To a vegan, even dating an ovo lacto can have its problems.

If you do want to date other vegetarians, you'll have better luck if you live in a large metropolitan area. Many vegetarian societies have local groups that meet in larger towns and cities. Many of these groups have pot luck get-togethers and outdoor events. There are also dating services just for vegetarians, as well as animal rights or animal welfare groups, and vegetarian cooking classes – all great places to meet vegetarian singles.

And don't rule out Internet dating. The number of people gravitating toward dating online grows all the time, and it's much more acceptable to meet potential mates this way than ever before. Sign up with a site that caters exclusively to vegetarian dating and, while you may not find as many members in the more all-inclusive services, you'll know from the start that you're meeting like-minded singles.

## **Vegetarianism at work**

If you've ever been on a weight-loss diet, you know what a royal pain co-

workers can be. There's a strange sort of hive-mind mentality that happens in the workplace, where people simply can't accept that you don't want a piece of birthday cake or a piece of that giant submarine sandwich. Sometimes it's like being back in grade school – the peer pressure can be annoying, and it can sabotage your diet!

Vegetarians face a similar problem, especially if they're the only meat-free eaters in their office. Sadly, it's human nature for people to feel threatened by any change in the status quo, and your becoming a vegetarian may cause people to become antagonistic, or to try and sway you to give up your commitment to a meat-free lifestyle.

Even if you're polite and don't make a big deal out of your vegetarianism, it will most likely become an issue. "Come on ... just have one slice," they'll say when the pepperoni pizza is set out. "What are you now, some kind of hippy?" they'll ask. Usually they don't even know they're being rude and hostile – it will usually be presented in a joking manner. But it will be hard for you to stay cheerful if you find yourself continually under attack.

The best you can do is to smile, say, "no, thank you" in a calm voice, and change the subject. You may have to walk away if they won't drop it. But if the subject keeps coming up, perhaps you can use the situation to your advantage instead of becoming frustrated and angry. When they hit you with the usual jibes, come back with a clever response:

"I think tofu's disgusting." ("And eating a cow's liver isn't?")

"It's okay to eat animals, because humans are smarter." ("So does that mean it's okay to eat stupid people?")

"I'll bet one really great cheeseburger would change your mind." ("And I'll bet one trip to a slaughterhouse would change yours!")

"If you don't eat meat, why do you wear leather shoes?" ("Why – are shoes made from meat?")

In any case, showing a good sense of humor and not letting yourself be antagonized is the key. That applies to business functions like dinners with clients and conferences with catered lunches. If you're dining in a restaurant, all of the usual etiquette applies – eat what you can, or politely

ask for something else. If you're stuck at a business function, however, and there's absolutely nothing to eat, share your vegetarianism with your boss or the person who plans your company's events. Once they start adding a vegetarian option to the fare at business meetings and other events, you'll find that you're not the only employee who enjoys that option – and pretty soon you'll find that there's always something for to eat at work.

## CHAPTER 18

### How to Create a Vegetarian

### Supportive Environments At Work and At Play



You now have a lot of valuable tools at your disposal – you know how to plan meals, you know what nutrients you need to keep your body healthy, and you know how to feed your vegetarian child. You even know how to answer questions from others and make sure you have plenty of healthful food to eat at home, at school, and at work.

Making your new lifestyle work at home and in the office requires a lot of flexibility, good humor, and planning. By this point, though, you should feel up to the task! You've made excellent choices for your health and your future, and how you integrate it into the rest of your life will not only affect your relationships, but also how others view vegetarianism.

### **Meat-eaters and meat-free – managing a mixed marriage**

All marriages are about compromise. You choose someone to spend the rest of your life with and, as time passes, you often find yourselves negotiating to find a middle ground that you can live with. One of you is messy, but the other is neat. He loves reality television, she adores opera. One partner may be a social butterfly but the other's happy to stay home every night with a good book. Married couples figure out how to adapt to such differences, and a vegetarian/omnivore marriage has to negotiate many more obstacles than most.

It's understandable, when you're single and dating, to believe that your ideal partner will share all of your values. But that's unrealistic – no two individuals are exactly alike, and the day-to-day struggle of paying bills, doing laundry, getting to work and raising children can sometimes make even the smallest difference seem enormous. As the popularity of vegetarianism increases, so do the number of "mixed marriages" between meat-eaters and non-meat eaters. You and your spouse may agree on a lot of things, but still disagree on how to eat.

The key to making it work is acceptance of each other's choices. If you judge your spouse harshly for not joining you in your vegetarian journey, you may be turning them off entirely, closing the door to them making that step themselves in the future. No one likes to be told that they're "bad," particularly if they're simply eating the same diet as most of the other people they see every day.

Try to keep in mind that your choice to become vegetarian was a personal one, and it has to be for them, too. You can't control what your spouse eats – but you can control how you behave towards them.

**Cherish the issues in your marriage that you agree on.** There are probably far more of those than there are issues on which you don't see eye-to-eye.

**Acknowledge that your spouse's diet isn't meant to hurt you.** If your partner eats meat, it isn't a choice designed to make your life unhappy or more complicated. Try to respect their decision, whether it is based on ethical principles, on convenience or on habit.

**Try to get your partner to compromise on certain foods.** See if you can get them to eat soy hot dogs, veggie burgers and non-dairy cheese at home.

**Never attack your spouse's point of view, especially in public.** Belittling your partner will only cause them to be resentful and more resistant to vegetarianism.

**Try to find restaurants where you can eat together.** Choose venues that offer both meat dishes and vegetarian options, so that you can enjoy a fine meal together.

**Play an active role in shopping and preparing meals.** Cook a variety of tasty, appealing meals so that your partner can see that the diet isn't boring. Buy a few cookbooks and try new recipes to keep things interesting.

**Be a positive role model.** Allow your cheerful attitude and good health serve as an example of how great vegetarianism can be.

**Don't talk endlessly about your diet.** If your partner is interested, the subject will come up naturally – but don't lecture.

**If you've agreed not to eat meat at home, accept that your spouse may eat meat sometimes when they're not with you.** Again, you can't control what they eat, and nagging doesn't help.

Eating together is one of the great pleasures of any relationship. Negotiate a menu plan that's acceptable to both of you, and then enjoy your meals together!

## **Being vegetarian at work**

If you work in a corporate environment, food is as much a part of your job as voice mail, computers and fluorescent lighting. Lunch is where you network, make deals and discuss contracts. Looking and acting professional in such situations is vital.

As a vegetarian this can pose a unique challenge. If everyone around you is ordering steak or chicken Caesar salads and you're not eating much, it can call undue attention to your eating habits. Suddenly, no one's talking about the deal – they're talking about why you aren't eating your lunch!

More and more people are choosing meatless lifestyles, but that doesn't mean that being a vegetarian at work is easy. You've made a lifestyle choice dictated by your health and your ethics, but you have to walk the fine line of also fitting in with your colleagues. After all, if you're too independent of a thinker, they might not believe that you're still a team player. When you're at work you want the focus to be on your work – not on what you eat. The same grace, good humor and tact that you use to deal with family and friends is even more important in the workplace.

## **Answering questions, looking professional**

Most of the time, nobody's going to care if you order a cheese omelette rather than ham and eggs. But sometimes the comments will be pointed – they can even be just plain rude. If you've brought along a tempeh-and pita sandwich and your colleague in the next cubicle tells you it looks disgusting, or if somebody at a power lunch says something insulting because you've ordered a hummus plate instead of a club sandwich, your

best strategy is to simply act surprised that they care so much about what you eat. It deflects the obnoxious behavior and puts it in perspective – why do they care so much about your food, anyway?

This is another situation in which you should be prepared to answer questions honestly but politely – and to keep your answers short. As we've mentioned already, you don't want the focus to be on your diet, nor do you want to come off as lecturing. At this point you should already know the answers to common questions, but let's review:

**"So, what can you eat?"** Tell them the truth, but downplay the tofu and seitan – you can eat almost anything, after all, and if you tell them that it'll put their minds at ease. "Most of the same things you eat – pizza, spaghetti, burritos – just without the meat" is a good answer.

**"Why do you become vegetarian?"** How you answer this depends on how well you know the person asking the question, and how much personal detail you feel comfortable sharing with co-workers. Often, it's best to highlight the health benefits of vegetarianism – sure, you could go into details about factory farming, the environment and the ethics of eating sentient creatures, but most people will get your message more readily if you simply make it clear that you've found that eating a meatless diet is better for your health.

**"Will it bother you if I eat meat?"** Your co-workers will probably want to make sure you're comfortable, but often it's more about them – they want to know that they won't be judged if they continue to eat meat. The best way to get along with everyone is to respect their food choices and let them know that you aren't going to look down on them for eating meat. If you simply can't stand to be around people who are eating animal foods, find somewhere else to eat – but don't make a big deal out of it.

In every food-related situation that you find yourself in, you're an ambassador for vegetarianism. By maintaining the same calm, straightforward demeanor that you would in any professional situation, you'll go a long way towards educating people that there's nothing weird, boring or threatening about the vegetarian lifestyle.

## **When your boss foots the bill**

Part of corporate life is showing up for conferences, training sessions and off-site meetings where food is "thoughtfully" provided for you. That thoughtfulness doesn't always extend to offering vegetarian options, however. Don't assume that vegetarian eaters will be catered to – if you know ahead of time that a corporate event is scheduled, by all means talk to your boss or to the employee in charge of planning the event and let them know you'd like a vegetarian meal. Usually, providing for vegetarians isn't a problem – but whoever's arranging for the food will need to know ahead of time how many vegetarian meals they need to provide. If it's a big event, you're unlikely to be the only vegetarian!

If the planner is unfamiliar with vegetarian meals, offer some suggestions. Give her some ideas. Vegetable lasagna, spinach ravioli, Indian curries, eggplant Parmesan, vegetable burritos or hummus sandwiches are all dishes that can be made for a large number of people. If, for whatever reason, you're unable to get a vegetarian meal, as always, make do with what's on hand. Eat salad, bread and side dishes. Even in the nicest restaurants or hotels, you can request a baked potato and a salad, and the kitchen will be happy to provide it for you.

Always remember that professional behavior is as important at the dining table as it is in the boardroom. If you throw a hissy fit about your lunch you risk alienating your co-workers, and looking bad in front of your superiors. No one wants to work with someone who's finicky, humorless, and inflexible, and that's precisely what they'll think of you if you can't handle a single meal without throwing a tantrum.

Also keep in mind that while it may be perfectly acceptable to bring an alternate vegetarian dish to a friend's home when they throw a dinner party, bringing your own food to a corporate event is tacky. Even if there's nothing for you to eat except salad and bread sticks, put on a charming smile and eat what you can. Nobody said it would always be easy!

## CHAPTER 19

### Ethics, Beauty and Health

#### Saving the Earth, One Soyburger at a Time

By now you've learned pretty much everything you need to know about becoming a vegetarian, from ethics to nutrition to meal planning. Just don't forget one of the biggest reasons that living a vegetarian lifestyle is a wonderful choice – what you eat affects the rest of the world.

Consider the effect of a meat-eating society on the planet:

**Water and soil damage.** 260 million acres of U.S. forest have disappeared, to make room for cropland to farm meat. To produce a one pound of beef requires 2,500 gallons of water. The manufacture of a single hamburger patty takes enough fossil fuel to drive a small car 25 miles. It takes less water to produce a year's worth of food for a vegetarian than to produce one month's food for a meat-eater. Factory farms damage the environment in addition to the horrors they commit on the animals that they raise and slaughter. They use large quantities of fossil fuels and fresh water, and pollute the earth in return.



85 percent American topsoil – over 5 billion tons – is lost annually due to the raising of livestock. 26 billion tons of topsoil is lost annually on agricultural land worldwide. In the United States, one-third of the cropland has been permanently destroyed due to excessive soil erosion. By switching to a vegetarian diet, you alone spare an acre of trees every year.

Millions of acres of forests and wetlands have been leveled and drained to create pastures to feed the animals butchered for meat, destroying habitats for wildlife and disrupting the ecological balance. Irrigation of these pastures and croplands uses vast quantities of water, our most precious resource, and the water that runs off these lands takes with it irreplaceable topsoil, turning millions of acres of lush cropland into desert. Along with waste products from factory farming and slaughterhouses, runoff from agribusiness contributes more pollution than all other human activities combined.

**Depletion of rainforests.** Between 1960 and 1985, nearly 40 percent of all

Central American rain forests were destroyed to create pasture for beef cattle. As the primary source of oxygen for the entire planet, the survival of the rainforests is inextricably linked with the survival of mankind. The unique flora and fauna found in the rain forests provide ingredients for many medicines used to treat and cure human illnesses, and scientists are continuing to find new medicines as they discover new plants available only in these regions – yet approximately 1,000 species go extinct every year due to destruction of tropical rainforests. By destroying the rain forests, we may be destroying the chance to cure AIDS, cancer or influenza.

**Poison in the atmosphere.** Two-thirds of carbon dioxide emissions worldwide are created by the burning of fossil fuels, and 200 gallons of fossil fuel are burned to produce the beef currently eaten by the average American family of four each year. Burning 200 gallons of fossil fuel releases two tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere – by switching to a vegetarian diet, you're cutting back on the amount of pollution in the air.

**Poison in the workplace.** The air inside factory farms contains a dangerous combination of ammonia, hydrogen sulfide, bacteria, and decomposing fecal matter. A joint study by the University of Iowa and the American Lung Association concluded that 70 percent of the workers in indoor facilities on factory pig farms experience symptoms of respiratory illness.



Chronic bronchitis is suffered by over 50 percent of all "swine confinement workers," three times that of farmers who work in outdoor facilities. The turnover rate of workers in these conditions is understandably very high, and in some cases the owners of the factory farms have had to sell their businesses because they themselves were unable to work in their own farms.

Consider this, the next time you're complaining about your job – the decomposing waste from pig pens is collected in pits below, causing a build-up of hydrogen sulfide. According to the American Lung Association report, "Animals have died and workers have become seriously ill in confinement buildings ... Several workers have died when entering a pit during or soon after the emptying process to repair pumping equipment. Persons attempting to rescue these workers have also died." The pigs living in these conditions breathe those toxic fumes every minute of their



short lives. Animals living in these conditions regularly contract pneumonia and other respiratory illnesses – yet another reason why they're pumped full of antibiotics.

**Economics.** Raising animals for food is,, to put it bluntly, a stupid way to feed a hungry world. Livestock in the United States consume enough grain and soybeans to feed more than five times the nation's population. One acre of pasture produces an average of 165 pounds of beef – the same acre could produce 20,000 pounds of potatoes. If Americans reduced their consumption of meat by just 10 percent, it would save 12 million tons of grain annually. That much grain could feed 60 million people each year.

## **Eating ethically**

In reading this book, we hope that you've taken away some important ideas about why it makes good sense for your health and the environment to live a vegetarian lifestyle. But there's another, very important reason – because eating meat is, for lack of a better word, immoral.

All animals are living creatures with thoughts and emotions. They feel pain, just like you do. Vegans and vegetarians believe that animals are sensitive beings, not just things to be grown and slaughtered as we see fit. Vegans follow the strictest lifestyle in this regard and, even if you're not yet ready to take that path, it's worth considering the choices they make. Vegans don't eat anything from animal origin, including meat, eggs, dairy products and honey. They don't wear leather or wool, and they don't use products made by companies that experiment on animals. They "walk the talk," as the saying goes, living by their principles and eschewing all products that involve the death and suffering of animals.

Every year, billions of animals – sensitive, sentient beings that feel intense pain and suffering – are transformed into food products, in a world where we can very easily get all the nutrition we need from plant foods. Their misery is completely unnecessary. We do not need to kill animals to live, we kill animals simply because we believe we have the right to do so. Vegans and vegetarians can't stop these atrocities from happening, but they can refuse to participate in the process.

It's no coincidence that many of the world's great religions have espoused vegetarianism as part of the journey to enlightenment. There are stories of great spiritual leaders who had the road in front of them gently swept as they walked so that they wouldn't accidentally step on an insect on the road. Some spiritually advanced Yogis have evolved their morals to the point where they can't bear to swat a mosquito. The progress of moral values is a long evolution, begun when a small minority of people whose values are eventually adopted by the rest of society. If you have natural empathy for animals and if you can't bear eat their flesh, then live by the courage of your convictions – display your feelings and empathy for animals by refusing to contribute to their suffering.

### **Beautiful inside and outside**

Eating a vegetarian diet will help you live longer, as you're avoiding foods that create free radicals in your system which hasten the aging process. You'll look younger longer because of this, and your skin and hair will glow with good health. But the biggest beauty benefit is the one that comes from within – the radiance that comes from living an ethical, more spiritual life.

You don't have to be religious to be spiritual. You don't even have to believe in any sort of divine power. But take a moment to think about the connection between the great religions and respect for animals.

There's a reason that so many people who are concerned about man's warring nature are also vegetarians. When you are conscious that animals have souls – that they're alive, and conscious, and feel pain – how can you kill them unnecessarily? If you believe that animals think and feel and suffer, then you believe in the soul and that, therefore, all living things are spiritual in essence.



On a more pragmatic note, animals are tortured in terrible ways in slaughterhouses. Pigs scream in fear, often dropping dead of heart attacks because of the terror they experience on the killing floor. The adrenalin

produced in these animals' bodies when they're under such intense stress permeates every part of them, producing toxins that are passed on in the animal products that meat-eaters consume. People who eat meat produced under such conditions can't help but be affected by it – and they, in turn, interact with the people around them while these substances are in their own bodies.



## **The Karma connection**

Some Buddhists, who believe in the concept of karma, are not vegetarians. It's certainly recommended for them to avoid eating meat, but not required. Many Buddhists around the world choose a vegetarian lifestyle, though, because they feel strongly that it connects to the laws of karma.

In a nutshell, karma is the concept that "what goes around comes around." If, as individuals, we want to bring peace, harmony and unity to the world, it simply doesn't make sense to contribute to the world's violence by killing animals. Violence breeds violence, whether it's the killing of animals, muggings in the street, murder or wars between nations. The Nobel Prize winner Isaac Bashevis Singer once asked, "How can we pray to God for mercy if we ourselves have no mercy? How can we speak of rights and

justice if we take an innocent creature and shed its blood? I personally believe that as long as human beings will go on shedding the blood of animals, there will never be any peace."

Buddhists believe that we affect and are affected by one collective karma. Karma works sort of like a spiritual bank account – if you've caused bad karma, you'll be reborn as a lesser being, like an animal or a demon. If you live a moral life, however, and spread good karma during your time on earth, you'll be reborn as a human – or even, should you attain enlightenment, a unity with God. Buddha said, "... if in the process of repayment the lives of other beings were taken or their flesh eaten, then it will start a cycle of mutual devouring and slaughtering that will send the debtors and creditors up and down endlessly."



As one story goes, a disciple of Buddha asked a man why he kept buying meat from the butcher. The man replied that he bought meat because the butcher kept selling meat. So the disciple then asked the butcher why he sold meat – and the butcher answered that he did so because the man kept buying it. The Buddha said that both men were lacking in compassion and wisdom.

Supply and demand is the foundation of economy. The cycle of meat-eating and animal slaughtering is a complex network of interdependence. By becoming a vegetarian, you're doing your part to stop the violence.



## CHAPTER 20

### The Path Ahead

# Enjoying Your Vegetarian Lifestyle For the Rest of Your Life

Congratulations! If you've followed all the steps and taken the advice presented to you in this book – you're a vegetarian! Now you have one more decision to make – whether you want to use your knowledge to reach out to other vegetarians and educate meat-eaters about the lifestyle. You don't have to do this, of course. You can live your meat-free life quietly and on your own, and there's nothing wrong with that. But now that you know what you do about vegetarianism's value to individuals and the world, you may find you want to become a bit more active.

You don't have to do it right this minute, of course. But many, many vegetarians find that it's easier to maintain their lifestyle if they have the support of others who share the same values. As you now know, there are many reasons for becoming vegetarian, and people have all sorts of different reasons for going meat-free – and you may find that there's a lot to learn by discovering the viewpoint of other vegetarians.

Even if you choose to travel this path alone, you're an ambassador for vegetarianism. Your family, friends, co-workers and even strangers will see you as an example of meatless living, and as you meet more people and have more unique experiences of your own, your outlook, appearance and behavior will – for better or worse – be seen as that of a vegetarian person. So why not be the best vegetarian that you can be?

## **First impressions**

Whether we like it or not, our appearance and actions are judged by others. If you're telling a co-worker about the barbaric treatment of cows in factory farms while eating a cheese sandwich or discussing karma while wearing leather shoes, your audience may see you as a hypocrite. That's not to say that you can't be a good vegetarian and eat cheese or wear leather – but you need to be aware of when your actions and your words aren't in sync.

Always practice good hygiene and dress neatly. Don't play into society's prejudices by exemplifying the stereotype of the "dirty hippy." If you're clean, neat and appropriately dressed, the people that you deal with will think, "Hey – you're just like me!" They'll hear your message because they relate to you, rather than being turned off due to their own preconceptions.

## Making a connection

If you live in a small town, it may be difficult for you to find other vegetarians to talk to about the lifestyle. But don't give up! If you have a college or university in your town, there's probably a vegetarian group on campus – higher education and vegetarianism often go hand-in-hand. Watch for notices of vegetarian group meetings posted on bulletin boards at colleges schools and community centers, as well as libraries, supermarkets and other public places. Check out the ads in your local newspaper and look for natural food stores, bookstores or other shops that support alternative lifestyles. Visit them, and ask questions – in a small town, word of mouth is invaluable.

The Internet is also a great resources for vegetarians. There are hundreds of online groups, including message boards and recipe swap site, geared toward vegetarians. Not only are they a good source of discussion and community, they may be able to connect you with vegetarians in your own area. If you weren't aware of it, Seventh-Day Adventists are vegetarian – so if there's a vegetarian group in your area, the church probably knows about it.



If you still find yourself coming up short, take the initiative and start your own group! It's highly unlikely that you're the only vegetarian where you live, even in a rural area or a very small town. Take out a newspaper ad and throw a potluck at your home or local community center – you may be pleasantly surprised by how many people show up! Once you've got a group together, start a regular event where you all eat out at local restaurants. You'll not only help your community by supporting restaurants that cater to meat-free diners, you may also encourage other local



businesses to take vegetarians into consideration when planning their menus.

As a newcomer to vegetarianism, you'll probably find it helpful to socialize with others who share your point of view. Even the most well-meaning friends can be less than supportive of a lifestyle change, because they think they already know who you are and what you like. But by making connections with others who feel the same way, you'll not only broaden your own social network, you'll have a valuable resource for asking questions, sharing ideas and learning about other approaches to meat-free eating.

## Getting active

As you've learned more about the ethical reasons for becoming a vegetarian, you may find yourself wanting to do something a bit more proactive – like joining an animal rights organization or working to promote meat-free eating in your community. The first step is to assess how you'll fit this into your already busy life. If you have a full-time job and a family, you're already struggling to make time for your partner, your friends, your work and your leisure activities. Do you have time to devote to activism? Take a hard look at all the responsibilities you juggle and figure out how much of your day-to-day chores you can shift to your spouse, co-workers and others to allow you time for activism.

One way to manage this is to try and incorporate activist activities into the existing areas of your life. You can share a video on factory farming practices with your church group, for example, or ask your employer if they would consider supporting an animal rights organization at a local event.



And take a moment to pick your battles carefully. There are a lot of terrible

things going on in the world, and you're just one person. It's better to make a real difference on one issue than to spread yourself so thin that you're ineffective at all of them. Your activism could be as simple as starting a vegetarian support group or helping out at an animals rescue group, or as intensive as becoming a full-time PETA volunteer. But choose your fight, and devote yourself fully to it.

The important thing is to think carefully about how you can realistically work activism into your life. You're going to be a vegetarian for years – as excited as you may be right now to jump into serious activism, if you burn yourself out by adding even more activities to a busy life, you'll be shortchanging yourself and everyone else. You have a lot of time – do what you can, when you can, and you're still doing a lot more to help the world than most people!

### **Consider other ways you can "go green"**

Once you start eating ethically, it's a short hop to thinking about your other habits that harm the earth. You may not want to adopt a 100 percent sustainable lifestyle – and, frankly, in today's world it's almost impossible to do so – but there are a number of ways that you can lessen your impact on the environment in addition to your meat-free lifestyle:

**Reduce, reuse, recycle.** When you buy new products, ask yourself – do I really need this? Is there another product which would do the same thing but with less impact on the environment? Will this last a long time? Are the materials used to make this renewable? Buy items that are durable, maintain them, and have them repaired if possible. If you don't need something that's taking up space in your home, give it to someone who does! And recycle whenever possible to cut down on matter going to landfills.



**Treasure your resources and cut back on waste.** Fix your leaky faucets, toilets or water pipes, and install water saving faucets. Conserve fuel by

turning down the heat at night and when you're away from your home, or install a programmable thermostat. Insulate your home against heat loss and periodically check insulation. Avoid driving — walk, cycle or use public transportation whenever possible. Use rechargeable batteries for appliances that require them. Buy locally — it's good for the local economy, and it save energy because it hasn't traveled so far to get to you.

**Use less toxic substances in your home.** Use non-toxic cleaning alternatives in your home. Buy furniture made from natural fibers, wood, metal and glass. Avoid the use of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) in your home, including shower curtains, flooring, and children's toys. Avoid the use of aerosol sprays.

**Be responsible with your waste.** Don't put toxic household wastes like such as paint, paint thinner and antifreeze in the garbage or down the drain — check with your local waste facility for proper disposal. Take your own bags to the grocery store, and use plastic bags until they're completely worn out. Avoid excess packaging, and always use reusable products rather than disposable ones - plates, napkins, mugs, lunch containers, batteries, pens, and razors.

**Go green at work.** Print on both sides of the paper you use, and reduce the number of copies you print. Buy recycled, chlorine-free paper, and have a recycling box under your desk for used paper goods. Buy a permanent mesh coffee filter instead of buying disposable paper filters. Encourage your workplace to use alternative cleaning materials. Use refillable pens and pencils rather than disposable ones. Walk, ride a bike, use public transit or carpool.

**Conserve in the kitchen.** Your refrigerator uses more energy than any other appliance in your home, so try to keep energy use to a minimum — keep the temperature between 38-42F and the freezer at 0-5F. Open the refrigerator door less frequently, and clean the condenser coils at least once a year. Use electric kettles to boil water — they use half the energy as boiling water on the stove. Avoid storing food in plastic — use reusable glass containers for storing food in the refrigerator. Never microwave food in a plastic container — even 'microwavable' plastics can leech chemicals into your food when heated. Buy food in bulk whenever possible, as it's cheaper and uses less packaging. Look for products made from recycled materials, and use cloth instead of paper napkins and towels.

## You're on your way!

Thomas Edison once said, " Non-violence leads to the highest ethics, which is the goal of all evolution. Until we stop harming all other living beings, we are still savages."

You've made a wise decision by choosing a vegetarian lifestyle. Enjoy the new world of interesting foods that you'll discover, and be proud of yourself for taking an ethical, responsible path through life's great journey. It will be a fulfilling adventure that you'll enjoy for years to come. Good luck!

P.S You'll *definitely* become a vegetarian if you just follow this simple rule :

### ***Don't Ever Ever Give Up !***

Follow this rule, and you'll be happy that you did ☺

## Resources

Be sure to visit our site at <http://www.veggie123.com> to get more resources, recipes, news, or meet with other vegetarians-to-be :) . Or even talk to them at [forums.veggie123.com](http://forums.veggie123.com) ! Share your success story, problems, or just chat and make some new friends ☺ . As an admin, I'll be there every day too.

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Sincerely,

Rudy Hadisentosa