

Secrets of Healthy Vegetarian



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Introduction

We have become a health-conscious society here in the twenty-first century. As we continue to find out information about processed foods, chemical pesticides, and various nutritional contents of food, many people have become alarmed at the unhealthy make-up of some of our foods.

Some people have chosen to eat healthier cutting out fats and carbohydrates in an effort to both eat better and to control weight gain. Other people have chosen a different route. They have decided that the way to go is to eat vegetarian or vegan.

The choice to become a vegetarian or vegan is a very personal one. The reasons people eschew meat are wide and varied. It's not always an easy lifestyle either. Problems can abound especially when attending events or eating out.

Many people consider vegetarians to be an odd sort and can't imagine how they can give up comfort foods like cheeseburgers and fried chicken. For some of us, not eating meat is inconceivable. But for those people who have embraced the vegetarian lifestyle, they report that they really don't miss meat in their diet.

Some who are considering going vegetarian worry about getting enough nutrition in their diets for a healthy life? There are ways to get the protein and nutrition you need to be healthy without eating meat or chicken.

Others are concerned about whether or not to include their children in this way of eating. Should you keep meat away from your child or will that affect their health in an adverse way?

The good news is that if you have decided that living as a vegetarian might be for you, you've found this book! Inside these pages, we'll address many of these issues that might have you concerned.

We'll guide you toward successfully becoming a vegetarian and show you ways that you can live a healthy lifestyle without eating meat. It's not as difficult as you might think.

As we've said, making this decision is a very personal one, so read this book and then decide for yourself. We've put together a book that can help you make that choice – or not make the choice. Let this be your guidebook toward becoming a vegetarian!

Chapter 1 - What is a Vegetarian

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A vegetarian is someone who does not eat meat, fish, poultry or any slaughterhouse by-product such as gelatin. Vegetarians live on a diet of grains, nuts, seeds, vegetables and fruit, with or without free-range eggs, milk and milk products.

A vegetarian does not eat any meat, poultry, game, fish, shellfish or crustacean, or slaughter by-products such as animal fats. Vegetarians not eating anything containing dairy products or eggs are called vegans.

You might be surprised to know that there are many different types of vegetarians.

- Lacto-ovo-vegetarian: Eats both dairy products and eggs. This is the most common type of vegetarian diet.

- Lacto-vegetarian: Eats dairy products but not eggs.

- **Vegan:** Does not eat dairy products, eggs, or any other animal product.

- **Fruitarian.** A type of vegan diet where very few processed or cooked foods are eaten. Consists mainly of raw fruit, grains and nuts. Fruitarians believe only plant foods that can be harvested without killing the plant should be eaten.

- **Macrobiotic:** A diet followed for spiritual and philosophical reasons. Aims to maintain a balance between foods seen as ying (positive) or yang (negative). The diet progresses through ten levels, becoming increasingly restrictive. Not all levels are vegetarian, though each level gradually eliminates animal products. The highest levels eliminate fruit and vegetables, eventually reaching the level of a brown rice diet.

Other terms can be used in describing various vegetarian diets, though their exact meaning can differ. The term strict vegetarian may refer to a vegan diet, though in other cases it may simply mean a lacto-ovo-vegetarian diet. The terms common or broad vegetarian may be used to refer to lacto-ovo-vegetarians. Demi-vegetarian is a term sometimes used to describe persons who eat no or little meat but may eat fish. Persons consuming fish but no meat are sometimes called pescetarians.

There really is no single vegetarian eating pattern as you can see from the definitions above. In fact, because choosing to eat as a vegetarian is such a personal decision, there are some foods you may want to include in your diet that don't fit into the pigeonhole category of vegetarian or vegan.

Most people agree that the basic definition of a vegetarian is a person who doesn't eat meat. That includes chicken, but not fish.

The reasons people choose to eat vegetarian are as varied as the types of vegetarian diets.

Chapter 2 - Why Go Vegetarian?

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I've heard some people say that they chose to eat vegetarian because they couldn't bear to eat anything that once had a face. They were freaked out by the thought of consuming something that at one time could look them in the eye. Others don't like the thought of eating something that was killed in a violent way such as in a slaughterhouse.

Many, many years ago, people survived on what they could grow or kill. Men would kill deer, cows, and pigs to provide food for their families. The women would grow huge gardens that would provide the rest of the nutrition.

Back then, the food was pure and unprocessed. The meat was cleaned and cured without chemicals or preservatives. Vegetables and fruits were canned and saved for the winter at the hands of the settlers themselves.

Somewhere along the way, big business began changing the way food was not only distributed, but also how it was processed for human consumption. New advances in chemicals allowed food to be stored for longer periods of time when they were canned for mass production.

Initially, people just accepted the fact that processed foods were a way of life. They didn't pay much attention to the fact that chemicals were being used to store these foods and went blissfully about their daily lives.

Then concern began to arise as to how safe these foods really were. Studies were conducted, surveys were taken, and results were published that indicated some of these processing procedures weren't as safe as originally thought.

Some of us still don't have much concern over our processed foods, but others have taken a different turn. They have decided that eating pure and natural foods instead of processed foods are the way to go.

Let's look at some common reasons people give for eating meatless meals.

It's true that the way we process meats can begin in a not so pleasant way. Cows and pigs are taken to a slaughterhouse where they use a variety of methods to bring about the death of the animal. Horror stories include bashing the beast in the head or giving them a shot to the brain abound.

Once they are killed, the meat is often injected with preservatives that allow it to be transported and make sure it will keep during the journey. In fact, some meat processors even inject beef with a red dye to make it look more appealing to the consumer.

These two instances – the way animals are killed and the preservatives put into the meat – are reason enough for some people to give up meat. Another good reason is that meat is expensive. It is a lot cheaper to buy vegetarian foods instead of meat.

Meat – especially red meat – is often associated with higher risks of heart ailments, elevated blood pressure, and other diseases. Many experts have said that eating red meat will clog your arteries faster than any other food you might consume.

Plus, even before the animals are sent to a slaughterhouse, their diet consists of chemically processed feed and eating plants and grass that are treated with various pesticides. They are also often injected with artificial hormones to increase meat production. This can't be healthy – for anyone!

Many animals are also infected with diseases due to poor living conditions. Mad cow disease is a very real illness that causes dire circumstances even death.

Vegetarians also worry about the amount of natural resources that are required in raising meat for food. Time magazine reports that it takes up the following resources just to make one hamburger:

- 2 pounds of grain feed
- 55 square feet of grazing land
- 210 gallons of water

Of course, there can be little doubt that eating a vegetarian diet is a healthier way to eat. Medical studies have proven that a vegetarian diet is easier to digest, provide a wider range of nutrients, and imposes fewer burdens and impurities on the body.

Vegetarians are less susceptible to major diseases that afflict present-day society. As a result, they live longer, are healthier, and enjoy very productive lives.

Vegetarians have fewer physical complaints, make less frequent visits to a doctor, fewer dental problems, and thus smaller medical bills. Their immune system is stronger, their bodies are more refined, and their physical appearance is better.

Whatever the reason, most people choose a vegetarian diet for health reasons. It's just a more productive and less invasive way to eat that gives way more benefits than not.

A huge myth among non-vegetarian eaters is that vegetarians are not able to get enough nutrients without meat products. This is simply not true.

Chapter 3 - Getting Enough Nutrition

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Human beings need certain nutrients to live and thrive. Certain components of food help our bodies not only operate more efficiently, but keep us from getting sick. Protein, calcium, and vitamins are all contained in our foods. How do vegetarians get these nutrients if they are cutting out foods that provide them?

A well balanced vegetarian diet can provide all the nutrients your body needs and there is much scientific evidence to indicate vegetarians may be healthier than meat-eaters.

A vegetarian diet is healthy because it is typically low in saturated and total fat, high in dietary fiber and complex carbohydrates and high in protective minerals and vitamins present in fresh fruit and vegetables.

There are six food groups in the vegetarian diet. They include:

- Cereals/grains - wheat (bread & pasta), oats, maize, barley, rye, rice, etc. Potatoes are a useful cereal alternative.
- Pulses - kidney beans, baked beans, chick peas, lentils, etc.
- Nuts & Seeds - almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, etc.
- Fruit & vegetables.
- Dairy products or Soya products - tofu, tempeh, soya protein etc.
- Vegetable oils and fats - margarine or butter.

Nutrients are usually divided into five classes: carbohydrates, proteins, fats (including oil), vitamins and minerals. We also need fiber and water. All are equally important to our well-being, although they are needed in varying quantities, from about 250g of carbohydrate a day to less than two micrograms of vitamin B12. Carbohydrate, fat and protein are usually called macro-nutrients and the vitamins and minerals are usually called micro-nutrients.

Most foods contain a mixture of nutrients (there are a few exceptions, like pure salt or sugar) but it is convenient to classify them by the main nutrient they provide. Still, it is worth remembering that everything you eat gives you a whole range of essential nutrients.

Meat supplies protein, fat, some B vitamins and minerals (mostly iron, zinc, potassium and phosphorous). Fish, in addition to the above, supplies vitamins A, D, and E, and the mineral iodine. All these nutrients can be easily obtained by vegetarians from other sources.

Protein is very important in the diet. Women need about 45g of protein a day (more if pregnant, lactating or very active), men need about 55g (more if very active). Evidence suggests that excess protein contributes to degenerative diseases.

How do vegetarians get ample protein in their diets? From the following sources:

- Nuts: hazels, brazils, almonds, cashews, walnuts, pine kernels etc.
- Seeds: sesame, pumpkin, sunflower, linseeds.
- Pulses: peas, beans, lentils, peanuts.
- Grains/cereals: wheat (in bread, flour, pasta etc), barley, rye, oats, millet, maize (sweet corn), rice.
- Soya products: tofu, tempeh, textured vegetable protein, veggie burgers, soya milk.
- Dairy products: milk, cheese, yoghurt (butter and cream are very poor sources of protein).
- Free range eggs.

You may have heard that it is necessary to balance the complementary amino acids in a vegetarian diet. This is not as alarming as it sounds. Amino acids are the units from which proteins are made. There are 20 different ones in all. We can make many of them in our bodies by converting other amino acids, but eight cannot be made, they have to be provided in the diet and so they are called essential amino acids.

Single plant foods do not contain all the essential amino acids we need in the right proportions, but when we mix plant foods together, any deficiency in one is cancelled out by any excess in the other. We mix protein foods all the time, whether we are meat-eaters or vegetarians. It is a normal part of the human way of eating. A few examples are beans on toast, muesli, or rice and peas. Adding

dairy products or eggs also adds the missing amino acids, e.g. macaroni cheese, quiche, porridge.

It is now known that the body has a pool of amino acids so that if one meal is deficient, it can be made up from the body's own stores. Because of this, we don't have to worry about complementing amino acids all the time, as long as our diet is generally varied and well-balanced. Even those foods not considered high in protein are adding some amino acids to this pool.

Carbohydrates are the body's main source of energy. Most of our carbohydrates are provided by plant food. There are three main types: simple sugars, complex carbohydrates or starches and dietary fiber.

The sugars or simple carbohydrates can be found in fruit, milk and ordinary table sugar. Refined sources of sugar are best avoided as they provide energy without any associated fiber, vitamins or minerals and they are also the main cause of dental decay.

Complex carbohydrates are found in cereals/grains (bread, rice, pasta, oats, barley, millet, buckwheat, rye) and some root vegetables, such as potatoes and parsnips. A healthy diet should contain plenty of these starchy foods as a high intake of complex carbohydrate is now known to benefit health. The unrefined carbohydrates, like whole meal bread and brown rice are best of all because they contain essential dietary fiber and B vitamins.

The World Health Organization recommends that 50-70% of energy should come from complex carbohydrates. The exact amount of carbohydrate that you need depends upon your appetite and also your level of activity. Contrary to previous belief a slimming diet should not be low in carbohydrates. In fact starchy foods are very filling relative to the number of calories that they contain.

We also need fiber in our diets to keep our bodies regular and eliminate waste effectively. Dietary fiber or non-starch polysaccharide (NSP), as it is now termed, refers to the indigestible part of a carbohydrate food. Fiber can be found in unrefined or wholegrain cereals, fruit (fresh and dried) and vegetables. A good intake of dietary fiber can prevent many digestive problems and protect against diseases like colon cancer and diverticular disease.

Too much fat is bad for us, but a little is necessary to keep our tissues in good repair, for the manufacture of hormones and to act as a carrier for some vitamins. Like proteins, fats are made of smaller units, called fatty acids. Two of these fatty acids, linoleic and linolenic acids, are termed essential as they must be provided in the diet. This is no problem as they are widely found in plant foods.

Fats can be either saturated or unsaturated (mono-unsaturated or poly-unsaturated). A high intake of saturated fat can lead to a raised blood cholesterol level and this has been linked to heart disease. Vegetable fats tend to be more unsaturated and this is one of the benefits of a vegetarian diet. Mono-unsaturated fats, such as olive oil or peanut oil, are best used for frying as the poly-unsaturated fats, like sunflower or safflower oil are unstable at high temperatures. Animal fats (including butter and cheese) tend to be more saturated than vegetable fats, with the exception of palm oil and coconut oil.

Vitamin is the name for several unrelated nutrients that the body cannot synthesize either at all, or in sufficient quantities. The one thing they have in common is that only small quantities are needed in the diet. The main vegetarian sources are listed below:

- **Vitamin A (or beta carotene):** Red, orange or yellow vegetables like carrots and tomatoes, leafy green vegetables and fruits like apricots and peaches. It is added to most margarines.

- **B Vitamins:** This group of vitamins includes B1 (thiamin), B2 (riboflavin), B3 (niacin), B6 (pyridoxine), B12 (cyanocobalmin), folate, pantothenic acid and biotin.

All the B vitamins except B12 occur in yeasts and whole cereals (especially wheat germ), nuts & seeds, pulses and green vegetables.

Vitamin B12 is the only one that may cause some difficulty as it is not present in plant foods. Only very tiny amounts of B12 are needed and vegetarians usually get this from dairy produce and free range eggs. It is sensible for vegans and vegetarians who consume few animal foods to incorporate some B12 fortified foods in their diet. Vitamin B12 is added to yeast extracts, soya milks, veggie burgers and some breakfast cereals.

- **Vitamin C:** Fresh fruit, salad vegetables, all leafy green vegetables and potatoes.
- **Vitamin D:** This is vitamin is not found in plant foods but humans can make their own when skin is exposed to sunlight. It is also added to most margarine and is present in milk, cheese and butter. These sources are usually adequate for healthy adults. The very young, the very old and anyone confined indoors would be wise to take a vitamin D supplement especially if they consume very few dairy products.
- **Vitamin E:** Vegetable oil, wholegrain cereals, eggs.
- **Vitamin K:** Fresh vegetables, cereals and bacterial synthesis in the intestine.

Minerals perform a variety of jobs in the body. Details of the some of the most important minerals are listed below:

- **Calcium:** Important for healthy bones and teeth. Found in dairy produce, leafy green vegetables, bread, tap water in hard water areas, nuts and seeds (especially sesame seeds), dried fruits, cheese. Vitamin D helps calcium to be absorbed.
- **Iron:** Needed for red blood cells. Found in leafy green vegetables, whole meal bread, molasses, eggs, dried fruits (especially apricots and figs), lentils and pulses. Vegetable sources of iron are not as easily absorbed as animal sources, but a good intake of vitamin C will enhance absorption.
- **Zinc:** Plays a major role in many enzyme reactions and the immune system. Found in green vegetables, cheese, sesame and pumpkin seeds, lentils and wholegrain cereals.
- **Iodine:** Present in vegetables, but the quantity depends on how rich the soil is in iodine. Dairy products also have plenty of iodine. Sea vegetables are a good source of iodine for vegans.

Let's look a little more in-depth at some of these foods that everyone needs for a healthy lifestyle.

Calcium

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Calcium is the most abundant mineral in the human body. Of the body's total calcium; about 99% is in the bones and teeth where it plays a structural role. The

remaining 1% is present in body tissues and fluids where it is essential for cell metabolism, muscle contraction and nerve impulse transmission.

The main function of calcium is structural. The skeleton of a young adult male contains about 1.2 kg of calcium. There is continuous movement of calcium between the skeleton and blood and other parts of the body. This is finely controlled by hormones. Metabolites of Vitamin D are important in this, increasing re-absorption of calcium by bones.

Calcium also plays a role in cell biology. Calcium can bind to a wide range of proteins altering their biological activity. This is important in nerve impulse transmission and muscle contraction. Calcium is also needed for blood clotting, activating clotting factors.

Vitamin D is needed for absorption of dietary calcium and so calcium deficiency may be linked with rickets in children. In adults, calcium deficiency may lead to osteomalacia (softening of bones). This may be related to repeated pregnancy with lengthy breast feeding.

Osteoporosis can be due to calcium deficiency. This involves loss of calcium from the bones and reduced bone density. This causes bones to be brittle and liable to fracture. Bone loss occurs with age in all individuals. This usually occurs after 35-40 years and involves the shrinking of the skeleton. Bone loss is greatest in women following the menopause. This is due to reduced levels of the hormone, oestrogen. Postmenopausal women are particularly at risk from osteoporosis.

Some research has indicated vegetarian women are at less risk of osteoporosis than omnivorous women. This is thought to be due to animal protein increasing calcium loss from bones. However, other research has found no difference between vegetarians and omnivores.

The risk of osteoporosis may be altered by factors other than diet. Lack of exercise, being underweight, smoking and alcohol can all increase the risk.

A low level of calcium in the blood and tissues can cause hypocalcaemia. This involves sensations of tingling and numbness and muscle twitches. In severe cases muscle spasms may occur. This is called tetany. It is more likely to be due to a hormonal imbalance in the regulation of calcium rather than a dietary deficiency.

Excess calcium in the blood can cause nausea, vomiting and calcium deposition in the heart and kidneys. This usually results from excessive doses of vitamin D and can be fatal in infants.

Calcium is present in a wide range of foods. Dairy products, leafy green vegetables, nuts and seeds (almonds, brazil nuts, sesame seeds), tofu, and dried fruit are all good sources of calcium for vegetarians. Most flour is fortified with calcium carbonate so cereals can also be a good source. Hard water may also provide calcium. Meat is a very poor source of calcium.

Calcium balance can be affected by a range of other factors. Vitamin D is essential for absorption of calcium from the gut. This is because calcium is transported into the body by a special carrier protein which requires vitamin D for its synthesis.

A number of substances can inhibit the absorption of calcium. Phytic acid, found in bran, whole cereals and raw vegetables is one of these. Uronic acid, a component of dietary fiber, and oxalic acid, found in certain fruits and vegetables can also bind calcium. However, diets habitually high in these acids are not

thought to have a major effect on calcium absorption. Saturated fats can also lessen calcium absorption.

Calcium is lost in the feces, urine and sweat. Calcium loss is roughly equal to dietary calcium in adults. Calcium loss is reduced if dietary calcium is low. Adaptation to both high and low calcium intakes occur. Reduced intake leads to increased efficiency of absorption. In infants and children calcium is retained for new bone growth. Calcium is also lost during lactation in breast milk.

Here are some good sources of calcium:

- Tofu
- Cheddar cheese
- Cow's milk
- Boiled spinach
- Dried figs
- Soy cheese
- Boiled chick peas
- Baked beans

During pregnancy, calcium absorption from the gut increases and no additional calcium is generally needed. Pregnant adolescents are an exception to this, having particularly high calcium needs.

Breast feeding women need extra calcium. A lactating woman can lose up to 300 mg a calcium/day in breast milk. Therefore, it is important that the vegetarian woman who is breast feeding or lactating get plenty of calcium.

Calcium absorption decreases with age so it is important the elderly have adequate dietary calcium.

Fats and Cholesterol

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Fats provide a concentrated source of energy in the diet. The building blocks of fats are called fatty acids. These can be either saturated, monounsaturated or poly-unsaturated. Foods rich in saturated fats are usually of animal origin. Vegetable fats are generally unsaturated.

Saturated fat raises the level of cholesterol in the blood. Cholesterol is present in animal foods but not plant foods. It is essential for metabolism but is not needed in the diet as our bodies can produce all that is needed. Raised blood cholesterol is associated with an increased risk of heart disease.

Fats and oils are essentially the same. Fats tend to be solid at room temperature whilst oils are liquid. The term lipids include both fats and oils.

Fats consist of fatty acids and glycerol. Nearly all the fats in our bodies and in foods are triglycerides, being made up of three fatty acid molecules to one glycerol molecule. There are about 16 different fatty acids commonly present in foods. The nature of fat depends on its constituent fatty acids.

Fats can be classed as either saturated, monounsaturated or polyunsaturated. This depends on the type of chemical bonds present in the fatty acid.

If a fatty acid has all the hydrogen atoms it can hold it is termed saturated. However, if some of the hydrogen atoms are absent and the usual single bond between carbon atoms has been replaced by a double bond, then it is unsaturated. If there is just one double bond then it is monounsaturated. If there is more than one then it is polyunsaturated. Most fats contain a proportion of each of these

three basic types of fatty acid but are generally described according to which type predominates.

Saturated fats tend to be animal fats and are solid at room temperature. Butter, lard, suet and meat fat are saturated fats. Unsaturated fats are liquid at room temperature. They are usually of plant origin, though fish oils may also be high in polyunsaturated fatty acids. Plant oils may be hardened by the addition of hydrogen atoms, converting double bonds to single bonds. This process is known as hydrogenation. Hydrogenated vegetable oils are often present in margarine and other processed foods.

Fats have a number of important functions in the body. As well as being a concentrated source of energy, fats act as carriers for fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K. Fats are also essential for the structure of cell membranes and are precursors of many hormones.

Two fatty acids are termed essential fatty acids. These are linoleic acid and α -linolenic acid. These must be present in the diet as the body is unable to make them itself. They are widely present in plant oils such as sunflower, rapeseed and soyabean oils.

Linoleic acid is converted into the body to arachidonic acid from which prostoglandins and other vital compounds are made. Because of this conversion, arachidonic acid is not an essential fatty acid as was once believed. α -Linolenic acid is converted to eicosapentanoic acid (EPA) which is important in proper nerve function.

EPA is present in fish oils and is claimed to be beneficial in reducing the symptoms of arthritis and the risk of heart disease. For this reason, fish oils are sometimes used therapeutically. Plant oils containing large amounts of α -

linolenic acid can be used as an alternative by vegetarians. Linseeds and linseed oil are particularly rich sources of a-linolenic acid.

Cholesterol belongs to the sterol group of fats. It is present in all animal tissues but is absent from plants. Cholesterol is essential as a component of cell membranes and a precursor of bile acids and certain hormones. The body can make its own cholesterol and so a dietary source is not required.

Cholesterol is transported in to various proteins. These complex molecules are called lipoproteins. There are four main types of lipoprotein involved in cholesterol transport. The most commonly refer red to are low density lipoprotein (LDL) and high density lipoprotein (HDL).

Cholesterol may form plaques on artery walls if levels in the blood are too high. This can lead to atherosclerosis. Because of this high blood cholesterol is linked with heart disease. It is the LDL cholesterol which has been linked to heart disease. HDL cholesterol may help protect against the risk of heart disease.

The amount of dietary cholesterol is not clearly linked to levels of cholesterol in the blood. Blood cholesterol is more closely related to the amount of saturated fat in the diet, saturated fat raising blood cholesterol. Unsaturated fats are not thought to raise blood cholesterol and may indeed lower levels.

Unsaturated fatty acids can exist in two different geometric forms. These are called the cis and transforms. Unsaturated fatty acids exist naturally in the cis form. During food manufacturing processes these cis fatty acids may be changed to trans fatty acids. Hydrogenation of margarine causes this to occur. It has been suggested that trans-fatty acids can increase the risk of heart disease.

Free radicals are highly reactive molecules which have been linked to both heart disease and cancer. A number of factors, including alcohol, stress and environmental pollutants can increase the generation of free radicals in the body.

Polyunsaturated fats can also generate free radicals, especially when exposed to heat or sunlight. Because of this it is suggested that vegetable oils should be stored out of direct sunlight. Mono-unsaturated olive oil is less vulnerable to free radical generation and so is a better choice for frying.

Anti-oxidants such as vitamins A, C and E offer protection against free radicals. Fresh fruit and vegetables are rich in these anti-oxidants.

Saturated fats are nearly always from animal foods. Meat, eggs and dairy products all contain saturated fats. Lard and suet are saturated fats. Coconut oil and palm oil are vegetable sources of saturated fats. Olive oil is a monounsaturated fat. Polyunsaturated fats are usually from plant sources.

The ratio of polyunsaturated to saturated fats in the diet is often called the P:S ratio.

Cholesterol is present in all animal foods but not plant foods. Egg yolks and high-fat dairy products are high in cholesterol.

Currently it is believed that around 42% of energy in the typical diet is from fat. Dietary advice is to reduce this. The COMA (Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy) report advocated that no more than 35% of daily energy requirement should come from fat whilst the NACNE (National Advisory Committee on Nutritional Education) paper recommends a reduction to no more than 30%. Special emphasis is placed on reducing the amount of saturated fat in the diet.

Vegetarian diets tend to be lower in fat than omnivore diets. However, vegetarians consuming dairy products and processed foods high in fat may still be consuming too much. Advice to vegetarians is to keep fat intake to a minimum, avoid high fat dairy products and processed foods containing dairy fats and hydrogenated vegetable fats, and to use olive oil for cooking purposes.

Iron

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Iron is an essential component of hemoglobin, transporting oxygen in the blood to all parts of the body. It also plays a vital role in many metabolic reactions. Iron deficiency can cause anemia resulting from low levels of hemoglobin in the blood. Iron deficiency is the most widespread mineral nutritional deficiency worldwide.

Iron is essential for the formation of hemoglobin, the red pigment in blood. The iron in hemoglobin combines with oxygen and transports it through the blood to the body's tissues and organs. The body contains between 3.5 and 4.5g of iron, 2/3 of which is present in hemoglobin. The remainder is stored in the liver, spleen and bone-marrow. A small amount is present as myoglobin, which acts as an oxygen store in muscle tissue.

Iron deficiency can lead to anemia. Iron stores in the body become depleted and hemoglobin synthesis is inhibited. Symptoms of anemia include tiredness, lack of stamina, breathlessness, headaches, insomnia, loss of appetite and pallor. All these symptoms are associated with decreased oxygen supply to tissues and organs.

Iron also plays an important role in the immune system, people with low iron levels having lowered resistance to infection. Research has also shown iron

deficiency to be associated with impaired brain function, and iron deficiency in infants can result in impaired learning ability and behavioral problems.

Iron deficiency is the most prevalent nutritional problem worldwide. It has been stated that 2/3 of children and women of child-bearing age in developing countries suffer from iron deficiency, 1/3 suffering from severe deficiency and anemia. In developed countries, between 10-20% of child-bearing age women are said to be anemic.

Dietary iron exists in two different forms. Haem iron only exists in animal tissues, whilst in plant foods iron is present as non-haem iron. In a mixed omnivore diet around 25% of dietary iron is non-haem iron. Non-haem iron is less easily absorbed by the body than is haem iron. The amount of iron absorbed from various foods ranges from around 1 to 10% from plant foods and 10 to 20% from animal foods.

The absorption of iron is influenced by other constituents of a meal. Phytates, oxalates and phosphates present in plant foods can inhibit absorption, as can tannin in tea. Fiber may also inhibit absorption. Vitamin C greatly increases the absorption of non-haem iron.

Foods rich in vitamin C include citrus fruits, green peppers, and fresh leafy green vegetables. Citric acid, sugars, amino acids and alcohol can also promote iron absorption. Iron absorption can also be influenced by the amount of iron in the diet. Lowered levels of iron in the diet result in improved absorption.

Good sources of iron for vegetarians include wholegrain cereals and flours, leafy green vegetables, blackstrap molasses, pulses such as lentils and kidney beans, and some dried fruits.

Despite iron from plant foods being less readily absorbed research has shown that vegetarians are no more likely to suffer from iron deficiency than non-vegetarians. Draper & Wheeler (1989) have stated there is no indication of increased prevalence of iron deficiency amongst vegetarians. Anderson (1981) found the iron status of long-term vegetarian women to be adequate, despite a high intake of fiber and phytate.

Protein

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Being vegetarian does not mean your diet will be lacking in protein. Most plant foods contain protein and in fact it would be very difficult to design a vegetarian diet that is short on protein. Excess dietary protein may lead to health problems. It is now thought that one of the benefits of a vegetarian diet is that it contains adequate but not excessive protein.

Proteins are made up of smaller units called amino acids. There are about 20 different amino acids, eight of which must be present in the diet. These are the essential amino acids. Unlike animal proteins, plant proteins may not contain all the essential amino acids in the necessary proportions. However, a varied vegetarian diet means a mixture of proteins are consumed, the amino acids in one protein compensating for the deficiencies of another.

Proteins are highly complex molecules comprised of linked amino acids. Amino acids are simple compounds containing carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen and occasionally sulphur. There are about 20 different amino acids commonly found in plant and animal proteins. Amino acids link together to form chains called peptides. A typical protein may contain 500 or more amino acids. Each protein has its own unique number and sequence of amino acids which determines its particular structure and function.

Proteins are broken down into their constituent amino acids during digestion which are then absorbed and used to make new proteins in the body. Certain amino acids can be made by the human body. However, the essential amino acids cannot be made and so they must be supplied in the diet. The eight essential amino acids required by humans are: leucine, isoleucine, valine, threonine, methionine, phenylalanine, tryptophan, and lysine. For children, histidine is also considered to be an essential amino acid.

Proteins are essential for growth and repair. They play a crucial role in virtually all biological processes in the body. All enzymes are proteins and are vital for the body's metabolism. Muscle contraction, immune protection, and the transmission of nerve impulses are all dependent on proteins. Proteins in skin and bone provide structural support.

Many hormones are proteins. Protein can also provide a source of energy. Generally the body uses carbohydrate and fat for energy but when there is excess dietary protein or inadequate dietary fat and carbohydrate, protein is used. Excess protein may also be converted to fat and stored.

Most foods contain at least some protein. Good sources of protein for vegetarians include nuts and seeds, pulses, soya products (tofu, soya milk and textured soya protein such as soya mince), cereals (wheat, oats, and rice), free-range eggs and some dairy products (milk, cheese and yoghurt).

Different foods contain different proteins, each with their own unique amino acid composition. The proportions of essential amino acids in foods may differ from the proportions needed by the body to make proteins. The proportion of each of the essential amino acids in foods containing protein determines the quality of that protein.

Dietary proteins with all the essential amino acids in the proportions required by the body are said to be a high quality protein. If the protein is low in one or more of the essential amino acids the protein is of a lower quality. The amino acid that is in shortest supply is called the limiting amino acid.

Protein quality is usually defined according to the amino acid pattern of egg protein, which is regarded as the ideal. As such, it is not surprising that animal proteins, such as meat, milk and cheese tend to be of a higher protein quality than plant proteins. This is why plant proteins are sometimes referred to as low quality proteins.

Many plant proteins are low in one of the essential amino acids. For instance, grains tend to be short of lysine whilst pulses are short of methionine. This does not mean that vegetarians or vegans go short on essential amino acids. By combining plant proteins, such as a grain with a pulse, leads to a high quality protein which is just as good and in some cases better, than protein from animal foods. Soya is a high quality protein on its own which can be regarded as equal to meat protein.

The limiting amino acid tends to be different in different proteins. This means when two different foods are combined, the amino acids in one protein can compensate for the one lacking in the other. This is known as protein complementing.

Vegetarians and vegans eating a well-balanced diet based on grains, pulses, seeds, nuts and vegetables will be consuming a mixture of proteins that complement one another naturally without requiring any planning. Beans on toast, cheese or peanut butter sandwich, muesli with milk (soya or cow's), and rice with peas or beans are all common examples of protein complementing.

Previously, it has been thought that protein complementing needed to occur within a single meal. However, it is now known that this is not necessary as the body keeps a short-term store of the essential amino acids. A well-balanced vegetarian or vegan will easily supply all the protein and essential amino acids needed by the body.

Here are some good sources of protein:

- Chick peas
- Baked beans
- Tofu
- Cow's milk
- Lentils
- Soy milk
- Muesli
- Boiled egg
- Peanuts
- Bread
- Hard cheese

Increased protein needs during pregnancy and breast feeding are usually met simply by the extra calories from more food. Because infants and children are growing they require more protein than adults (proportional to their body weight). Children on a balanced diet usually get enough protein as long as they are getting enough energy (or calories).

Contrary to popular belief athletes and those who engage in a lot of exercise do not necessarily need extra protein as the extra energy required for strenuous

activity is best supplied by carbohydrates. The extra protein needs of a body builder can usually be supplied by an increased energy intake from more food.

While vegetarian diets usually meet or exceed protein requirements, they are typically lower in total intake of protein than non-vegetarian diets. This lower protein intake may well be beneficial as high protein intake has been associated with osteoporosis and aggravating poor or failing kidney functioning.

Vitamin B-12

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Vitamin B12 is a member of the vitamin B complex. It contains cobalt, and so is also known as cobalamin. It is exclusively synthesized by bacteria and is found primarily in meat, eggs and dairy products.

There has been considerable research into proposed plant sources of vitamin B12. Fermented soya products, seaweeds, and algae such as spirulina have all been suggested as containing significant B12. However, the present consensus is that any B12 present in plant foods is likely to be unavailable to humans and so these foods should not be relied upon as safe sources.

Many vegan foods are supplemented with B12. Vitamin B12 is necessary for the synthesis of red blood cells, the maintenance of the nervous system, and growth and development in children. Deficiency can cause anemia. Vitamin B12 neuropathy, involving the degeneration of nerve fibers and irreversible neurological damage, can also occur.

Vitamin B12's primary functions are in the formation of red blood cells and the maintenance of a healthy nervous system. B12 is necessary for the rapid synthesis of DNA during cell division. This is especially important in tissues where cells are

dividing rapidly, particularly the bone marrow tissues responsible for red blood cell formation.

If B12 deficiency occurs, DNA production is disrupted and abnormal cells called megaloblasts occur. This results in anemia. Symptoms include excessive tiredness, breathlessness, listlessness, pallor, and poor resistance to infection. Other symptoms can include a smooth, sore tongue and menstrual disorders. Anemia may also be due to folic acid deficiency, folic acid also being necessary for DNA synthesis.

B12 is also important in maintaining the nervous system. Nerves are surrounded by an insulating fatty sheath comprised of a complex protein called myelin. B12 plays a vital role in the metabolism of fatty acids essential for the maintenance of myelin. Prolonged B12 deficiency can lead to nerve degeneration and irreversible neurological damage.

When deficiency occurs, it is more commonly linked to a failure to effectively absorb B12 from the intestine rather than a dietary deficiency. Absorption of B12 requires the secretion from the cells lining the stomach of a glycoprotein, known as intrinsic factor. The B12-intrinsic factor complex is then absorbed in the ileum (part of the small intestine) in the presence of calcium. Certain people are unable to produce intrinsic factor and the subsequent pernicious anemia is treated with injections of B12.

Vitamin B12 can be stored in small amounts by the body. Total body store is 2-5mg in adults. Around 80% of this is stored in the liver.

Vitamin B12 is excreted in the bile and is effectively reabsorbed. This is known as enterohepatic circulation. The amount of B12 excreted in the bile can vary from 1 to 10ug (micrograms) a day. People on diets low in B12, including vegans and

some vegetarians, may be obtaining more B12 from re-absorption than from dietary sources. Re-absorption is the reason it can take over 20 years for deficiency disease to develop in people changing to diets absent in B12. In comparison, if B12 deficiency is due to a failure in absorption it can take only 3 years for deficiency disease to occur.

The only reliable unfortified sources of vitamin B12 are meat, dairy products and eggs. There has been considerable research into possible plant food sources of B12. Fermented soya products, seaweeds and algae have all been proposed as possible sources of B12. However, analysis of fermented soya products, including tempeh, miso, shoyu and tamari, found no significant B12.

Spirulina, an algae available as a dietary supplement in tablet form, and nori, a seaweed, have both appeared to contain significant amounts of B12 after analysis. However, it is thought that this is due to the presence of compounds structurally similar to B12, known as B12 analogues. These cannot be utilized to satisfy dietary needs. Assay methods used to detect B12 are unable to differentiate between B12 and its analogues, Analysis of possible B12 sources may give false positive results due to the presence of these analogues.

Researchers have suggested that supposed B12 supplements such as spirulina may in fact increase the risk of B12 deficiency disease, as the B12 analogues can compete with B12 and inhibit metabolism.

The current nutritional consensus is that no plant foods can be relied on as a safe source of vitamin B12.

Bacteria present in the large intestine are able to synthesize B12. In the past, it has been thought that the B12 produced by these colonic bacteria could be absorbed and utilized by humans. However, the bacteria produce B12 too far

down the intestine for absorption to occur, B12 not being absorbed through the colon lining.

Human feces can contain significant B12. A study has shown that a group of Iranian vegans obtained adequate B12 from unwashed vegetables which had been fertilized with human manure. Fecal contamination of vegetables and other plant foods can make a significant contribution to dietary needs, particularly in areas where hygiene standards may be low. This may be responsible for the lack of anemia due to B12 deficiency in vegan communities in developing countries.

Good sources of vitamin B12 for vegetarians are dairy products or free-range eggs. ½ pint of milk (full fat or semi skimmed) contains 1.2 µg. A slice of vegetarian cheddar cheese (40g) contains 0.5 µg. A boiled egg contains 0.7 µg. Fermentation in the manufacture of yoghurt destroys much of the B12 present. Boiling milk can also destroy much of the B12.

Vegans are recommended to ensure their diet includes foods fortified with vitamin B12. A range of B12 fortified foods are available. These include yeast extracts, Vecon vegetable stock, veggie burger mixes, textured vegetable protein, soya milks, vegetable and sunflower margarines, and breakfast cereals.

Pregnant women are not thought to require any extra B12, though little is known about this. Lactating women need extra B12 to ensure an adequate supply in breast milk.

B12 has very low toxicity and high intakes are not thought to be dangerous.

Zinc

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The mineral zinc is present in every part of the body and has a wide range of functions. It helps with the healing of wounds and is a vital component of many enzyme reactions. Zinc is vital for the healthy working of many of the body's systems. It is particularly important for healthy skin and is essential for a healthy immune system and resistance to infection.

Zinc has a range of functions. It plays a crucial role in growth and cell division where it is required for protein and DNA synthesis, in insulin activity, in the metabolism of the ovaries and testes, and in liver function. As a component of many enzymes, zinc is involved in the metabolism of proteins, carbohydrates, lipids and energy.

Our body contains about 2-3g of zinc. There are no specific storage sites known for zinc and so a regular supply in the diet is required. Zinc is found in all parts of our body, 60% is found in muscle, 30% in bone and about 5% in our skin. Particularly high concentrations are in the prostate gland and semen. Men need more zinc than women because male semen contains 100 times more zinc than is found in the blood. The more sexually active a man the more zinc he will require. The recommended amounts of zinc for adult men are 1/3 higher than those for women.

The first signs of zinc deficiency are impairment of taste, a poor immune response and skin problems. Other symptoms of zinc deficiency can include hair

loss, diarrhea, fatigue, delayed wound healing, and decreased growth rate and mental development in infants.

It is thought that zinc supplementation can help skin conditions such as acne and eczema, prostate problems, anorexia nervosa, alcoholics and those suffering from trauma or post-surgery. It is always better to seek the advice of an expert before dosing yourself with supplements. If you choose to take a zinc supplement you should not need more than the daily recommended amount unless medical advice says otherwise

Zinc is present in a wide variety of foods, particularly in association with protein foods. A vegetarian diet often contains less zinc than a meat based diet and so it is important for vegetarians to eat plenty of foods that are rich in this vital mineral.

Good sources for vegetarians include dairy products, beans and lentils, yeast, nuts, seeds and wholegrain cereals. Pumpkin seeds provide one of the most concentrated vegetarian food sources of zinc.

Only 20% of the zinc present in the diet is actually absorbed by the body. Dietary fiber and phytic acid, found in bran, wholegrain cereals, pulses and nuts, inhibit zinc absorption. Phytic acid forms a highly insoluble complex with zinc which the body cannot absorb.

Cooking processes can reduce the adverse effects of both phytic acid and dietary fiber on zinc absorption. Baking can destroy over half the phytic acid in whole meal bread.

Zinc deficiency occurs where a large part of the diet consists of unleavened bread, such as Iran and other Middle East countries. High levels of the toxic mineral cadmium can also prevent zinc absorption because these two minerals compete

for absorption. Conversely high levels of zinc in the diet can prevent the absorption of cadmium. Various chemicals added to many processed foods can also reduce zinc absorption e.g. phosphates, EDTA. A deficiency of zinc in the diet means zinc absorption is improved.

Zinc is lost via the feces, urine, hair, skin, sweat, semen and also menstruation.

Pregnant women do need extra zinc, but it is thought that demands are met by increased absorption from the gut. Breast feeding mothers need extra zinc in their diet. Breast milk contains over 2mg of zinc in the first four months and women need an extra 6mg a day to cover these demands. Breast feeding women must include a generous serving of at least one good source of zinc in their diet each day.

The iron supplements routinely prescribed for pregnant women when there is no sign of anemia may compromise zinc status. This is because the interactions between essential minerals are complex and too much of one may cause an imbalance of another.

Excess zinc is toxic. Too much zinc will interfere with the metabolism of other minerals in the body, particularly iron and copper. Symptoms of zinc toxicity occur after ingestion of 2g or more and include nausea, vomiting and fever.

A vegetarian diet makes you a healthier person, but getting started with this new lifestyle takes not only dedication, but also some common sense.

Chapter 4 - Getting Started

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The first thing that you should do when beginning to eat as a vegetarian is to take it slow. It can be a shock to your body if you go cold turkey and give up everything meat in the first stages of this transition. You will have a larger chance of not succeeding if you do it this way initially.

Some people start out by eliminating red meat first, then poultry, then fish. Others eat vegetarian food one day a week, then two or three days and eventually every day. The important thing is to work out what will suit you and stick with it.

Learn as much as you can about nutrition and what your body needs to thrive and prosper. We've given you most of what you need to know in the above chapters, but always be a learner when it comes to your body and what you put into it.

You'll have to change your habits. If you've grown up eating meat, this can be difficult, but you can learn to stay healthy by understanding what it is your body needs. Then you can make the necessary modifications to be sure you're taking care of yourself and your nutritional needs.

As you get more confident about vegetarian food, take the next step by making sure you always buy free-range eggs and vegetarian cheese. Be careful about hidden non-veggie ingredients in foods. Educate yourself by reading labels or making all your food yourself.

Try something new. Take a fresh look around the shelves of your local supermarket and health food shop and get to know as many different vegetarian foods as possible, including meat alternatives like mince and sausages made from soya or Quorn™, tofu, pulses, cous cous and all sorts of vegetables.

Don't go it alone. Make sure you tell any vegetarian friends that you are going veggie and ask for their support and advice. Join The Vegetarian Society to make sure that you always have access to our expert advisors, information-packed quarterly magazine and discounts in all sorts of veggie-friendly places. And, to avoid any embarrassment when friends are cooking for you, remember to let them know in advance that you are vegetarian.

Be prepared to take a little teasing or snide remarks. Don't be put off by a bit of teasing or ill-informed scare stories. Vegetarians are sometimes the brunt of jokes and prejudices – usually from people who know very little about their own health and dietary needs.

Buy a vegetarian cookbook (or borrow one from your local library). Whether you need simple step by step instructions or gourmet dishes to impress your friends, there are literally hundreds of vegetarian cookbooks around. A little later in this book, we'll give you some great veggie recipes, but investing in a cook book is a great way to start.

You will want to go through your cupboards and get rid of those products that don't fit with your new vegetarian lifestyle. That includes anything made with

animal products or preservatives. Don't throw that food away. Donate it to a church or local food pantry.

Then you'll need to stock up on vegetarian friendly foods. Here's a good list to get started with:

- Lots of fresh fruit and vegetables
- Vegetable oil
- Olive oil
- Vegetable stock cubes
- Vegetarian gravy granules (check the label, many meat-flavored varieties are actually vegetarian)
- Yeast extract (e.g. marmite)
- White wine vinegar (or balsamic for a treat)
- Peanut butter
- Canned beans and pulses
- Canned tomatoes
- Canned soup
- Dried pasta
- Rice
- Quick-cook noodles
- Cous-cous
- Dried soya chunks
- Ready made pasta / curry sauces
- Dried herbs and spices
- Seeds (try sesame, pumpkin, sunflower and many others)

The list looks long, but you don't need to buy everything! In fact, your new vegetarian lifestyle shouldn't increase your weekly shopping bill because the price

of veggie ready meals and frozen foods is usually around the same or slightly cheaper than their meaty counterparts.

Once you get into the swing of things you'll probably find that your shopping bill actually goes down as the raw ingredients for many vegetarian dishes are surprisingly cheap and many also have the advantage of being much quicker to cook than meat.

Most people keep a few stock items in their kitchen cupboard or freezer. Many of the basics – bread, flour, vegetable oil, dairy products, free-range eggs, frozen chips etc – will be suitable for vegetarians

Eating vegetarian is a real culinary adventure. Once you've broken out of the conventional meat-and-two-vegetable routine, you can break all the rules, or stick with more familiar tastes if you prefer.

Many of your favorite dishes, such as spaghetti bolognese, chili, stir-fry and curries can be made with soya mince, pulses or just vegetables. Bean burgers, pizzas, veggie sausages, ratatouille, baked beans, scrambled eggs, jacket potatoes, many cheeses and all sorts of ready meals, pasta sauces and soups are all suitable for vegetarians already.

How do you handle it when you want to go out to eat as a vegetarian? It's easier than you think.

Chapter 5 - Dining Out

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For many new or wannabe vegetarians, the fear of never eating out except at a vegan or vegetarian restaurant keeps them from inviting friends out for dinner. Or worse, that fear keeps them from accepting dinner invitations from family and friends. If you find yourself in that predicament, rest assured you can eat almost anywhere and still find a satisfying vegetarian meal.

If you are going to a quality restaurant or one that is locally owned, you will almost always be able to find a vegetarian friendly meal on the menu. If not, ask your server what is available. Most chefs in quality restaurants are more than happy to whip something up. It shows their talent, feeds their ego and gets you an outstanding meal.

If you know you are going to be eating in restaurant X on Saturday, call ahead and ask if they offer vegetarian entrees and if not, can something special be prepared. Most often than not, you will get a yes.

Dine-in food chains such as Applebee's or Chili's will also most likely have meatless meals available for you to order. Most all of the better chain food restaurants have salad bars. Many have extensive, well stocked salad bars. Look at the soup bars also; many of the soups are bean based with no meat.

If not, all have something vegetarian on the menu. Even the larger steakhouse chains offer baked potatoes and side salads that can make your meal while your friends enjoy their steak and fries.

Even fast food restaurants are getting into the healthy trend. If you thought you'd never dine again under the Golden Arches, you were wrong. Most fast food chains now offer garden salads in a wide variety of different flavors. Order your salad with no meat and you're set to go. Depending on the chain, you can add a baked potato, yogurt and fruit or a number of other meatless items off the menu.

Some of your best choices when eating out are to choose ethnic restaurants such as Chinese, Japanese, or Mexican food. 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 cheese-less 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.

Don't be afraid to ask questions when you are dining out. Check with your server to see what type of oil is used and what exact ingredients are in certain dishes. If you're not comfortable with taking a chance on the veggie burger, simply order a salad or baked potato.

The choices are more diverse than what you think. Just be creative and look for foods that you will enjoy while not spoiling your new lifestyle.

What about eating in other people's homes or having people to your home for dinner?

We've all experienced it, the family member or friend that just will not accept that you've gone meatless. It's tough. Here they are worrying about your health and you are worrying about hurting their feelings. This is one time, you really do have to stand firm.

Assure the well meaning, but often misguided, loved one that you are indeed paying attention to your health. That you feel, and you have the research to back it up, that your diet is the perfect diet for you. Offer to show them websites, books and magazines so they can learn more.

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.

When having people to your home for dinner, stick to your choices and prepare a vegetarian dinner. Eggplant parmigiana or a simple spaghetti Bolognese are delicious meatless meals. Chances are good that people won't even notice that they are eating dishes that don't contain meat.

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.

You should only serve meat if you genuinely feel comfortable doing so. You can choose to prepare a separate meal in your home for your meat eating guests, but only do so if you won't be compromising your choices. If you're comfortable handling meat products and are doing it for the courtesy of your guests, by all means do that. It's a choice only you can make!

So you've decided to become a vegetarian, what about the rest of your family? There's two parts of that question that really need to be addressed here: should your children eat vegetarian and what to do if your partner doesn't want to follow your lead.

Chapter 6 - The Vegetarian Family

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Probably the most controversial part of a vegetarian lifestyle is whether or not to include your children in your new lifestyle. Those against a veggie diet for children say that you won't be able to give your child the nutrients they need to grow up healthy. This isn't necessarily true.

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.

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.

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)
- 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.

What if your partner doesn't support your vegetarian choice? This can be a very sticky situation - especially if you have a husband or wife who loves a nice juicy steak on a regular basis.

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.

Here are a few things for you to consider:

- **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!

You are likely to encounter people who are less than supportive of your diet choices. Although vegetarians aren't looked down upon today as much as in the past, there will still be people who think that your new lifestyle is a weird one.

Chapter 7 - Defending Your Choice

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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 enjoying 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!

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.

The vegetarian lifestyle will be most difficult for the non-vegetarian. A little compromise and understanding can go a long way. If your partner has decided to go vegetarian and you don't embrace that choice, here are some helpful tips to allow you to deal with your partner's choice:

1. Try to see the positive side of your partner's diet. Recognize that she/he may be having a hard time defending his/her diet outside the home and that some support at home can be very helpful.
2. Don't say "how much easier life could be if you could just throw a steak in the oven (or on the grill)".
3. Appreciate any improved health and increased vitality your mate has due to a vegetarian diet.
4. Recognize that if you eat vegetarian food you are not compromising any principle or belief, while your spouse would be doing so if she/he ate meat. Consider, for example, that all meals served by the Israeli military are kosher, even though many Israeli soldiers do not normally keep the kosher laws, so that nobody's beliefs will be violated. (Vegetarian food is also available for Israeli vegetarian soldiers.)

5. Try to find some good vegetarian recipes that you find convenient and enjoyable, and that you can share together.

When family and friends begin to question your new meatless diet, take the opportunity to simply and matter-of-factly tell them your reason for wanting to be a vegetarian. You don't need to be an expert, you just need to speak from the heart and let them know that this is something you wanted to do for particular reason.

Becoming a vegetarian is an exciting change in your life. Learning how to cook without meat can be a daunting task, but it doesn't have to be. Here are some great recipes for you to try.

Chapter 8 - Vegetarian Recipes

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Eating meatless doesn't mean all rice cakes and soy burgers. You can have delicious meals that are healthy and meatless conforming to your vegetarian choice. Try out a few of these yummy recipes.

Potato and Bean Enchiladas

- 1 pound potatoes, peeled and diced
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon ketchup
- 1 pound fresh tomatillos, husks removed
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 bunch fresh cilantro, coarsely chopped, divided
- 2 (12 ounce) packages corn tortilla
- 1 (15.5 ounce) can pinto beans, drained
- 1 (12 ounce) package queso fresco
- Oil for frying

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F (205 degrees C). In a bowl, toss diced potatoes together with cumin, chili powder, salt, and ketchup, and place in an oiled baking dish. Bake in the preheated oven for 20 to 25 minutes, or until tender.

Meanwhile, boil tomatillos and chopped onion in water to cover for 10 minutes. Set aside to cool. Once cooled, puree with half of the cilantro until smooth.

Fry tortillas individually in a small amount of hot oil until soft.

Mix potatoes together with pinto beans, 1/2 cheese, and 1/2 cilantro. Fill tortillas with potato mixture, and roll up. Place seam side down in an oiled 9x13 inch baking dish. Spoon tomatillo sauce over enchiladas, and spread remaining cheese over sauce. Bake for 20 minutes, or until hot and bubbly.

Insanely Easy Vegetarian Chili

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 cup chopped onions
- 3/4 cup chopped carrots
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup chopped green bell pepper
- 1 cup chopped red bell pepper
- 3/4 cup chopped celery
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 1/2 cups chopped fresh mushrooms
- 1 (28 ounce) can whole peeled tomatoes with liquid, chopped
- 1 (19 ounce) can kidney beans with liquid
- 1 (11 ounce) can whole kernel corn, un-drained
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1 1/2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1 1/2 teaspoons dried basil

Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Sauté onions, carrots, and garlic until tender. Stir in green pepper, red pepper, celery, and chili powder. Cook until vegetables are tender, about 6 minutes.

Stir in mushrooms, and cook 4 minutes. Stir in tomatoes, kidney beans, and corn. Season with cumin, oregano, and basil. Bring to a boil, and reduce heat to medium. Cover, and simmer for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Potato Pancakes

- 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 fryin

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.

Black Bean Rice Burgers

- 1 (15 ounce) can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup cooked brown rice
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 6 tablespoons salsa, divided
- 1/4 cup reduced-fat sour cream
- 4 lettuce leaves
- 4 slices reduced-fat Cheddar cheese
- 4 hamburger buns, split

In a large bowl, mash beans with a fork. Add the rice, onion, egg and 2 tablespoons salsa; mix well. Drop by 1/2 cupfuls into a large nonstick skillet coated with nonstick cooking spray. Flatten to 1/2-in. thickness.

Cook over medium heat for 4-5 minutes on each side or until firm and browned.

In a small bowl, combine sour cream and remaining salsa. Place a lettuce leaf, burger, sour cream mixture and slice of cheese on bun.

Quick Pizza Sandwiches

- 1 (8 ounce) package refrigerated crescent rolls
- 4 slices mozzarella cheese
- 4 teaspoons tomato paste
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).

Unwind the roll dough, and separate into 4 rectangles. Pinch together perforations to seal. Place 2 rectangles on a 9x13 inch baking sheet. Moisten edges of rectangles with water.

Place 2 slices mozzarella on each rectangle. Top each with 2 teaspoons tomato paste. Sprinkle each with 1/4 teaspoon oregano. Cover each with remaining dough. Press the edges firmly with a fork to seal.

Bake in the preheated oven 10 to 12 minutes, or until golden brown.

Tomato Cheese Melt

- 1 onion bagel or English muffin, split
- 1/4 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 2 tomato slices
- 1 tablespoon shredded Parmesan cheese

On each bagel or muffin half, sprinkle half of the cheddar cheese and cayenne pepper. Top with a tomato slice. Sprinkle half of the Parmesan cheese over each tomato. Broil 6 in. from the heat for 4-5 minutes or until cheese is bubbly.

Caramel Popcorn

- 1 cup butter
- 2 cups brown sugar
- 1/2 cup corn syrup
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 5 quarts popped popcorn

Preheat oven to 250 degrees F (95 degrees C). Place popcorn in a very large bowl.

In a medium saucepan over medium heat, melt butter. Stir in brown sugar, corn syrup and salt. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Boil without stirring 4 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in soda and vanilla. Pour in a thin stream over popcorn, stirring to coat.

Place in two large shallow baking dishes and bake in preheated oven, stirring every 15 minutes, for 1 hour. Remove from oven and let cool completely before breaking into pieces.

Vegetable Chowder

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 large onion, sliced
- 1/4 pound zucchini, chopped
- 1 (8 ounce) can garbanzo beans, with liquid
- 1 (8 ounce) can whole peeled tomatoes with liquid, chopped
- 3/4 cup dry white wine
- 3 tablespoons butter, melted

- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 bay leaf
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- 1/2 cup grated Romano cheese

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F (200 degrees C).

Heat oil in a medium saucepan over medium heat, and saute onion until tender and lightly browned.

In a medium baking dish, mix onion, zucchini, garbanzo beans with liquid, tomatoes with liquid, wine, butter, garlic, basil, and bay leaf.

Cover, and bake in the preheated oven 30 minutes. Uncover, stir, and continue baking 30 minutes.

Stir heavy cream, Monterey Jack cheese, and Romano cheese into the vegetable mixture, and continue baking 10 minutes, until cheeses are melted and bubbly.

Mushroom and Artichoke Soup

- 4 (14 ounce) cans canned quartered artichoke hearts
- 1 cup olive oil
- 3 pounds thinly sliced shallots
- 3 small red onions, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 3/4 cup all-purpose flour

- 1/2 cup rice vinegar
- 1 gallon water
- 6 tablespoons vegetable base
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 2 tablespoons dried thyme
- 6 dried portabella mushrooms, softened in water
- 3 pounds fresh mushrooms, sliced
- 3 pounds carrots, sliced
- 3/4 cup capers
- 3/4 cup chopped fresh parsley

Place artichokes in a food processor, slice thinly and set aside. It works well when using a 3 millimeter slicing disk.

Using a extra-large stock pot sauté onions, garlic and shallots in olive oil and set on low. Cook for 15 minutes.

Sprinkle flour over onions and cook for 1 minute. Stir in vinegar and cook for approximately 3 minutes, in order for vinegar to evaporate.

Stir in water, vegetable base, salt, pepper, cayenne, nutmeg, thyme and sliced artichokes and cook for 25 minutes.

Add dried mushrooms along with the water they soaked in, fresh mushrooms and carrots. Let cook for 15 minutes.

Stir in capers and parsley, season with salt and serve.

Banana Crumb Muffins

- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 3 bananas, mashed
- 3/4 cup white sugar
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 1/3 cup butter, melted
- 1/3 cup packed brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon butter

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C). Lightly grease 10 muffin cups, or line with muffin papers.

In a large bowl, mix together 1 1/2 cups flour, baking soda, baking powder and salt. In another bowl, beat together bananas, sugar, egg and melted butter. Stir the banana mixture into the flour mixture just until moistened. Spoon batter into prepared muffin cups.

In a small bowl, mix together brown sugar, 2 tablespoons flour and cinnamon. Cut in 1 tablespoon butter until mixture resembles coarse cornmeal. Sprinkle topping over muffins.

Bake in preheated oven for 18 to 20 minutes, until a toothpick inserted into center of a muffin comes out clean.

Clone of a Cinnabon

- 1 cup warm milk (110 degrees F/45 degrees C)
- 2 eggs, room temperature
- 1/3 cup margarine, melted
- 4 1/2 cups bread flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 2 1/2 teaspoons bread machine yeast
- 1 cup brown sugar, packed
- 2 1/2 tablespoons ground cinnamon
- 1/3 cup butter, softened
- 1 (3 ounce) package cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 cup butter, softened
- 1 1/2 cups confectioners' sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/8 teaspoon salt

Place ingredients in the pan of the bread machine in the order recommended by the manufacturer. Select dough cycle; press Start.

After the dough has doubled in size turn it out onto a lightly floured surface, cover and let rest for 10 minutes. In a small bowl, combine brown sugar and cinnamon.

Roll dough into a 16x21 inch rectangle. Spread dough with 1/3 cup butter and sprinkle evenly with sugar/cinnamon mixture. Roll up dough and cut into 12 rolls. Place rolls in a lightly greased 9x13 inch baking pan. Cover and let rise until

nearly doubled, about 30 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 400 degrees F (200 degrees C).

Bake rolls in preheated oven until golden brown, about 15 minutes. While rolls are baking, beat together cream cheese, 1/4 cup butter, confectioners' sugar, vanilla extract and salt. Spread frosting on warm rolls before serving.

An Amazing Breakfast Scramble

Cheese sauce:

- 1/2 cup flour
- 1/2 cup nutritional yeast
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 2 cups water
- 1 teaspoon yellow mustard
- 4 tablespoons or less of vegan margarine

Stir fry:

- 1/2 onion
- 1/2 green pepper
- 1 tub drained and crumbled extra firm tofu (not silken style)
- Cooking oil
- Turmeric (optional)
- Salt and pepper to taste

Make Cheese Sauce:

Mix first 3 ingredients together in sauce pan. Add water and mix thoroughly. Heat on Med until thick and bubbly. Remove from heat and add mustard and margarine. Set aside.

Stir Fry:

Sauté onion and green pepper in oil. When they are good and soft, move them to the sides of the pan and form an empty circle in the middle for your tofu. Add more oil to the middle of the pan, then add your drained, crumbled tofu (don't use silken, use extra firm). When it starts to get golden, mix in the peppers and onion and keep frying. You can add some turmeric for color if you like.

When it looks like you could eat it, add the yeast and sauce and mix it all in to coat until that becomes golden brown too. Sauté this for another couple of minutes.

Add salt and pepper to taste.

YUMMY VEGGIE POT PIE

- 1 frozen pie shell, or fresh dough if you have time
- 2-3 cups veggie broth
- 1-2 potatoes
- 3 medium carrots
- A variety of veggies such as green beans, zucchini, mushrooms, or just about anything.
- 1 package frozen spinach
- Vegan grated or sliced cheddar to cover pan in two layers
- Lots of good spices: garlic, cumin, tarragon, or whatever you like.

Thaw pie shell and take 1/2 out of the tin. Meanwhile, cook chopped veggies (NOT spinach, just keep it till later).

Cook in microwave or oven till about 3/4 cooked.

To make sauce, heat broth in large kettle, add spices, and lower heat. Add slowly either cornstarch or flour till slightly thickened. You can add dairy free milk and use veggie bouillon cubes. Add cooked veggies and coat them w/sauce.

Meanwhile, layer 1/2 cheese on bottom of lower crust. Spoon in veggies and sauce, then add spinach on top. Add rest of cheese on top of that, and close it up as best as you can w/ the torn top shell.

Bake at 400 for about 45 min, till crust is brown and delicious cheese and juice oozes out.

Cheesy Bean and Cheese Enchiladas

- 1/2c flour
- 1/2c nutritional yeast
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 2 cup water
- 1 teaspoon mustard
- 4 tablespoon margarine
- 10 tortillas
- 2 small cans enchilada sauce
- 3 cans beans (white kidney, pinto, black), drained
- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 1 can olives, chopped
- 1/4 cup chopped cilantro, 1/2 cup salsa (optional)

In medium-large saucepan, combine flour, nutritional yeast, salt and garlic powder. Add water and mix thoroughly. Heat on medium heat until bubbling and thick.

Remove from heat and add mustard and margarine. Set aside 1/2 cup of cheese sauce in separate container. Add onion, beans, olives, cilantro and salsa to sauce. Mix it up.

Pour a 1/2 cup of enchilada sauce in the bottom of a 9x13 pan. Place a tortilla in pan and cover in enchilada sauce. Spoon in filling. Roll and push to one end of pan. Continue until all tortillas filled. Pour the rest of the enchilada sauce on top and then spread reserved cheese sauce on as last step.

Bake at 350 until brown, 30-45 minutes.

Cheesy Lasagna

- 2-3 jars of favorite spaghetti sauce
- 1-16 oz bag of spinach leaves
- 2-3 jars of tomato sauce
- 1/2 lb. carrots
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 2 cloves minced garlic
- 1/4 cup canned low-sodium veggie broth
- 1 lb. herbed tofu
- 8 oz. vegan cream cheese
- 2 Tbsp. lemon juice
- 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
- 12 lasagna noodles, cooked
- 1/4 cup nutritional yeast (optional)

Slice carrots and steam, set aside. Add olive oil to a large skillet, place over medium-high heat until hot. Add parsley and garlic, sauté for 1 minute. Add carrots and veggie broth; simmer uncovered for 5 min. Add herbed tofu, vegan cream cheese, and lemon juice; stir well. Cook over medium heat stirring constantly until fake cheesy stuff starts to melt.

Stir in nutmeg (possibly you could add some about 1/4 C. nutritional yeast at this step, just to make it a little bit more cheesy!). Remove from heat; keep warm.

Place 3 lasagna noodles in bottom of 11x7 baking dish. spread carrot mixture over top, place 3 noodles on top of that and spread tomato sauce and spinach on top of those, repeat process until all noodles are used up... top with spaghetti sauce.

Cover and bake 15 min. at 375 degrees. Uncover and bake an additional 20-30 min. until it is thoroughly heated... use your own judgment. Usually lasagna takes about 45 minutes to cook thoroughly.

Easy Marinara Sauce

- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, sliced
- 1 (16 ounce) can crushed tomatoes
- 1/2 cup red wine
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon white sugar
- 6 leaves fresh basil leaves, torn

Heat oil in a large non-stick skillet over low heat and sauté garlic for about 2 minutes; be careful not to burn. Just as the garlic begins to turn brown, remove pan from heat.

Allow pan to cool, and add tomatoes, wine, water, salt and sugar. Cook over medium-high heat and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer, covered, about 20 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in basil.

BAKED RICE WITH CHEESE AND GREEN CHILIES

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 4 cups cooked brown rice (from about 1 1/2 cups raw)
- 8 ounces grated organic cheddar cheese or cheddar-style soy cheese
- 1 cup part-skim ricotta cheese, preferably organic
- 1 to 2 fresh jalapeño peppers, seeded and minced, or one to two 4-ounce cans chopped mild green chilies
- 1/4 cup minced fresh cilantro
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Heat the oil in a small skillet. Add the onion and sauté over low heat until lightly browned.

In a mixing bowl, combine the onion with the rice and all the remaining ingredients. Stir together thoroughly. Pour the mixture into a lightly oiled, 1 1/2-quart baking casserole.

Bake for 35 minutes, or until the top is golden brown and bubbly.

TORTILLA CASSEROLE

- One 16-ounce can pinto, pink, or black beans, drained and rinsed
- One 16--ounce can crushed tomatoes
- One 4-ounce can chopped mild green chilies
- 2 cups frozen corn kernels, thawed
- 2 scallions, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
- 8 corn tortillas
- 1 1/2 cups grated nondairy Monterey Jack, cheddar, or jalapeno cheese
- Salsa for topping

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

Combine the first 7 ingredients in a mixing bowl. Mix thoroughly.

Lightly oil a wide, 2-quart casserole dish and layer as follows: 4 tortillas, overlapping one another; half of the bean mixture; half of the cheese. Repeat the layers.

Bake the casserole for 12 to 15 minutes, or until the cheese is bubbly. Let stand for a minute or two, and then cut into squares to serve. Pass around salsa to top each serving

MOM'S "TUNA"-NOODLE CASSEROLE

- 12 ounces vegan ribbon noodles (quinoa, spelt, etc.)
- 1 tablespoon light olive oil
- 3 medium celery stalks, diced
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms
- 2 cups soy or rice milk
- 1/4 cup unbleached white flour
- 8-ounce package baked tofu, finely diced
- 2 to 3 scallions, sliced
- Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- Wheat germ for topping

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Bring water to a boil in a large pot. Add the noodles and cook until just tender, according to package directions.

In the meantime, heat the margarine or oil in a medium-sized saucepan. Add the celery dice and sauté over medium heat for 3 to 4 minutes. Add the mushrooms and continue to sauté until the mushrooms are wilted.

Pour 1 1/2 cups of the soy or rice milk into the saucepan and bring to a simmer. Combine the remaining milk with the flour in a small bowl and stir until the flour is smoothly dissolved. Slowly pour into the saucepan, stirring constantly. Simmer gently until the sauce has thickened, then remove from the heat.

When the noodles are done, drain them, and then return them to the pot. Pour in the sauce, and then add the baked tofu and scallions and season to taste with salt and pepper. Transfer the mixture to an oiled, large shallow casserole dish. Top generously with wheat germ.

Bake for 30 to 35 minutes, or until the top is golden brown and beginning to get crusty. Allow to cool for 5 minutes, and then cut into squares to serve.

TORTILLA FIESTA

- Flour tortillas, burrito- or soft taco-size, warmed or taco shells, warmed according to package direction
- One or two 16-ounce cans vegetarian refried beans (one can will make 6 to 8 burritos)
- Pre-shredded reduced-fat cheddar cheese (or grated cheddar-style soy cheese)
- Salsa of your choice
- Organic sour cream, soy yogurt, or plain low-fat yogurt
- Diced tomatoes
- Shredded lettuce
- Suggested accompaniments: Quick-cooking brown rice, cooked with a vegetable bouillon cube; black olives.

Cook some quick brown rice according to package directions; warm the refried beans in a saucepan with a little water to loosen. Place everything on the table,

letting everyone make their own burritos or tacos with any or all of the ingredients listed above.

PASTA AND ANTIPASTO

Pasta Ingredients

- pound package pasta (thin spaghetti and angel hair are quickest cooking)
- 28-ounce jar good-quality natural pasta (marinara) sauce
- 28-ounce can diced tomatoes

Antipasto: choose several from the following suggested items:

- Jarred roasted red peppers, drained
- Cured olives, black or green
- Fresh mozzarella balls or very fresh tofu, diced and sprinkled with vinaigrette
- Baby carrots
- Pre-cut broccoli or cauliflower florets
- Pepperoncini
- Cherry tomatoes
- Sliced green bell peppers and/or cut celery stalks

Suggested accompaniments: Fresh whole-grain bread and a good wine; a bowl of grated fresh Parmesan cheese (preferably organic) or Parmesan-style soy cheese to pass around.

While bringing a large pot of water to a boil and cooking the pasta, prepare a platter or two of antipasto and slice the bread.

When the pasta is done, drain it and return it to the pot. Stir in the pasta sauce (and if you've used dry pasta, the diced tomatoes). Warm up as needed.

Serve the pasta on individual plates and let everyone take what they wish from the antipasto platters. Pass around the Parmesan cheese for topping the pasta.

SPINACH AND FETA-STUFFED POTATOES

- 4 large baking potatoes
- One 10-ounce package frozen chopped spinach, thawed and drained
- 1/4 cup organic low-fat milk
- 1 scallion, green part only, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup finely crumbled feta cheese

Bake or microwave the potatoes until done but still firm. When cool enough to handle, cut each in half lengthwise. Scoop out the inside of each potato half, leaving a sturdy shell, about 1/4 inch thick all around.

Transfer the scooped-out potato to a mixing bowl and mash it coarsely. Add the remaining ingredients and stir well to combine.

Stuff the mixture back into the potato shells. Heat as needed in the microwave or in a preheated 400-degree oven, and serve.

MUSHROOM-STUFFED POTATOES

- 4 large baking potatoes
- 1/4 cup organic dairy, soy, or rice cream cheese
- 1 tablespoon light olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 8 ounces white or cremini mushrooms, sliced
- Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Bake or microwave the potatoes until done but still firm. When cool enough to handle, cut each in half lengthwise. Scoop out the inside of each potato half, leaving a sturdy shell, about 1/4 inch thick all around.

Transfer the scooped-out potato to a mixing bowl and mash it coarsely. Stir in the cream cheese.

Heat the oil in a medium skillet. Add the onion and sauté over medium heat until golden. Add the mushrooms, cover, and cook until they are done to your liking, stirring occasionally.

Combine the mushroom mixture, liquid and all, with the mashed potato in the mixing bowl. Season with salt and pepper and stir well to combine.

Stuff the mixture back into the potato shells. Heat as needed in the microwave or in a preheated 400-degree oven, and serve.

BROCCOLI AND CHEDDAR-STUFFED POTATOES

- 4 large baking potatoes
- 1/4 cup low-fat organic milk, soy milk, or rice milk
- 2 cups finely chopped broccoli florets, steamed
- 1 cup grated organic cheddar or cheddar-style nondairy cheese
- Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Bake or microwave the potatoes until done but still firm. When cool enough to handle, cut each in half lengthwise. Scoop out the inside of each potato half, leaving a sturdy shell, about 1/4 inch thick all around.

Transfer the scooped-out potato to a mixing bowl and mash it coarsely. Add the remaining ingredients and stir well to combine.

Stuff the mixture back into the potato shells. Heat as needed in the microwave or in a preheated 400-degree oven, and serve.

BROILED MUSHROOMS TERIYAKI

- 3 tablespoons teriyaki sauce
- 1 teaspoon dark sesame oil
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar or white wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon honey, maple syrup, or brown rice syrup
- 16 ounces fresh organic mushrooms, any variety (portabello, shiitake, cremini, oyster, baby bella, or a combination)

Preheat broiler (unless using a toaster oven).

Combine the first 4 ingredients in a mixing bowl and stir together. Wipe the

mushrooms clean. If using shiitakes, remove and discard the stems. Leave the mushrooms whole (unless you're using large portabellos—slice them 1/4 inch thick).

Combine the mushrooms with the teriyaki mixture and stir together. Arrange in a shallow foil-lined pan and pour any excess marinade over them.

Broil in the oven or a toaster oven for 4 minutes, and stir. Broil until the mushrooms begin turning dark and are touched by charred spots, about 4 to 5 minutes. Remove from the broiler and transfer to a serving container.

CHOCOLATE TOFU BANANA "CREAM" PIE

- Two 12.3-ounce aseptic packages silken tofu
- 1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips, preferably cane juice sweetened
- 1/3 cup pure maple syrup or agave nectar, or to taste
- One 9-inch graham cracker crust
- 2 medium bananas, thinly sliced

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Puree the tofu in a food processor or blender until completely smooth. Transfer

to a small saucepan and add the chocolate chips. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring often, until the chocolate chips have melted. Stir in the maple syrup.

Pour the mixture into the crust and bake for 25 minutes to 30 minutes, or until the top of the pudding feels fairly firm to the touch. Allow to cool completely, then refrigerate for at least an hour, preferably two.

Just before serving, cover the top of the pie with thin banana slices arranged in concentric, slightly overlapping circles, then cut into wedges to serve.

CHOCOLATE CHIP PEANUT BUTTER CAKE

- 1 cup whole wheat pastry flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/3 cup natural granulated sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup applesauce
- 1/2 cup plain rice milk or soymilk
- 1/2 cup natural style peanut butter, at room temperature
- 1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips (preferably a natural brand)

- 1/3 cup chopped peanuts, optional

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Combine the flour, baking powder, sugar, and salt in a mixing bowl and stir together.

Combine the applesauce, rice milk, and peanut butter in another bowl and whisk together until smooth. Pour into the flour mixture and stir together until fairly well blended, then use a whisk until the mixture is smooth.

Stir in the chocolate chips and optional peanuts. Pour into a lightly oiled 9-inch round or square cake pan. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until golden on top, and a knife inserted into the center comes out with chocolate, but no batter.

Allow to cool to room temperature or just warm, then cut into squares or wedges to serve.

DOUBLE CHOCOLATE OATMEAL COOKIES

- 1 1/2 cups whole wheat pastry flour
- 1/2 cup quick-cooking oats
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 cup natural granulated sugar
- 1/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 tablespoons ground flaxseeds, optional

- 1 cup applesauce (or a bit more as needed to make a smooth and slightly stiff batter)
- 2 tablespoons safflower oil
- 1 1/2 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips, preferably cane juice sweetened
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts, optional

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Combine the first 6 (dry) ingredients in a mixing bowl plus the optional flaxseeds and stir together.

Make a well in the center of the dry ingredients and add the applesauce and oil. Stir together until the wet and dry ingredients are completely mixed.

Stir in the chocolate chips and optional walnuts. Drop the batter onto lightly oiled baking sheets in slightly rounded tablespoonfuls. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes, or until the bottoms are just lightly browned. Let stand for a minute or two, then carefully remove with a spatula to plates to cool.

Asparagus and Mushroom Tart

Crust

- 2 cups All-Purpose Flour
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, chilled
- 3 tablespoons vegetable shortening
- 5 tablespoons ice water

- 1 egg yolk
- 1 tablespoon white vinegar

Filling

- 4 eggs, beaten
- 1 cup milk
- 1/2 cup (2 ounces) shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1/4 teaspoon oregano
- 1/4 teaspoon thyme
- 10 stalks fresh asparagus, cleaned wood stems removed
- 1/2 cup sliced mushrooms
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper, or to taste

Crust: In a medium sized bowl, combine the flour and salt. Cut in the butter and shortening, mixing quickly and lightly with a pastry knife, a mixer or your fingers until the mixture is crumbly. Make a well in the center of the pastry, and add the water, egg yolk and vinegar. Mix until the dough just holds together, adding an additional tablespoon of water only if necessary; the more water you use, the tougher your crust will be.

Pat the dough into a 10 or 11-inch removable-bottom tart pan. Prick it all over with a fork. Bake it in a preheated 350°F oven for 10 minutes. Remove it from the oven, and let cool.

Filling: In a medium-sized bowl, beat together the eggs and milk, then stir in the cheese, oregano and thyme. Slice six of the asparagus stalks, on the diagonal, into 3/4-inch pieces. Stir the sliced asparagus, mushrooms, and salt and pepper into the egg mixture.

Pour the filling into the crust. Place the remaining 5 stalks of asparagus in a fan pattern on top of the filling.

Bake the tart in a preheated 350°F oven for about 30 minutes, or until it's set. Remove the tart from the oven, and cool to lukewarm before removing the bottom. Yield 1 tart, 12 servings.

Baked Ravioli

- 1 small eggplant
- 1 celery stalk
- 1 medium carrot
- 1 small onion
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 28 oz. can Italian peeled tomatoes
- 1 tsp. sugar
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 13 oz. package of frozen ravioli
- 8 oz. whole mozzarella cheese-2 cups shredded.

Chop eggplant, celery carrot and onion. In a large saucepan over a medium heat stir place in the olive oil, eggplant, celery onion and carrot. Cover and cook for 10 minutes, until tender.

Place tomatoes in a blender and puree. Add the tomatoes, sugar and salt in to the saucepan with the vegetables. Bring to a boil. Lower the flame and simmer for 20 minutes.

Cook the ravioli as described on the package. Slightly undercook them. In a baking pan place in some of the tomato sauce to cover the bottom. Place the cooked ravioli in the pan and top with the rest of the sauce. Sprinkle the shredded Mozzarella cheese on top and bake in a 375 degree oven for 30 minutes. The cheese should be bubbly, hot and golden. Serve with a crisp salad.

Eggplant Parmigiana

- 2 to 3 eggs
- 1 tbsp parmesan
- 2 tsp dried parsley
- Black pepper
- 1/2 tsp garlic powder
- 2 cups bread crumbs
- 2 med size eggplants, peeled and thinly sliced
- Olive oil to fry eggplant
- Mozzarella cheese
- Marinara Sauce

Beat eggs, cheese, parsley, pepper and garlic together. Dip sliced eggplant into egg mix and then into the breadcrumbs to coat nicely. Fry each piece in oil until brown on both sides. Drain on paper towel and then place them in a baking pan with sauce on the bottom.

After you layer them coat them with sauce and sprinkle with mozzarella (lots). Keep going till run out. Top with sauce and mozzarella and bake at 350 until cheese is melted and sauce bubbly.

Pasta in a Creamy White Sauce

- 8 oz Pasta (your choice)

- 1 1/2 cups Dry Red Wine
- 2 tbsp Shallots, minced
- 1 Plum tomatoes, diced
- 1 cup Heavy Cream
- Parmesan Cheese

Combine wine, shallots and tomatoes to pan and cook until reduced to 1/2 cup, about 8-10 min. Add 3/4 cup of the cream and boil until slightly thickened, about 2 min. Take remaining 1/4 cup cream and toss with pasta. Spoon sauce over pasta and top with parmesan

Ratatouille

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed and minced
- 1 large onion, quartered and thinly sliced
- 1 small eggplant, cubed
- 2 green bell peppers, coarsely chopped
- 4 large tomatoes, coarsely chopped, or 2 cans (14.5 ounces each) diced tomatoes
- 3 to 4 small zucchini, cut into 1/4-inch slices
- 1 teaspoon dried leaf basil
- 1/2 teaspoon dried leaf oregano
- 1/4 teaspoon dried leaf thyme
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

In a 4-quart saucepan, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add garlic and onions and cook, stirring often, until softened, about 6 to 7 minutes.

Add eggplant; stir until coated with oil. Add peppers; stir to combine.

Cover and cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally to keep vegetables from sticking.

Add tomatoes, zucchini, and herbs; mix well.

Cover and cook over low heat about 15 minutes, or until eggplant is tender but not too soft.

Rigatoni With Tomatoes, Mozzarella, and Spinach Salad

- 4 Roma tomatoes
- 4 cloves of chopped garlic
- 12 oz of rigatoni
- 3 tbsp of freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1/4 cup of extra virgin oil
- 5 oz of mozzarella cheese cut in little cubes
- 5 oz of spinach leaves

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Boil pasta until al dente. Let it cool.

Cut each tomato in fours. Season the tomatoes for taste (salt, pepper, etc.) Place tomatoes on baking tray. Bake tomatoes for 45 minutes until wrinkled & shrunken. Let it cool down.

Combine oil & lemon juice (for salad dressing. Add more seasonings for taste

(optional)

Toss all lightly

Sour Cream 'N' Cheddar Potato Casserole

- 6 medium potatoes
- 2 cups of shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 cups of sour cream
- 1/4 cup of butter
- 1/3 cup of chopped onions

Boil the potatoes until they are almost tender then grate them into a mixing bowl. Mix all the other ingredients together with the grated potatoes and place into a greased casserole dish. Bake for 25 minutes at 350 degrees.

Spinach Pie

- 1 10 oz. pkg. frozen chopped spinach
- 1/2 lb. Feta Cheese, crumbles
- 1 pt. cottage cheese
- 4 eggs
- 6 tbsp. flour
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp. pepper
- 2 tsp. butter

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Crumble the Feta cheese and put it in one mixing bowl with the thawed spinach and cottage cheese.

In another bowl mix together salt, pepper, flour and eggs. Then combine the two mixtures into one bowl and stir well. Grease a 9" square baking pan with the butter and pour the mixture into the pan. Make sure you spread it evenly.

Bake the pie for one hour. To tell if it is done, stick a knife or toothpick into the center of the pie. If it comes out clean, the pie is ready. Let the pie cool for a few minutes. Then cut it into pieces and serve hot.

Vegetable Kabobs

- 1 medium eggplant
- 2 medium zucchini
- 2 ea. red and green peppers
- 1 medium red onion
- 2 tsp salt
- 1 tsp pepper
- 2 Tbsp herbs (tarragon, marjoram, etc.)
- 2 tsp garlic, crushed

Cut vegetables into half-inch chunks or wedges and toss with seasonings. Thread onto metal or soaked bamboo skewers. Let sit for one half hour. Grill or broil until colour shows on vegetables, about 10-15 minutes.

Vegetable Stuffed Ravioli

8 pieces uncooked manicotti

FILLING

- 1 Cup Julienne, cut zucchini
- 1 cup Cut up Broccoli
- 1/2 LB sliced mushrooms
- 1/2 cup Grated Parmesan Cheese
- 1/2 cup Red or Green bell pepper
- 1/2 tsp dried basil leaves

TOPPING

- 1 1/2 cup spaghetti sauce
- 3 oz shredded mozzarella cheese

Cook manicotti to desired doneness. Drain, rinse with cold water and let drain.

Meanwhile, heat oven to 400. In medium bowl combine all filling ingredients and mix well. Fill each manicotti with mixture.

Place 1/2cup spaghetti sauce in ungreased 12X8" baking dish. Place filled manicotti over sauce. Pour remaining sauce over manicotti. Cover tightly with foil

Bake at 400 for 20-25 min or until bubbly. Uncover, sprinkle evenly with cheese. Bake an additional 5-8 min or until cheese is melted.

Serve with Italian bread or garlic bread sticks

Veggie Burgers

- 1 small zucchini grated
- 1 medium uncooked potato, peeled & grated
- 1 medium carrot, grated
- 1/4 C onion, grated or minced
- 3/4 C egg substitute
- Pepper to taste

In a bowl, combine ingredients, mix well. Pour about 1/2 cup batter on hot griddle, lightly coated with non-stick cooking spray. Fry 2-3 minutes on each side or until golden brown.

Works great on GEORGE FORMAN grill (tilt it up a little if too runny)

Hunan Chow Mein

- 1 med onion, chopped
- 3 cloves minced garlic
- 1 tbsp peanut oil
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp dried mustard
- 2 stalks celery, sliced diagonally
- 2 c baby bok choy, chopped
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 8 oz. water chestnuts, sliced
- 1 c vegetable stock
- 1 c sliced mushrooms
- 4 c cooked rice

In a wok or large skillet over high heat, cook onion and garlic in oil for 3 minutes, or until they begin to soften. Add soy sauce, mustard, celery, bok choy, bell pepper, water chestnuts, vegetable stock, and mushrooms. Continue cooking, stirring frequently, until vegetables are crisp-tender, about 5 minutes. Serve over rice.

Spicy Vegetable Lo Mein

- 8 oz soba noodles (or other flat Asian noodle)
- 2 tsp hot chili oil
- 2 tsp grated ginger root
- 2 cloves minced garlic
- 3 ½ oz. shiitake mushroom caps thinly sliced
- 1 med. red bell pepper cut in short, thin strips
- 2 c chopped bok choy
- ½ c vegetable broth
- 6 oz. sugar snap peas or snow pea pods
- 2 tbsp tamari or soy sauce
- 2 tbsp seasoned or regular rice vinegar
- 1 tbsp dark-roasted sesame oil
- ¼ c chopped peanuts or cashews (optional)

Cook noodles according to package directions. Meanwhile, heat oil in large deep skillet or wok over medium heat. Add ginger and garlic; cook 30 seconds. Add mushrooms, bell pepper and bok choy; cook 3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add broth and sugar snap peas; simmer until vegetables are crisp-tender, stirring occasionally, 3 to 5 minutes. Add tamari or soy sauce, and vinegar.

Drain noodles; add to skillet with vegetables. Add sesame oil; cook 1 minute, tossing well. Sprinkle with peanuts or cashews, if desired.

Vegetable Fried Rice

- 1/4 cup light soy sauce
- 3 tablespoons rice wine or dry sherry
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 6 tablespoons peanut oil
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 carrot, in 1/2" cubes
- 1 red bell pepper, in 1/2" cubes
- 1/2 cup frozen peas
- 4 cups cold cooked rice

Combine the ingredients for the sauce in a small bowl. Mix to blend well and set aside.

Place a small skillet over medium heat. When it begins to smoke, add 2 tablespoons of peanut oil and the lightly beaten eggs.

Stir until the eggs are firm but moist. Transfer the eggs from the skillet to a small bowl and break them into small curds. Set aside.

Bring 1 quart of water to a boil in a small saucepan. Add the carrot and boil 1 minute. Drain and rinse in cold water. Drain again and reserve.

Place a wok over medium-high heat. When it begins to smoke, add the remaining 1/4 cup of peanut oil and the garlic. Stir briefly.

Add the carrots, celery, red pepper, and peas. Stir-fry 1 minute. Stir in the rice and stir-fry 1 minute.

Pour in the sauce and cook until the rice is heated through, about 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Serve hot.

Potato Salad

- 2 lbs med. red potatoes
- 2/3 c olive oil
- 1/3 c red wine vinegar
- 1/2 tsp oregano
- 1/2 tsp rosemary
- 1/2 lb. crumbled feta cheese
- 1 sweet red bell pepper, seeded
- 1/2 c chopped green onions
- 1/2 c black olives, drained & chopped

Start by washing and cutting the potatoes into bit-sized pieces, leaving the skins on.

Next, cook the potatoes in boiling water until tender. They are done when you can easily stick them with a fork. Do not overcook!

While the potatoes are being cooked, mix the oil, vinegar, oregano, and rosemary. After the potatoes are tender, drain them and move the potatoes to a mixing bowl.

Then pour on the oil/vinegar/spices mix and gently toss in the remaining ingredients. After all of the ingredients have been thoroughly (yet gently!) mixed, let the salad stand for at least thirty minutes before serving. This dish will keep well in the fridge for up to a week.

Tex-Mex Rice and Bean Bake

- 2 cups cooked brown or white rice
- 1/4 cup fat-free cholesterol free egg product
- 1 1/2 cups picante sauce
- 1 cup shredded reduced fat cheddar cheese (4 ounces)
- 1 can (15-16 oz) pinto beans, drained
- 1/4 tsp chili powder

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Spray square baking dish, 8x8x2 inches, with nonstick cooking spray.

Mix rice, egg product, 1/2 cup of the picante sauce and 1/2 cup of the cheese; press in bottom of baking dish.

Mix beans and remaining 1 cup picante sauce; spoon over rice mixture. Sprinkle with remaining 1/2 cup cheese and the chili powder.

Bake uncovered 30-35 minutes or until cheese is melted and bubbly. Let stand 5 minutes before serving. 6 servings.

Spinach Stuffed Tomatoes

- 10 oz. pkg. frozen spinach
- 4 med tomatoes
- 1 c shredded mozzarella cheese
- ¼ c finely minced onions
- ¼ c grated parmesan cheese
- ½ tsp salt
- 1/8 tsp pepper
- 2 tbsp minced parsley

Cook unopened spinach on high for 4 minutes. Let stand 5 minutes, drain well and squeeze dry. Put in large bowl. Slice and hollow out centers of tomatoes. Discard seeds. Chop pulp finely and add to spinach. Invert tomatoes shells on paper towels to drain. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Add 1/2 cup mozzarella cheese, onion, parmesan, salt & pepper to spinach mixture and blend well. Spoon evenly into tomato shells. Sprinkle with remaining mozzarella and parsley. Arrange in 8-inch round glass or ceramic baking dish & cook at 350 degrees for 6 minutes or until heated through.

Asian Slaw

- 1 head of Napa Cabbage, shredded
- 2 Asian pears, peeled and diced
- 1/2 cup shredded carrot
- 1/4 cup green onion, chopped
- 1/4 cup diced red pepper
- 2/3 cup rice wine vinegar
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro
- 1 tablespoon toasted sesame seeds

Mix rice wine vinegar, sugar, honey, soy sauce, cilantro and sesame seeds in a large bowl. In another large bowl mix cabbage, Asian pears, carrot, green onion and red pepper. Toss the cabbage mixture with the vinaigrette. Let stand for 20 minutes.

Serve salad in a large bowl, garnish with chopped green onion and toasted sesame seeds. This salad goes well with grilled meats and fish.

Chili Cheese Soufflé

- 12-15 eggs
- 1 cup Bisquick
- 2 cups milk
- 8 ounces crumbled Feta cheese
- 3/4 pound grated Swiss cheese
- 2 cups cottage cheese
- 1 teaspoon grated nutmeg
- 1 1/2 cups grated Jack cheese
- 1 can diced green chilies

Mix all ingredients together. Pour into greased 9x13" pan. Bake at 350 degrees 50-60 minutes.

Potato Parmesan Soup

- 8 peeled and chopped potatoes
- 3 green onions chopped (save green for garnish)
- 1 minced garlic clove
- 1 1/2 tablespoons course ground pepper
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 quart heavy cream
- 1 cup grated parmesan cheese

Boil and puree potatoes. Add chopped white part of green onion, garlic, heavy cream, salt, and pepper. Cook on low heat for 30 minutes. Add parmesan cheese at the end of cook time. Set off burner and allow cheese to melt into soup.

Tomato Vodka Cream Sauce

- 1/4 pound (1 stick) butter
- 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1/2 cup vodka
- 1 can Italian crushed tomatoes
- 3/4 cup Parmesan cheese
- 1/2 cup Romano cheese
- 1 cup heavy cream

- Pasta, prepared according to package directions

Melt butter over high heat until bubbly. Add red pepper flakes. Rapidly add vodka.

Simmer for 2 minutes. (The alcohol burns off but makes tomatoes "come alive". Simmer tomatoes with the two cheeses for three minutes, then add 1 cup of heavy cream and simmer for one minute.

Prepare pasta (shell or tube pasta suggested).

Mix completely with the sauce and serve immediately.

Vermont Cheddar Pie

- 2-3 cups diced, par-boiled potatoes
- 1/2 cup chopped onions
- 1 tsp. salt-free lemon/herb seasoning
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
- 3/4 cup chopped steamed spinach

- 1/4 cup freshly-grated Romano cheese
- 1/2 cup white cheddar
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup low fat milk
- Parsley flakes
- Paprika
- 1/3 cup feta cheese

Grease a glass pie plate. Combine potatoes and 1/4 cup onions, press into pie plate as crust. Sprinkle with seasoned salt and garlic powder.

Carefully put a layer of spinach and crumbled feta cheese into the crust, top with parmesan then cheddar cheeses.

Combine eggs, milk, pour carefully over cheeses. Garnish pie: make a small circle of 1/4 cup onions in center of pie; sprinkle parsley flakes in a larger circle around the onions; sprinkle paprika in a larger circle around parsley flake circle.

Bake at 350 for 1 hour.

Zucchini Soup

- 4 medium zucchini, quartered and sliced
- 2 cans of 15 oz. vegetable broth
- 2 onions, chopped

- 1 tsp. white pepper
- Dill weed to taste
- 2 pkgs. 8 oz. cream cheese
- Chopped fresh chives or edible flowers for garnish.

In a saucepan, add zucchini, chicken broth, onions, pepper and dill weed to taste. Cook mixture until soft, approximately 20 to 30 minutes. Blend the cream cheese in blender until smooth. Then blend in zucchini mixture, a portion at a time, until smooth. Chill over night or until very cold. Garnish with chopped chives or fresh flowers.

New Orleans Style Red Beans & Rice

- 1 lb bag of red kidney beans

- 1 large onion, chopped into large cubes
- 2 Tbsp of dried parsley
- 1 Tbsp of season salt
- Two 5-inch pieces of fresh celery
- 1 toe of fresh garlic peeled and cut in half
- 10-12 bay leaves
- 1 Tbsp margarine
- 1/4 cup chopped green onions
- 4 cups of cooked white rice

Wash kidney beans well. Add to a large pot and cover beans with water until water is two inches above bean line. Add all other ingredients, except seasoning meat, chopped green onions and rice. Bring to a rolling boil, then cover and reduce to a low heat and simmer.

After beans have been cooking for approximately 2 hours, add remaining liquid.

Add season salt and continue to simmer this combined mixture for another hour. Now add chopped green onions and additional season salt if desired. Cook for approximately one more hour, or until beans are very soft and a red gravy is produced.

Serve hot over warm, white rice.

Delicious Banana Pancakes

- 2 cups Bisquick mix
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 2 extremely ripe bananas (the one\'s that are brown and too soft to eat),
mashed
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 3 tsp sugar
- 2 tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 2 tbsp powdered sugar

Mix all ingredients together very well, final mixture will be a little lumpy. Prepare a medium-hot skillet, lightly oiled. Lightly dust finished pancakes with powdered sugar and serve with your favorite syrup.

There are many, many more recipes out there for vegetarians. This is just a start for you. Be creative and use your imagination. We're willing to bet that you won't even miss the meat!

Conclusion

Becoming a vegetarian is a lifestyle choice that you have to make for yourself, but when you do decide to switch to a meatless diet, you need to go into it with as much information as you can. Never stop learning about your diet and what you put into your body.

The reasons for switching to a vegetarian lifestyle are many. It is good for the environment. For example, it takes 3 to 15 times as much water to produce animal protein as it does plant protein. As a vegetarian I contribute to water conservation.

It takes up to 16 pounds of soybeans and grains to produce 1 lb. of beef and 3 to 6 lbs. to produce 1 lb of turkey & egg. By eating grain foods directly, I make the food supply more efficient & that contributes to the environment.

Tropical forests in Brazil and other tropic regions are destroyed daily, in part, to create more acreage to raise livestock. By not supporting the meat industry, I directly reduce the demand to pillage these irreplaceable treasures of nature. Since the forest land "filters" our air supply and contains botanical sources for new medicines, this destruction is irreversible.

You will face no nutritional deficiencies. There is no nutrient necessary for optimal human functioning which cannot be obtained from plant food.

Animal foods are higher in fat than most plant foods, particularly saturated fats. Plants do not contain cholesterol. Being higher on the food chain, animal foods contain far higher concentrations of agricultural chemicals than plant foods, including pesticides, herbicides, etc.

There are over 20,000 different drugs, including sterols, antibiotics, growth hormones and other veterinary drugs that are given to livestock animals. These drugs are consumed when animal foods are consumed. The dangers herein, in secondary consumption of antibiotics, are well documented.

Being healthier on a vegetarian diet means spending less on health care. Vegetarian foods tend to cost less than meat based items.

The list can go on and on. Whatever your reason for wanting to become a vegetarian, you have started yourself on a terrific path of self-discovery and better health than you have ever known!

Please visit <http://HealthyPages.info> for updates and other information.