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I'm a meat eater and have been all my life but have had thoughts of becoming a vegan eater but I feel the taste of most vegan meals do not have to taste I like in foods. If I ever find something vegan that taste good, I will eat it. I do juice and find it very healthy for me. Most of our foods sold in stores is full of harmful chemicals that are poisoning us and making us unhealthy so we have to be cautious of what we buy, especially for our kids.

I hope you enjoy this book...

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Vegan Alternatives To Gelatin

Gelatin serves both nutritional and culinary roles in non vegetarian diets; however, a lot of vegetarians and all vegans do not consume gelatin in its many forms because it is often created out of boiled pig skins and dissolved veal cartilage and bones.

This leaves vegetarians with a gap in cooking functionality when a recipe calls for a gel or thickening agent. It also leaves vegetarians with fewer options if they need a source of gelatin to increase bone and cartilage health.

If you are a vegetarian and you are looking for something to replace gelatin, do not despair. Here are some alternative options for you:

1. Use a rice starch alternative. A&B Ingredients recently developed a rice starch alternative to gelatins that mimics the cooking functionality of gelatins closely.
2. Use a soy-based alternative. Soyfoods USA developed NuSoy Gel, a gelatin alternative which was created entirely out of soy isoflavones and contains 100% of your vitamin c recommended daily allowance.
3. Use seaweed-based alternatives. Agar-agar, for instance, is a seaweed based alternative to gelatin that can simulate the culinary functions of gelatin.
4. Increase your calcium intake. One component of gelatin supplements that allegedly increases joint health is calcium. If you want to increase your calcium intake without eating gelatin, you can simply consume more calcium-fortified foods and even take supplements.
5. Increase your vitamin c intake. Another component of gelatin supplements that allegedly increases joint health is vitamin c. You can increase your vitamin c intake by consuming more citrus fruit.
6. Increase your glucosamine intake. No foods contain glucosamine, but you can increase your intake by purchasing supplements at your local grocery store or pharmacy. This is rumored to improve joint health if taken regularly.

To reiterate - gelatin has two major functions: it works as a thickening agent for foods and is rumored to improve joint health; both of these functions can easily be mimicked by structural and nutritional alternatives.



Cooking With Tofu

If you aren't a vegetarian now and haven't been one in the past, you probably also haven't eaten tofu many times. In fact, the only time most people hear about tofu it is in jokes aimed at vegetarians.

So why is it that vegetarians eat this stuff all the time? Is it simply because they have no other choice?

The answer is both yes and no.

Being a vegetarian doesn't mean you have to eat tofu. In fact, there are many vegetarians who never eat tofu or any popular meat-replacement dishes--such as "veggie burgers" or "tofurkey"--for that matter.

As long as they research and create meal plans, vegetarians can maintain a healthy diet eating traditional meals or ethnic dishes.

Tofu is often cited as something exclusively vegetarian because it is a versatile, highly-nutritional, and can be used to replace meat dishes.

Not only can it be created in textures, consistencies, and flavors that simulate a range of meats--from turkey to hamburg--but it can also actually replace and far exceed the nutritional value of similar meat dishes.

While vegetarians do not actually need to consume tofu, doing so is often a wise dietary choice--and also the next best thing to eating similar meat products (for those who enjoyed meat dishes before they became vegetarians).

Tofu is a low-fat, low-cholesterol, low-calorie food made out of steamed and compressed soy beans. Not only is it a great source of protein--which many vegetarians lack--but it is also heart-healthy and has been linked to a decreased risk in cancer.

In addition to being served as a meat alternative, tofu is also served in a number of spicy and ethnic dishes, which were never intended to contain meat. Many ethnic Indian dishes contain large amounts of tofu cooked and spiced in different ways.

So here is my suggestion to you: If you aren't already a vegetarian, but want to become one, don't let tofu get in your way. You can maintain a healthy vegetarian diet without ever eating it. However, if you already are a vegetarian, but haven't tried tofu, I highly suggest you do. It is both nutritional and versatile - and it might not taste as bad as you think.

Does It Really Matter If I Become A Vegetarian?

As a prospective vegetarian, you probably question whether or not it really matters if you stop eating meat. You might wonder how much of a difference one additional vegetarian can make.

And while it might be true that one vegetarian won't make a huge statistical difference in a world of meat-eaters-- and while it is also true that one more vegetarian probably isn't going to turn the tide in the movement-- you can do a lot as an individual that will be good for you and good for hundreds of animals.

Take, for instance, the number one cause of death in the United States and other countries with meat-centered diets: heart disease.

If it weren't specifically for meat, eggs, and dairy products--which are the three largest sources of cholesterol--heart attacks and other heart and circulatory problems would be far less prevalent. According to Earth Save, the average vegetarian has about 1/4 the chance of having a heart attack as the average non vegetarian. As for people who are pure vegans, it gets even lower: they have less than 1/10 the chance of having a heart attack as non vegetarians.

In addition to heart health, you will get a number of other health benefits as a vegetarian. For instance, you won't be exposed to nearly as many preservatives, which are common in meat and are linked to cancer. You won't be exposed to various hormones (that are packed into animal feed), which often disrupt normal hormonal processes in the body. And you won't consume as much lactose, which most people cannot digest properly--and which some dietitians have suggested is a cause of digestive problems.

In addition to health benefits you will receive as an individual, you will also reduce your share of the suffering human beings inflict on animals.

According to veganoutreach.org, the average American consumes 2,714 land animals in their lifetime. If you quit eating meat now, you could literally prevent the suffering and death of hundreds of animals over the course of a couple decades.

In addition to this, if you stop eating eggs and drinking milk, you will also reduce your share in the suffering and death of battery hens and their offspring, as well as dairy cows and their offspring, too.

So the answer is yes: it does matter whether or not you become a vegetarian. It matters to the thousands of animals you could potentially save and it matters to you as an individual because you can greatly reduce your chances of getting cancer and heart disease.

Eating A Healthful Vegetarian Diet

Many people start vegetarian and vegan diets without devoting an adequate amount of time to nutritional research and meal planning. As a result, a considerable amount of people who start vegetarian diets do not last for more than 1-2 months.

Many dieters who fail to carefully research and plan complain that they lack energy - and often experience a significant loss in muscle mass. Others observe a number of other more peripheral problems that come with a poorly-planned vegetarian diet.

The first group--the group that most failed dieters fall into--is actually experiencing a form of protein-energy malnutrition (PEM). PEM emerges when a person fails to consume enough protein, leading to muscle loss - and subsequently feelings of weakness that are often accompanied by head and muscle aches.

This problem can be circumvented by dietary alterations. A vegetarian who is experiencing PEM should either a) find out what foods contain what amino chains, so they can combine them to form proteins; or b) start consuming larger amounts and more diversified sources of protein, such as nuts, soy milk, and yogurt.

The first group is often iron-deficient as well. Because vegetarians can only consume nonheme iron, which is more sensitive to iron inhibitors, they often do not consume enough to maintain healthy blood-iron levels. This can cause pervasive weakness and even anemia.

Most nutritionists suggest that vegetarian and vegan dieters consume roughly twice the recommended amount of iron while greatly reducing their consumption of iron inhibitors.

People in the second group--the smaller one--who suffer from a range of other peripheral, diet-related problems are often not consuming enough of the nutrients that they would normally take in unknowingly on a diet that includes meat and dairy products. These nutrients include, for example, zinc, calcium, vitamin b, and riboflavin.

Some recent studies have suggested that vegetarians also process certain types of foods with less efficiency because they consume different amounts and varieties of absorption inhibitors and enhancers.

Recent studies also suggest, however, that a vegetarian or vegan diet, when done right, is not only as healthful as a non-vegetarian diet, but it is also much more heart-healthy - and usually contains higher amounts of antioxidants.

What does this all mean for you as a prospective vegetarian? It means that eating a healthful vegetarian diet is not only a good alternative to your current diet, but it can also lower your chances of getting heart disease and cancer.

However, in order to eat a HEALTHFUL vegetarian diet, you must actually put in the time to research and plan; if you don't, you most certainly will end up in one of the two groups discussed above.

Important Non-Meat Sources Of Protein For Vegetarians

Although most vegetarians consume a considerable amount of protein, they often do not absorb as much as they would on a non vegetarian diet. This is because plant proteins are considerably less digestible than animal proteins, which contain amino acid chains that are closer or identical to human amino acid chains.

Consuming animal proteins might yield close to a 1:1 absorption ratio, while consuming plant proteins, such as wheat, might only yield 50% of the amino acids needed to build a "complete protein" or a protein that can readily be assimilated into the human body.

In order for vegetarians to absorb a healthy amount of protein, they must consume a variety of plant proteins to form complete amino chains. By eating vegetables, legumes, seeds, nuts, fruits, and whole grains, vegetarians can increase the amount of complete proteins they create by combining a number of varieties of amino acid chains.

Vegetarians must also consume more foods that contain proteins because plant proteins are generally harder to digest. While a nutritional label may suggest that pasta has 5 grams of protein per serving; you may only be able to digest 2-3 grams of that protein, which means you must complement the pasta with other sources of protein.

In addition to natural sources of protein, vegetarians should also seek foods that are "protein-fortified"-- or artificially-infused with protein.

For example, many supermarkets offer a variety "protein-fortified" pasta and bread. I have seen pasta that contains as much as 12 grams of protein per serving.

Soy milk is also a good source of protein for vegetarians. Studies on isolated soy protein show that it can be absorbed nearly as well as animal proteins, yielding close to a 1:1 protein absorption ratio.

For non-vegan vegetarians, yogurt, milk, and eggs (which contain complete proteins) are all excellent sources of protein.

As a vegetarian you have a number of options to boost your protein intake - and you should consider taking advantage of all of them. You should diversify your food selections, drink more soy products, and eat "protein-fortified" breads and pasta.



Three Health Advantages Of A Vegetarian Diet

While many people lament the nutritional disadvantages of a poorly planned vegetarian diet, few stress the health advantages of adopting a vegetarian or vegan diet. In this article, I will cover the major three nutritional advantages of becoming a vegetarian.

The first major advantage of a vegetarian diet is increased heart health. Vegetarians, on average, consume more nuts (often as a supplemental form of protein). Nuts contain "good" fats, such as omega-3 and omega-6. This promotes good heart health by reducing "bad" cholesterol and unclogging arteries.

In addition to nuts, vegetarians also consume more soy milk (often to replace milk), which reduces "bad" cholesterol and has been linked to good heart health.

The second major advantage vegetarians enjoy is increased skin health. In addition to consuming larger quantities of nuts (which contain healthful oils), vegetarians tend to consume more fruit and vegetables, which are rich in essential vitamins, including A and E, which are linked to good skin health.

Fruits and vegetables also contain high amounts of fiber, which helps flush toxins out of the body, further contributing to better skin health.

The last health advantage vegetarians enjoy is an increased natural consumption of antioxidants.

Antioxidants are foods that help prevent cancer by destroying free radicals. Vitamin C and Vitamin E, two strong antioxidants, are commonly found in vegetarian meals.

Vitamin C can be found in berries, tomatoes, citrus fruit, kale, kiwis, asparagus and peppers.

Vitamin E can be found in wheat germ, seed oils, walnuts, almonds, and brown rice--all foods that are commonly a part of a well-balanced vegetarian diet.

So what does this all mean for you as a prospective vegetarian?

It means the popular mythology about vegetarian diets is false. Not only can a vegetarian diet be nutritionally sufficient, but it can also affect better skin health, prevent cancer, and increase your heart health.



The Top Five Nutrients Vegetarians Lack

Both vegetarian and non-vegetarian diets have advantages. Vegetarian diets tend to be rich in antioxidants, certain vitamins, and healthy fats. Non-vegetarian diets, by contrast, tend to contain more protein, iron, zinc, calcium, and vitamin B-12.

If you already decided to adopt a vegetarian diet, it is essential you learn how to increase your intake and absorption of these nutrients to avoid short-term and long-term health complications.

In the next few paragraphs, I will explain how you can regularly assimilate larger portions of these nutrients into your regular diet:

1. Protein. Different types of protein are made up of different permutations of amino acid chains. In order to create a "complete protein" or a protein that can be assimilated into the human body as tissue, you must consume foods that contain complementary chains of amino acids.

Wheat, nuts, and beans are three types of vegan-friendly incomplete proteins; however, wheat is hard to digest and up to 50% of its protein is lost during the process.

Isolated soy protein, which you can get from a number of sources (including soy milk), can be digested efficiently-enough to match the animal protein yields.

2. Iron. Plant sources contain a significant amount of iron, but in nonheme form, which is more sensitive to inhibitors than iron that comes from animal products. You should do two things to increase your blood-iron levels: 1) consume more plant iron; and 2) avoid absorption inhibitors, such as tea, coffee, and fiber.

3. Zinc. Whereas non-vegetarian diets seem to enhance the absorption of zinc; vegetarian and vegan diets do the exact opposite--they inhibit it.

Nutritionists suggest that you can overcome this by consuming more foods that contain zinc, such as soybeans, cashews, and sunflower seeds while reducing your intake of inhibitors by washing vegetables and grains.

4. Calcium. While vegetarians can easily consume an adequate amount of calcium without any dietary additions, it is important that vegetarians avoid consuming certain foods that are high in oxalates, which inhibit calcium absorption.

Dietitians suggest that vegetarians do not consume spinach, beet greens, and swiss chard as the calcium component of a meal plan. While they are rich in calcium, they also contain high amounts of oxalates.

Rather than consuming those foods for calcium, vegetarians should consider other options, such as soy yogurt, tofu, beans, almonds, and calcium- fortified foods.

5. Vitamin B-12. Many vegetarians lack vitamin B-12 simply because it does not exist naturally in any non-animal forms. Vegetarians should seek out vitamin B-12 fortified foods, such as certain soy milks and cereals to supplement what they lack. As I outlined, there are a number of nutrients vegetarians can

lack of they do not research and plan. This is not meant to discourage people from becoming vegetarians, but instead to encourage them to spend time planning a health approach to their vegetarian diet before starting it.

When planned adequately, a vegetarian diet can not only make up for what it lacks from animal products, but it can far exceed the healthfulness of most non-vegetarian diets.



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How To Make A Vegan Cake

Do you have a strict vegan in the family who has a birthday or celebration coming up that traditionally calls for cake? If you're not familiar with vegan dietary practices, you might not know what vegans do not eat. Even worse, you might have no idea how to replace what they do not eat.

But don't worry. In a few short paragraphs, I'll explain exactly what you need to make the perfect cake for your vegan friend or relative. And best of all, no one will be able to taste the difference.

Let's start with what strict vegans do not eat. They do not eat eggs. They do not drink milk. They don't eat certain types of sugar. They don't eat butter. And they don't eat frosting.

Eggs can be replaced by "EnerG Egg Replacer," which you can purchase at many grocery stores. The box will explain how much replacer to use per egg.

Cow's milk can be replaced by organic rice milk, which doesn't contain any animal byproducts. You can buy rice milk at your local grocery store, too.

Many vegans do not consume sugar, either, because it is often whitened by animal bone char. You can avoid sugar that is whitened by bone char by purchasing "unbleached" sugar, sugar in the raw, or beet sugar. There are some cane sugars, too, which were not whitened using bone char, but they hard to distinguish from others, unless you know the exact name brand.

Strict vegans will not eat food made with butter, either. If your cake recipe calls for butter, you can simply replace it with margarine or vegetable shortening.

In addition to butter, sugar, milk, and eggs, strict vegans also will not eat dairy frosting. If your recipe calls for frosting, you can look for a similar flavor of "non-dairy" frosting or you can make your own, replacing butter with margarine.

And there you have it: an ingredient replacement key for your vegan cake. Simply follow the key, replace vegan-unfriendly items on your recipe, and your cake will be perfectly fit for even the strictest vegetarian!

Why Vegans Don't Consume Dairy Products

As with most dietary questions, vegans are split on the issue of dairy products--not so much on the question of whether or not they are acceptable, but instead for what reasons they should not be consumed.

All vegans (or at least true vegans) abstain from consuming dairy products. Some do so for nutritional reasons; others abstain for ethical reasons.

Those who do it for nutritional reasons cite a range of health problems related to the consumption of dairy products, including high cholesterol. Many also have a problem digesting lactose or have a blood-iron or diabetic problem related to milk protein, casein. In addition to this, milk and cheese often contain small portions of undesirable hormones that are added to dairy cow feeds to increase production.

Those who abstain from consuming dairy products for ethical reasons also have a range of reasons for doing so.

Some cite the poor treatment of dairy cows as a main reason for not consuming milk and cheese. They note that dairy cows are forced to become pregnant once each year to maintain a constantly high yield of milk. They are also fed numerous steroids to increase production.

Others who abstain for ethical reasons often cite the maltreatment of dairy cow offspring. They note that calves are not allowed to spend time with or suckle from the mother, but instead are prematurely removed to be reared for either veal production, beef production, or as replacement dairy cows.

The calves selected for "veal" production are often forced to live in crates so tiny that they cannot turn around. They must face in one direction; they cannot groom themselves; and they are fed hormone-laden feed until they are sent off to be slaughtered.

If you are a prospective vegan, you may want to take some time now to think about what is best for you. Ask yourself whether you wanted to become a vegan for ethical reasons, dietary reasons, or both. And from there, determine whether or not these arguments were strong enough to compel you to do so. Either way, you should emerge with a stronger viewpoint and a better understanding of what you do and do not want.

Why Vegans Don't Eat Eggs

As a prospective vegan, you may be wondering exactly why vegans make the dietary choices they make. And you may also be hesitant to adopt these choices until you yourself understand and accept them.

In this article, I will explain the two major vegetarian positions on eating eggs to help you make your decision.

The sub-category of vegetarian I will cover, ovo-vegetarians, accept the normal consumption of eggs because they do not believe that doing so conflicts with an ethical vegetarian diet. They do not see eggs as living things and subsequently do not make the connection between consuming eggs and causing animal suffering or death.

In addition to this, many ovo-vegetarians see complete veganism as limiting their options unnecessarily, especially when eggs are an excellent source of complete protein and a viable nutritional alternative to meat.

Many vegetarians who do consume eggs opt for "free range" eggs over normal--or "battery"--eggs. This is usually out of ethical concern for the treatment of egg-laying hens.

Vegans, by contrast, do not consume eggs normally and generally oppose the institution altogether. They argue that purchasing "battery hen" eggs supports an institution that cages up to nine birds together, debeaks them, and forces them to continually lay eggs until they are calcium-depleted and on the verge of death--at which point, they are slaughtered.

In addition, vegans also go further to disapprove of "free range" eggs, which do not require a hen to be caged. They argue that most free range hens are actually packed into houses, where they have minimal access to the outside.

They also note that even producing "free range" eggs requires having fertile eggs--half of which will hatch into male chicks, which will then be slaughtered after birth or fed to a certain weight only to be culled.

In addition to these two positions, there are also vegetarians who don't consume eggs for other reasons. Some of these vegetarians don't eat eggs because they are high in cholesterol; and others do not consume them because they believe that the animal farming institution contributes to environmental degradation.

Take some time to determine where you stand--ethically and nutritionally--and then make your decision from there.

Why Some Vegans Do Not Wear Wool

Many vegans quit eating meat, eggs, milk, honey, and yeast for one very specific reason: they have a deep reverence for all living things and subsequently want to prevent all living things from suffering on their behalf.

This reverence for all living things drives some vegans to what non vegetarians might consider extremes. Some live greatly restricted lives, but for a noble cause: to prevent suffering and death wherever possible.

In addition to preventing death and suffering through dietary selections, some vegans have vow to prevent it in all other capacities.

For instance, some vegans do not wear wool because they believe it contributes to animal suffering.

These vegans often cite how scientists have bred sheep over the years to generate unnatural amounts of wool for human needs. This breeding has resulted in the Merino sheep of today, which often has enough wool to equal its body weight.

As a result of this counter-evolutionary trait, the Merino sheep that exists today often has far more wool than it needs, which is evidenced by the high amount of sheep that die of heat exhaustion. In addition to overheating in hot temperatures, many sheep end up freezing to death after they are sheared.

The wool shearing process can also cause quite a bit of suffering for the sheep. Almost a quarter of all wool sheared from sheep is "skin wool," which is so close to the sheep's skin that it is actually must be torn off.

If you currently are a vegetarian for ethical reasons, take some time to consider whether or not wearing wool compromises your commitment to end or at least stop contributing to animal suffering.

For some vegetarians, wearing wool is just as bad as eating meat; and for others, it simply isn't an issue because they do not believe it causes an unreasonable amount of suffering. Which are you?

The Difference Between Vegan & Vegetarian

If you recently started reading about vegetarian diets, you have probably read all sorts of strange vegetarian terms and categories like "vegan," "ovo-lacto vegetarian," and "semi-vegetarian." You probably wondered what the big deal was. After all, what is so conceptually tough about not eating meat?

And you were right!

The distinctions between these sub-categories of vegetarian are actually small, but each is very important to members who belong to the groups. For them, these distinctions aren't arbitrary lines; they are important dietary or ethical decisions.

Let's take a look at some of these groups:

VEGETARIAN:

Vegetarian is a blanket term used to describe a person who does not consume meat, poultry, fish, or seafood. This grouping includes vegans and the various sub-categories of vegetarian; however, it generally implies someone who has less dietary restrictions than a vegan.

SEMI-VEGETARIAN:

The term semi-vegetarian is usually used to describe someone who is not actually a vegetarian. Semi-vegetarian generally implies someone who only eats meat occasionally or doesn't eat meat, but eats poultry and fish.

OVO-LACTO-VEGETARIAN:

Ovo-lacto vegetarians are vegetarians who do not consume meat, poultry, fish, and seafood, but do consume eggs and milk. This is the largest group of vegetarians.

OVO-VEGETARIAN:

Ovo-vegetarian is a term used to describe someone who would be a vegan if they did not consume eggs.

LACTO-VEGETARIAN:

Lacto-vegetarian is a term used to describe someone who would be a vegan if they did not consume milk.

VEGAN:

Vegan is the strictest sub-category of vegetarians. Vegans do not consume any animal products or byproducts. Some even go as far as not consuming honey and yeast. Others do not wear any clothing made from animal products.

Take some time to figure out what group you will belong to when you become a vegetarian. You will want to consider both dietary and ethical reasons for choosing this lifestyle.

What Is Vegetarian Cheese?

Vegetarian cheese is cheese that is not curdled with rennet, an enzyme that occurs naturally in animal stomachs. Most vegetarian cheeses are curdled with either plants, fungi, or bacteria.

Vegetarians who do not consume cheese with rennet generally choose not to because it involves slaughtering animals to extract the enzymes.

Vegetarian cheese is hard to distinguish from cheese made with rennet. This lack of distinguishability often forces vegetarians who are ethically-opposed to harming animals to consume cheeses that contain rennet.

Even though more cheeses are being made with vegetable rennet, it is usually impossible to spot the difference, unless the package is clearly labeled "vegetarian cheese." Recently, some grocery stores have started doing this to aid vegetarian shoppers, who would not otherwise be able to distinguish the difference between the vegetable and animal rennet cheeses.

In addition to eating cheeses made with vegetable rennet, there are more alternatives to eating regular cheese.

Vegans, for instance, do not consume cheese at all because it is an animal byproduct and subsequently requires animals to be caged and suffer. Many vegans, however, do consume cheese substitutes.

Chreese (www.chreese.com) is one of these substitutes. Chreese is an all natural, non-soy, cheese replacement that requires substantially less natural resources and energy to create than cheese with rennet.

And chreese is just one substitute. There are a number of other all natural alternatives you can find at local organic and health food stores.

If you are a vegetarian and you don't support animal suffering on your behalf in any capacity, you may also want to consider adjusting your dietary habits if you consume cheese made with animal rennet.

To reiterate, you have three basic options: you can look for grocery stores that label vegetarian cheese; you can purchase vegetarian cheese online; or you can purchase cheese alternatives online or at your local organic or health food store.

Is A Vegetarian Diet Safe For My Child?

If you are a vegetarian parent, you have probably considered putting your child on a vegetarian diet. Not only would it save time and make meal-planning easier, but for dietary and ethical reasons, you believe it is a better choice for your child.

Conversely, you might not be a vegetarian yourself, but have a child who is going through a vegetarian "phase," where she rejects meat, but doesn't consume enough healthy foods to compensate for the nutritional gap.

Whatever the case is, you may have wondered whether or not a vegetarian diet is a sustainable, healthy choice for your child. You may have heard that putting your child on a vegetarian diet could potentially stunt her growth.

These concerns probably prevented you from putting your child on a vegetarian diet up to this point.

And all of these concerns are legitimate. In fact, if a vegetarian diet is poorly planned, it can cause serious short and long term health problems, especially for children, who are growing and developing--and who do not yet have sufficient stores of vitamins.

If you aren't well-prepared to put your child on a vegetarian diet, you definitely shouldn't. However, if you have done your nutritional research and you are familiar with the nutrients vegetarians commonly lack, then you know that these problems can easily be overcome with some meal planning.

You also know that putting your child on a healthful vegetarian diet can greatly improve her health in both the short and long term. It can also reduce her exposure to animal products that contain hormones and preservatives, which have been linked to developmental problems and cancer.

If you haven't researched vegetarian diets thoroughly, but you are anxious to start your child on one now, you should start by ensuring that you plan meals to boost amounts of the following nutrients (that most vegetarians lack):

1. **Protein.** Make sure your child is consuming enough protein by adding additional sources, such as wheat, soybeans, isolated soy protein, and nuts.
2. **Calcium.** Ensure your child is consuming enough calcium by adding calcium-fortified processed foods and leafy green vegetables to his diet.
3. **Iron.** Add more iron to your child's diet by increasing servings of soybeans, pinto beans, tofu, and cereals.
4. **Zinc.** Enhance your child's zinc intake by increasing his servings of almonds, peanut butter, and mushrooms.

If you concentrate on compensating for all of these common nutritional deficiencies, you absolutely can put your child on a vegetarian diet without any negative health consequences.

Just ignore the mythology surrounding vegetarian diets and instead focus on research and meal-

planning.

How To Cook For A Vegetarian This Holiday Season

Are you worried about cooking for a vegetarian in your family this upcoming holiday season? Well, worry no more. This article will tell you exactly what you need to do and know before you start cooking this holiday season.

You can start off by finding out what type of vegetarian your guest is. For instance, if she is a strict vegan, then there's a chance she will not eat food that contains honey or yeast; however, if on the other hand, she is a "semi" or "pseudo" vegetarian, there is a chance she will actually eat the meal as it is prepared, including the meat. And if she's a lacto-ovo-vegetarian, she might eat anything with eggs and milk, but will probably avoid meat dishes.

If you talk to the vegetarian in your family before you prepare your holiday meal, you should consider asking the following five questions:

1. Do you eat certain types of meat or none at all?

If the vegetarian in your family will eat certain meats (generally fish, chicken, and turkey), then you should consider preparing that as a side dish or asking them if they would like to bring a small dish of it for their own meal.

2. Will you use serving utensils that have been placed in dishes containing meat?

Some vegetarians experience severe gastrointestinal stress when they consume meat and grease from meat, so it is a good idea to find out whether or not they can do so ahead of time. If they can't, you can simply put out one utensil for all non-meat dishes and ask that guests do not cross-contaminate.

3. Do you eat foods that contain milk and eggs?

As I mentioned above, lacto-ovo vegetarians will eat milk and eggs, but other sub-categories of vegetarian will not. Some won't do it for health reasons; others won't for ethical reasons. Whatever the case, you can get around this problem by either creating more dishes that do not contain milk and eggs or by using egg replacer, which you can find at most supermarkets, and milk replacements, such as soy milk.

4. Do you eat honey and yeast?

Some vegetarians do not eat honey and yeast for ethical reasons. If you find out that the vegetarian in your family does not eat honey and yeast ahead of time, you can either prepare alternate dishes or ask if they are willing to bring an alternate dish.

5. Would you like to bring your own main dish (to replace the turkey, ham, etc.)?

Many vegetarians eat popular meat-replacement dishes, such as "tofurkey" and "veggie burgers." Your guest will probably be more than willing to bring her own meat-replacement dish if you ask.

To reiterate, there are a number of things you should take into consideration when you cook for a vegetarian this holiday season; however, the single most important thing you can do is actually

approach the vegetarian and ask how you can accommodate her and if she would like to cook with you or bring her own dish.

If you keep this in mind, your holiday meal will be a success with everyone - even the vegetarian in your family!

Is A Vegetarian Diet Safe For My Infant?

If, for dietary or ethical reasons, you have decided that you want to put your infant on a vegetarian diet, you should be very careful in choosing formulas and solid food for your child.

If you plan to breastfeed the infant and you are also a vegetarian, you may need to supplement breast milk with additional sources of nutrition, depending on your dietary restrictions. If you are a vegan, or an ovo-vegetarian, you should add sources of vitamin B-12 to your child's diet.

Other than the B-12 supplements, your infant should be able to receive all micro and macronutrients through breastfeeding, even if you are on a strictly vegan diet.

If you plan to use formula rather than breast milk, you should stick to commercial formulas, which contain the proper amounts and ratios of nutrients. If you opt for a homemade formula or soy milk over a commercial product, your child could experience developmental problems from a lack of proper nutrition.

If you want to keep your infant on a vegan diet, you can select a soy commercial formula, as long as it is nutritionally-adequate.

After about a year, you can begin to supplement formula or breast milk with other sources of nutrition, such as homemade formulas, soy milk, yogurt, and cow's milk (if you are not a vegan).

Nutritionists suggest that you keep your infant on a full-fat, high protein diet after age one, which includes vegetarian-friendly foods, such as mashed and pureed avocados, soy milk, nutrient-fortified tofu, and yogurt.

When you are ready to switch your infant to solid vegetarian foods, you can introduce solid tofu, pieces of vegetarian burgers, eggs, and cheese.

If you supplement what a non vegetarian diet lacks, maintain a full-fat diet, and increase your infant's sources of protein, you should have no problem maintaining a healthful vegetarian diet during your child's crucial developmental stages.

Why Some Vegetarians Will Not Consume Sugar

Some vegetarians--usually strict vegans--will not consume sugar. This is because sugar is often whitened with bone char from cows.

If you are a vegetarian and you want to continue eating products that contain sugar, but do not want to cause suffering in the process, you have a number of options.

Your first option is to only consume products made with beet sugar. There are two major sources of sugar in the United States: beet sugar and cane sugar. Cane sugar is often whitened with bone char from cows; in contrast, beet sugar is never whitened with bone char.

So, if you want to completely avoid the bone char, you can do so by eating only beet sugar. The only challenge--and it is a big one--is finding out which foods contain beet sugar and which foods contain cane sugar.

To make things more complex, you can also consume a number of types of cane sugar, as long as you are willing to find out what the source of the sugar is.

You can do this in a lot of cases by looking at the nutritional panel on food before you buy it. If it says fructose or dextrose, the sugar is from a plant source (either beet or corn). If it says sucrose, it could be from a number of sources, which could include bone char-whitened cane sugar.

Now, if you are cooking with sugar, you can personally verify that is bone-char free by purchasing from the following companies, which have publicly-stated that they do not use bone-char: Florida Crystals Refinery, Imperial Sugar Company, Irish Sugar Ltd., Sugar In the Raw (which is also less-refined), and American Crystal Sugar Company.

If you can't find these brands, but want to avoid consuming bone-char sugar if possible, you can avoid these brands, which have publicly-stated that they do use bone-char: Domino, Savannah Foods, and C&H Sugar Company.

Why Some Vegetarians Do Not Wear Leather And Silk

Most vegetarians who stop eating meat for ethical reasons also take measures to avoid contributing to the suffering and death of animals (and even insects) in other capacities. For instance, a number of vegetarians refuse to wear leather and silk because they see it as an ethical violation of their respect for all living things.

Vegetarians who refuse to wear silk argue that the process involves unnecessary cruelty to moth larvae. Rather than allowing the moth to grow and leave the cocoon, silk manufacturers boil the larvae alive, causing them to suffer and writhe, in order to obtain longer strands of silk.

Leather, by contrast, does not directly contribute to the suffering of animals in most cases. In most cases, leather is made from the byproducts of animals that would be slaughtered for meat, rennet, and other animal products.

This is precisely why many vegetarians who have an ethical dilemma with meat have no problem wearing leather: because they do not see it as the primary reason for killing the animals, but instead a byproduct of the slaughter.

However, certain groups of vegans oppose wearing leather on the grounds that it indirectly contributes to the suffering of animals.

These vegans argue that contributing money to the companies that own the slaughterhouses (and sell the byproducts for leather, etc.) is just as bad as actually purchasing and eating meat yourself because you are still contributing money to the continuation of institutionalized animal suffering.

This is certainly something to consider if you are currently a vegan or a vegetarian for ethical reasons. It may have been tough to give up meat in the first place, but if you are truly committed to the cause and you believe the arguments are strong-enough, you may want to avoid clothing purchases that will aid institutions that cause animal suffering.

Vegetarian Statistics

Many non vegetarians and some vegetarians alike question whether being a vegetarian really makes any difference at all. Some bring up blurry ethical situations to make it impossible to see a vegetarian lifestyle as ethical.

If you are a prospective vegetarian for ethical reasons, but aren't sure whether or not a vegetarian lifestyle is truly a more ethical choice, here are some statistics from EarthSave to help you make your choice (for or against):

1. Over 1.3 billion human beings could be fed each year from the grain and soybeans that go to livestock in the United States.

This means that the entire population of the United States could be fed (without losing any nutritional value) and there would still be enough food left over to feed one billion people.

In a world where millions of people die each year of starvation, that type of food excess and inefficiency could be considered unethical.

2. Livestock in the US produces roughly 30 times more excrement than human beings. While humans in the US have complex sewage systems to collect and treat human waste, there are no such systems on feedlots. As a result, most of this waste leeches into water.

This means that large-scale, massive production and slaughter of animals is not only unethical, but it also causes serious environmental degradation.

3. It takes 7.5 pounds of protein feed to create 1 pound of consumable hog protein; and it takes 5 pounds of protein feed to create 1 pound of consumable chicken protein. Close to 90% of protein from wheat and beans is lost to feed cycling.

This means that an enormous amount of resources are dedicated to producing wheat and soy just for the purpose of feeding it to animals, which will be slaughtered as "a source of protein"--even though they only provide about 1/5 of the amount they consume.

Not only can the production of meat be considered an injustice against animals, but it can also be considered an injustice against human beings, as well as the environment in general.

Why People Become Vegetarians

Many non vegetarians wonder what drives vegetarians to give up meat and adopt an entirely different lifestyle. There is no single answer to this question. Non vegetarians become vegetarians for a number of different reasons – some even for multiple reasons.

Most vegetarians claim that they became a vegetarian for one of three reasons.

The first reason, which most vegetarians claim, is that they have ethical problems with eating meat. Most disagree with how chickens are debeaked, forced to live in small cages, and are then slaughtered when they do not produce eggs fast enough.

Most vegetarians also disagree with the crowded and stressful environments animals are forced into; and the hormone-laden feed used to make them grow faster and produce more.

People who become vegetarians for this purpose often draw ethical boundaries in different spots, depending on their personal beliefs. For instance, some staunch vegans won't consume yeast, wear wool, or even eat certain vegetables, such as carrots, that require killing the plant to harvest.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, some vegetarians--sometimes referred to as pseudo-vegetarians--will actually eat fish and chicken on a regular basis.

The second biggest reason vegetarians claim for not eating meat is that it conflicts with their dietary preferences. Some of these vegetarians simply do not like the texture and taste of meat; others do not eat it because it is high in cholesterol and often contains high concentrations of hormones and preservatives.

The third and smallest group of vegetarians cite environmental reasons for not consuming meat. They complain that consumption of meat causes farmers to continually deforest land to create grazing land for cattle.

In addition to these three major groups, there are a number of other smaller groups of vegetarians who stopped eating meat for entirely different reasons.

Conclusion

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