



The Ultimate Vegetarian Cooking And Food Guide



Everything You'll Ever Need to Know About
Cooking And Preparing Vegetarian Food

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Chapter 1

History of Vegetarianism

To get a good understanding of being a vegetarian, vegetarian food, and cooking it will help to learn about the origins of Vegetarianism. Vegetarianism can be traced back to ancient Egyptian society where many religious sects abstained from eating meat or wearing clothing that was made from animal skins do to their beliefs in reincarnation. The practice could also be found in ancient Greece. Most notably, the famed scholar Pythagoras, known for his contributions in the field of mathematics believed that being a vegetarian was an essential part of being a good human and would help lead to a peaceful existence. The idea of being a vegetarian was hotly debated by the Greeks throughout their civilization. This was one idea that the Romans did not share with the Greeks. Romans saw animals as a source of food and entertainment for the masses.

Vegetarianism in Religion

Adhering to a vegetarian diet is central to many religions. Buddhism shows kindness to all living things and its believers hold many animals to be scared for what they provide to humans whether it is milk or as work animals to help plow fields. Followers of Christianity had different views when it came to being a vegetarian. Christians believe that humans reign over all other living things on Earth meaning that they believe that animals are here for their use whether that means as beasts of burden or as a food source. However, that does not mean that all Christians

are carnivores. Throughout history, different sects of Christians have broken with the mainstream beliefs and preached a vegetarian lifestyle. Vegetarianism played a key role for Christians in Eastern Europe; among these groups were the Bogomils that rose up in the 900's in what is now modern day Bulgaria. The Bogomils were seen as heretics because they spoke out against what they saw as the excesses of monasteries and the Eastern Orthodox Church; they rejected the physical world and forswore the consumption of eggs, meat, and cheese that led them to lead a vegetarian lifestyle.

Hinduism

While not all Hindu's practice vegetarianism a substantial portion of the followers of the religion up to 35 percent adhere to a vegetarian lifestyle. Those that live as vegetarians believe that idea of nonviolence applies to animals and that by avoiding the slaughter of animals they will not bring bad karma upon their family. The influence of vegetarianism on the Hindu religion came from its predecessor Brahmanism in which violence against animals was strictly controlled with its scriptures only allowing the slaughter of animals for religious sacrifice.

In Addition, the Brahmanism views are also expressed in the Hindu law book the [*Dharmaśāstra*](#), which denounced the slaughter of animals and the consumption of meat unless it was performed in a proper religious sacrifice performed by priests. Today, the slaughter of animals based on these principles has almost come to an end.

Other Religions

Other major religions throughout the world to include Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have followers that adhere to a vegetarian diet, but the religions do not have a strict policy concerning the consumption of animals. However, when it comes to Judaism and Islam followers of these religions will not consume meat unless it has been slaughtered through the traditional halal method for Muslims and kosher method for followers of Judaism. While both of these religions allow their followers to eat meat that has been prepared in the proper manner they both avoid eating pork, and meat from carnivorous animals to include birds of prey.

Chapter 2

Types of Vegetarians

If you are looking to join the vegetarian lifestyle, there are different options from which you can choose. These different options give you the opportunity to ease your way into the scene without having to jump into the deep end with no life vest. You no longer have to make the decision to swear off meat all together to be a vegetarian and you can choose to be one of the four types.

Strict Vegetarian/Vegan

Strict vegetarians are also known as vegans and as their name implies, they do not eat any products that derive from animals, to include cheese, eggs, and cream. Vegans will replace the

nutrients that are found in food that comes from animals with different foodstuffs. For example, vegans use tofu to replace meat that may be found in a dish along with the use of plant cream and plant milk. The nutrients that humans get from eggs and cheeses are replaced with the substitution of applesauce and certain ground seeds like flax.

Strict vegetarians also have their own variations of foods that meat eaters consume. If you take the time to visit your local health food store, you will have no problem finding vegetarian sausage, vegetarian burgers, vegetarian chicken nuggets, and vegetarian bacon. To replace what nutrition that is lost by not eating meat nutritionists recommend that vegans have a minimum of three servings a day of vegetables that include the dark green and leafy vegetables such as spinach and broccoli, along with vegetables like carrots.

To further their nutritional intake nutritionists recommend that strict vegetarians also consume at least five servings a day of whole grains like pasta, bread, and rice. To comply with nutritionist guidelines strict vegetarians should also have three servings of fruit and at least two servings of beans, peas, or lentils.

Health Benefits

Research studies have shown that people that adhere to a strict vegetarian diet and follow the recommended nutritional servings have a lower risk of cardiovascular disease as well as lower levels of obesity. Studies have also shown that a properly executed vegetarian diet is safe for all ages of human life, along with situations that put more nutritional needs on the body such as pregnancy. On the other hand, if a strict vegetarian does not follow a properly planned diet they

may suffer from shortages of vitamin B₁₂, Omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin D, iron, zinc, among other vital vitamins and minerals.

To counter act some of the deficiencies that can occur with being a strict vegetarian it is recommended that vegetarians eat foods that are rich in vitamin B₁₂ or take a vitamin B₁₂ supplement to ensure that blood levels maintain their normal levels. The reason for this is that vitamin B₁₂ is essential to the formation of new red blood cells, DNA synthesis, and proper nerve function. By not consuming the recommended dosage of vitamin B₁₂, strict vegetarians are at risk for a variety of health problems to include anemia.

This is especially critical in strict vegetarians that become pregnant. Vegetarian women should supplement their diet with B₁₂. Low levels of B₁₂ when breastfeeding have been linked to neurological problems in children. It is also important during pregnancy for a strict vegetarian to ensure that they follow the recommended daily servings because consuming a vegetarian diet has been linked to low birth weights in newborns.

Lacto vegetarian

Lacto vegetarians follow most of the dietary recommendations of strict vegetarians except that they consume milk, cheese, yogurt, and butter but not eggs. This type of vegetarian diet is popular in India. Lacto vegetarianism is in keeping with the Eastern religions such as Hinduism, Sikhism, and Buddhism and their belief in non-violence. Hindu's believe that you are affected by the type of food that you consume and being a lacto vegetarian helps them maintain an inner peace by not consuming the flesh of any animals.

Health Benefits

This type of vegetarian diet is good for people that want to keep their cholesterol levels at an acceptable number. They can do this because lacto vegetarians abstain from eating fish and egg yolks that are high in cholesterol. Just like strict vegetarians, those who choose to become lacto vegetarians should maintain a proper diet with the recommended servings of vegetables, legumes, whole grains, and fruits. They should also back up their food selections with vitamin supplements such as B₁₂, iodine, and choline.

Furthermore, while vegetarian diets have been deemed healthy for all ages, pregnant women should ensure that they are getting all of the recommended nutrition. If they do not, they are putting their newborn at risk for low birth weight, neurological disorders, and vision problems. They can help avoid these problems by taking the aforementioned vitamins and minerals along with DHA supplements to help the development of the newborns vision.

Lacto Ovovegetarian

A person who chooses to become a lacto ovovegetarian is a vegetarian who does not eat meat but does consume dairy products and eggs. This type of vegetarian diet is more common in Western culture. This is also the most common type of vegetarianism that is catered to in mainstream restaurants. This means that if you are going to go to dinner with someone who is a lacto ovovegetarian you do not have to look for a restaurant that caters exclusively to vegetarians because most restaurants will have vegetarian options available on their menu.

This type of vegetarian lifestyle is popular with Seventh Day Adventists. The Seventh Day Adventist church recommends that its followers eat a diet that is rich in whole grain bread, cereal, and pasta. It also calls for the liberal use of green leafy vegetables and fruits along with a modest amount of nuts, beans, and seeds. When it comes to consuming dairy products Seventh Day Adventists advises its followers to choose the low fat varieties of milk, yogurt, and cheese and does allow for the consumption of eggs.

Health Benefits

Like other types of vegetarianism, being a lacto ovovegetarian has healthy benefits. Lacto ovovegetarian usually consume a diet that is lower in saturated fats and cholesterol than the traditional diets that include the consumption of meat, which can aid in reducing the risk of atherosclerosis and lowering blood pressure. Some people who suffer from diabetes can better control their blood glucose levels through the implementation of a vegetarian diet. This is possible through the consumption of vegetarian foods such as legumes, fruit, and green leafy vegetables that can make your body more responsive to insulin. In addition, the vegetarian diet is low in fat and high in fiber, which in turn can help you maintain a healthy weight further controlling blood glucose levels.

Moreover, as well as being helpful for people who suffer from diabetes, a vegetarian diet has also been shown to lower a person's risk for cancer. Vegetarian foods are full of antioxidants and phytochemicals, which have been shown to lower the risk of cancer. To that end, consuming meat has been shown to increase a person's chance of getting prostate and colon cancer.

Additionally, studies have shown that diets high in fat have been linked to a higher risk of breast cancer.

Flexitarian

The term “flexitarian” is relatively new and is used to describe people who follow a vegetarian diet for the most part but will occasionally eat meat. You might meet people who call themselves semi-vegetarian, this is the same as being a flexitarian. This might be a good option for someone who is making the transition from being a meat eater to a vegetarian. You can try to avoid eating meat, but if you want to have a small break, its okay and you will not feel like you have failed. One compromise that some flexitarians do when eating meat is that when they eat meat they only eat animals that have been raised organically or free range.

Being a flexitarian has become somewhat of an argument in the vegetarian culture. Some vegetarians feel that any consumption of any meat products is strictly forbidden, while others have embraced the idea that any reduction in people consuming animals is a positive. The benefit of being a flexitarian is that you can get essential protein through meat and will be less prone to need outside supplements to maintain healthy levels of vitamins and minerals.

Chapter 3

The United States

In a recent study that was performed, it was determined that just over three percent of Americans are vegetarian or approximately nine million people. Three million of those who claimed to be vegetarian identified themselves as vegan meaning that they do not eat any products that come from animals to include dairy products and eggs. Additionally, nearly ten percent of U.S. adults or thirty million stated that they follow a mostly vegetarian diet.

The majority of adults that stated that they follow a vegetarian diet were female at sixty percent with males at forty percent. There was also a slight majority for people aged eighteen to thirty-four suggesting that the decision to become a vegetarian is one that takes place early in life. The main reason for deciding to become a vegetarian was health concerns, with over fifty percent giving that reason.

Origins

Vegetarianism in the United States was endorsed by the American Health Convention in 1838. However, vegetarians remained somewhat of an enigma in American society with only one percent of the population adhering to a vegetarian diet up until 1971. This percentage has tripled

over the last forty years with now over three percent of Americans following a vegetarian diet. This number is only sure to grow as vegetarian parents introduce their children to the lifestyle. There are some scholars that point to the year 1971 as the birth of vegetarianism in the United States due to the release of the book *Diet for a Small Planet* by Francis Moore Lappé.

Important Literary Contributions

In *Diet for a Small Planet*, Lappé makes the case for conserving food after she learned that it takes fourteen times the amount of grain to feed an animal compared to the amount of meat that can be consumed from the same animal. In fact, she determined that livestock consume about eighty percent of all the grain that is produced in the United States, which takes it out of the mouths it could feed at a much lower price than animal meat can.

The early 1970's also saw the popularity of soybeans grow in the United States. The main credit for this can be traced to a vegetarian commune farm in Tennessee that was given the unimaginative title "The Farm". The soybean based product tofu was brought to the attention of mainstream America through the publication of *The Farm Cookbook*.

As the twentieth-century wore on more books were being published about being a vegetarian. In 1987, John Robbins published the book *Diet for a New America*, which built upon studies that had been done on vegetarian diets along with adding new information and it presented the information in an objective manner. One of the main points that *Diet for a New America* made was the contrast between the health benefits of being a vegetarian to how eating a meat-based

diet could lead to a higher incidence of medical problems such as hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and some cancers.

The trend of publishing new findings in health and vegetarianism continued into the 1990's, which saw the publication of *Dr. Dean Ornish's Program for Reversing Heart Disease* in 1990. In this publication, Dr. Ornish showed through his research how heart disease could be reversed through the implementation of a mostly vegetarian, low fat diet. It was during the 1990's that the American Dietetic Association began to espouse the benefits of a vegetarian diet for its benefits in health and help with lowering blood glucose levels in people who suffer from diabetes.

England

Vegetarianism in England has a long and distinctive history. Even before the term “vegetarian” was coined there were people in the church that advocated a diet that was free of animal flesh. One of the first church officials to champion a diet free of meat was the leader of the Bible Christian Church, Reverend William Cowherd. To Reverend Cowherd, the consumption of animal flesh was something that was not in keeping with the natural order of the world and could lead to aggression.

The idea that following a vegetarian diet was morally virtuous caught on in England. This can be seen with the formation of the Vegetarian Society on September 30, 1847 in Ramsgate, Kent. The society immediately had over one hundred people sign up to be members, a number that rose to over two hundred and fifty the following year. The idea of vegetarianism spread quickly

across the country and by 1849, the Vegetarian Society newsletter *The Vegetarian Messenger* had a circulation of approximately five thousand.

Expansion

Vegetarianism in England spread relatively fast, 1877 saw the formation of The London Food Reform Society, which not only swore off animal flesh but alcohol and tobacco. Vegetarian meetings were held all across Britain, from Glasgow to London and Liverpool, the movement became so influential that even a vegetarian hotel was opened in Birmingham at the turn of the twentieth-century.

Throughout the twentieth-century vegetarianism continued to grow throughout England, with interruptions to vegetarian diets due to the First and Second World Wars. It was after the Second World War, in the 1950's, that vegetarianism in England began to prosper once again.

Restaurants in London started to include vegetarian selections, which not only attracted vegetarians to their restaurants but also gave customers the opportunity to try something new. Restaurants offering vegetarian options on their menus coincided with vegetarian societies and clubs across the country beginning to work together and putting out a common message about the benefits of living a vegetarian lifestyle.

As in the United States, medical professionals, doctors and researchers became involved in investigating the vegetarian diet. Prior to Dr. Dean Ornish in the United States, Dr. Frank Wokes studied the vegetarian diet in England starting in the 1950's. His research, like Dr. Ornish's that was to follow showed the benefits of eating a vegetarian diet and its help with weight loss and

lowering the risk of cardiac problems in people that ate a vegetarian based diet. Today, vegetarian restaurants can be found all across England.

India

Perhaps no other country on the planet is as closely associated with vegetarian cuisine than India. Indians have been closely linked with vegetarianism dating back to the birth of Buddhism and its emphasis on non-violence. Their belief in non-violence goes hand in hand with its reverence for cows and seeing them as an animal that provides for them so its flesh should not be consumed by humans.

That is not to say that all Indians are vegetarian but it does enjoy popularity in many of India's states. Many Indian states have populations that are over fifty percent vegetarian with more states just below that level, in a country that has over a billion people; it makes for a lot of vegetarians. The state that boasts the largest percent, nearly seventy percent vegetarian is Gujarat located on the western coast of India.

Gujarat

Their morning meal is usually made up of rice, lentils, roti, and vegetables, in the evening a favorite meal is known as khichdi kadhi, which is a dish made up of rice and lentils. However, their food selections are not just limited to rice and lentils. Staples of Gujarati's cuisine include cereal, buttermilk, fruits, vegetables, yogurt, chutney, ghee, and pickles along with various spices that are used during food preparation.

Andhra Pradesh

The southern state of Andhra Pradesh is also well known for its vegetarian dishes. Andhra Pradesh cuisine is infused with the use of different varieties of pickles that are available at different times of the year. It is also known for its spiciness, which is why you will find curd served quite often with meals as a counter balance. Like the cuisine that is found in Gujarat, food staples in Andhra Pradesh are rice, lentils, and various vegetables.

Punjab

The Punjab region of India is known for its diversity in food preparation, this includes many vegetarian dishes. Punjabi cuisine incorporates the use of ghee, or clarified butter, along with rice cooked in sugar cane juice. Most of the dishes include whole wheat with the use of garlic and ginger for seasoning. Like other regions and states in India, you will find dishes that have lentils and are served with curd to take a bite out of the spiciness. You will also find dishes that are prepared using buttermilk as well as the use of red and black beans.

Germany

At first thought, one might not think of Germany as having a sizable vegetarian population, especially with it being famous for its sausage and schnitzel. However, recent studies have shown that Germany's population is about eleven percent vegetarian, which is a greater percent of the population being vegetarian than even the United States.

Some of this growth in vegetarianism in Germany can be traced to its increasing population diversity. According to new government data, nearly one in five Germans has immigrated to Germany. This growing diversity has added to the variety of foods that are available at German supermarkets as well as adding to the assortment of restaurants that cater to immigrants and native Germans.

Shopping for vegetarian foods in Germany can be a little tricky if you are not familiar with the language or have a native German to help you pick the right packages. This is because unlike countries such as the United States and England, Germany does not have a system to label their food as vegetarian. So if you find yourself in this predicament get a good German dictionary so you will be able to make out what the ingredients are in the package of food that you want to buy.

If you choose to take your meals at a restaurant, you should not have any trouble finding vegetarian selections on the menu. This is especially true if you are visiting any of the large cities across the country. However, even the smaller eateries in rural parts of the country have at least one selection available on their menu.

Chapter 4

Vegetarian Food and Your Health

Switching to a vegetarian diet can be an exciting and fun way to attain a healthier lifestyle. As we have previously learned, vegetarians do not eat meat, poultry, or fish. Although some do eat dairy or eggs. If you choose to follow one of these diets and lifestyles, you will find that your risks of contracting certain diseases will fall.

Cardiovascular Disease

Studies that have been conducted on vegetarians have shown that they have lower cholesterol levels than people who consume red meat. This is because cholesterol is found in animal products to include milk and eggs. Therefore, even if you choose to become a lacto vegetarian you will be consuming much lower levels of cholesterol than if you stayed on a meat based diet. To that end, vegetarian meals are also low in saturated fat, one of the leading causes of cardiovascular disease. In addition, studies have shown that consuming plant proteins instead of animal proteins have led to vegetarians having lower cholesterol levels.

Hypertension

There have also been many studies conducted on vegetarians in concern to their blood pressure. Results have shown that vegetarians, on average, have lower blood pressure than people who consume red meat as a regular part of their diet. Adhering to a vegetarian diet is beneficial for people who suffer from hypertension due to it being low in sodium and cholesterol. In some cases, people who have suffered from hypertension and switched to a vegetarian diet have been able to stop taking medication to keep their blood pressure under control.

Diabetes

Becoming a vegetarian can also be advantageous to people who suffer from diabetes. A vegetarian diet is high in complex carbohydrates and low in fat, which are essential in keeping a diabetic person's blood glucose level at a more normal range. Some people who suffer from diabetes have actually been able to come off their medication once they switched to a vegetarian diet, while others have seen a decrease in the amount of self-injected insulin they require in order to keep their blood glucose level within an acceptable range.

Cancer

Committing to a vegetarian diet can also reduce the risk of some cancers. Studies have shown that people who live in countries and cultures that have a vegetarian diet or nearly vegetarian diet have a less incidence of breast and colon cancer in their population. It is believed that this is achieved because vegetarian diets are low in fat and high in fiber. In addition, vegetables are high in beta-carotene that has been shown to help lower the risk of getting cancer. It has also been discovered that people who follow a vegetarian diet have more of what are called killer cells that are able to protect the body by fighting off and killing cells that are turning cancerous.

Other Diseases

Just as vegetarians are at a lower risk of getting some cancers, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes, they are at a lower risk for being afflicted with gallstones, kidney stones, or osteoporosis. This is due to consuming plant proteins instead of animal protein. Eating high quantities of animal protein has been shown in studies to dramatically decrease the amount of

calcium from human bones. With the vegetarian diet, the consumption of plant proteins can help people from getting osteoporosis.

Chapter 5

How to Plan a Vegetarian Diet

If you are making the switch to a vegetarian diet do not be overwhelmed when it comes to making a shopping list so you can start preparing vegetarian meals at home. It is not a difficult job to make sure that you have everything you need to succeed in your new endeavor. Make sure you buy plenty of grains, green leafy vegetables, beans, and nuts. If you are unsure of how to prepare vegetarian meals, invest in a vegetarian cookbook, which are plentiful at your local bookstore or look online for recipe ideas.

Simple Guidelines for the Beginner

Start with simple and easy to prepare meals such as brown rice and mix in your favorite vegetables, you can even add flavor to rice by adding apple juice to the water when cooking it. Take a trip to your local ethnic market, many of these markets especially ones that cater to people from the Middle East will have a variety of vegetarian selections available and will be able to give you some pointers about how to prepare food that you might not be familiar with. To curb your temptations to fall off the vegetarian wagon while you have a day out, pack some nuts, granola, fresh or dried fruit, along with some juice.

Chapter 6

What about Protein?

Getting the right amount of protein is important to maintain human health. It was once believed that a vegetarian diet could not deliver the proper amount of protein that humans needed without including at least some red meat. However, this has been proven not to be the case. If you follow a proper vegetarian diet with the right amount of bean, grains, lentils, and vegetables you get all of the essential amino acids that you need to maintain a healthy diet.

The benefit of consuming plant proteins instead of animal protein is that you will not only eating a healthier diet but your risk for many medical problems will be lowered. Eating a diet that is high in animal protein increases your risk for developing kidney disease, certain cancers, kidney stones, and even osteoporosis.

How about Calcium?

Do not be worried that by becoming a vegetarian that you will be not getting the required amount of calcium that is needed to maintain your body's health. The benefit of being a vegetarian is that a proper vegetarian diet does not contain protein from animals. Diets that are high in animal proteins have been shown to cause bones to lose calcium and possibly lead to osteoporosis.

Along with the use of plant proteins to maintain healthy calcium levels vegetarians can find foods that are a good source of calcium. Good sources of calcium in a vegetarian diet include soymilk, soybeans, lentils, almonds, and some dried fruit.

Chapter 7

Supermarket Shopping Tips

When you have made the decision to become a vegetarian you will also have the task of relearning your favorite supermarket. You will have to find things on aisles that you may have never been down before. As most supermarkets are generally laid out in like fashion, it is good to know the sections where vegetarian foods can be found. Most supermarkets now offer a health food section, and it is here where you will find products like vegetarian burgers, sausage, and roasts. The refrigerated section of your supermarket is where you will find tofu, hummus, vegetarian bacon, vegetarian hotdogs, and egg-free pasta. Other vegetarian staples will be where they have always been, these items include rice, beans, pasta, and spaghetti sauce. Of course, you should already know where they keep the vegetables at your local supermarket.

A Sample of a Vegetarian Menu

Making the switch to become a vegetarian does not mean that your daily meals will be filled with bland food that resembles bark from a tree. There are many choices that you can make to have delicious and attractive looking meals. For breakfast, have oatmeal, toast with peanut butter, your favorite fruit, and cereal with soymilk and top it off with a sliced banana or your other favorite fruit. At lunchtime, you can choose from having a veggieburger, garden salad, baked sweet or regular potato topped with your favorite vegetable, hummus, or a hearty vegetable soup with crackers, or a bowl of fresh fruit. For dinner, you could choose from having

burritos stuffed with beans, rice, tomatoes, and avocado, or a fresh garden salad. You could opt for a Chinese stir-fry made with tofu and vegetables such as broccoli, onions, and ginger or vegetarian sausage. You could also have pasta topped with a vegetarian spaghetti sauce or just a nice selection of your favorite vegetables with a nice vegetarian dip. If you get hungry during the day, make sure that you have some vegetarian snacks on hand like fresh fruit, trail mix, dried fruit, or a soy based yogurt.

Chapter 8

Forget about the Five Food Groups

Most of us can remember way back in school learning about the five food groups and what the recommended servings were from each group, but the five food groups that we learned about are no more. What was once five groups have now been pared down to four. This new and improved four food groups was developed in 1991 as a way to try to reduce the amount of cholesterol and fats that adults were consuming with the previous five-food group plan.

Group 1 – Vegetables

It is now recommended that adults consume at least five servings of vegetables everyday. While it was already known that vegetables are good for you, the more that is learned about the healthy properties in vegetables the more they should be incorporated into your daily routine.

Vegetables are rich in vitamin C, iron, calcium, beta-carotene, and riboflavin. Vegetables that

are of the dark green and leafy variety like broccoli and spinach are full of these nutrients.

Vegetables that are yellow or orange such as carrots, squash, sweet potatoes, and pumpkins have even more nutrients like beta-carotene than green leafy vegetables. For vegetables, the serving size is either 1-cup of raw vegetables or ½ cup of cooked vegetables.

Group 2 – Whole Grains

For whole grains, it is recommended that adults should have at least three servings a day. Whole grains are rich in protein, fiber, B vitamins, and complex carbohydrates. To get the nutrition you need from whole grains you need to know what foods to choose. Foods that are considered whole grain include cereal, tacos, whole grain bread, whole grain pasta, and corn. Serving sizes for whole grains are as follows, ½ cup of rice or pasta, ½ cup of cereal, or one slice of bread.

Group 3 – Fruit

When it comes to fruit, it is recommended that adults should have at least three servings a day. Eating fresh fruit is important because it is rich in beta-carotene and vitamin C. It is important that at least one of the serving of fruit that you incorporate into your diet should be of the citrus variety such as oranges, strawberries, melon, or peaches. This is because they are full of vitamin C. Whenever possible do not substitute fruit juices for the actual fruit because you will not get the same level of nutrition from them. Serving sizes for the fruit group breakdown like this, ½ cup of cooked fruit, ½ cup of juice, or one medium piece of fruit.

Group 4 – Legumes

It is now recommended that to ensure that you are following a healthy diet you should have at least two servings of legumes everyday. Consuming legumes are important for vegetarians because they are good sources of iron, fiber, B vitamins, protein, calcium, and zinc. If the word “legume” seems funny, it is just another word for foods such as lentils, beans, and peas. Other foods that are considered part of the legume group include chickpeas, refried beans, and tofu. Proper serving size for the legume group is ½ cup of cooked beans or four ounces of tofu.

Chapter 9

Pregnancy and Vegetarianism

When a woman becomes pregnant, her body needs more nutrition in order to help the development of her unborn child. For women that are vegetarian, it does not mean that you have to give up being one to ensure you are getting the proper nutrition for yourself and your baby. What you have to do is alter the servings of the four food groups to maximize your nutrition. The good news is that because you were are vegetarian before you became pregnant that you are probably in good health, which is very important for the initial stages of your pregnancy.

Calcium

During pregnancy, it is important to maintain proper nutrition and one of the most important nutrients during pregnancy is calcium. When pregnant, vegetarians should try to have at least four servings of foods that are high in calcium. Foods that are good sources of calcium

especially when pregnant include green leafy vegetables, cereals and soymilk that has been fortified with calcium, bok choy, and beans.

Vitamin B12

One vitamin that is lacking in the vegetarian diet is vitamin B₁₂. When a woman is pregnant it is more important than ever to make sure that she is getting all of the vitamins she needs to ensure proper development of her unborn child. There are not many food choices for vegetarians to choose from that are good sources of vitamin B₁₂. The best source of vitamin B₁₂ for vegetarians is soymilk that has had vitamin B₁₂ added to it. To ensure that pregnant vegetarian women gets the right amount of vitamin B₁₂ in their diet it is recommended that they take a B₁₂ supplement. It is important to check the label of prenatal vitamins to ensure that vitamin B₁₂ is included in its recommended daily dosage.

Iron

For vegetarians, making sure that they have enough iron in their diet when pregnant should not be a problem. Green leafy vegetables, nuts, beans, and whole grains are all good sources of iron and are staples of the vegetarian diet. To help absorb iron, it is a good idea to eat citrus fruit or drink some juice that has high levels of vitamin C and this will help make sure that pregnant vegetarian women are getting enough iron. Just remember that as pregnancy progresses more iron is needed, so a supplement may be needed. Again, check the label of the prenatal vitamins that have been prescribed to ensure that iron is represented in the daily recommended dosage.

Protein

During pregnancy, the body's need for protein increases just like many other nutrients. This is another one of the advantages of being a vegetarian. The vegetarian diet is full of good sources of protein, soy, whole grains, and legumes are full of protein and if you have been following a proper vegetarian diet, you are probably already getting enough protein even during pregnancy.

Suggestions for Meals during Pregnancy

As you have read, when pregnant it is important to maintain a healthy diet and increase the intake of some foods to ensure that the proper amount of nutrients are consumed. To do this, make sure that your meals include green leafy vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts, and fruit. For example, for breakfast have juice, cereal topped with your favorite fruit, or perhaps toast with peanut butter. For lunch, have a healthy garden salad with a nice assortment of fresh fruit. For dinner, have some lentil soup and do not be afraid to add your favorite vegetables to the soup, perhaps broccoli or spinach. For snacks during the day, have some dried fruit, trail mix, or nuts. Do not forget to include some soymilk that has been fortified with vitamin B₁₂ and take any supplements that have been prescribed. If the decision to breastfeed is made then the same diet that was followed during pregnancy should be continued until the decision is made to stop breastfeeding.

Chapter 10

Vegetarianism and Children

One of the most important things you can do as a parent is to teach your children how to eat healthy. The best way to do this is to start as soon as they are born to set a solid foundation for the rest of their lives. When it comes to newborns and the decision has been made not to breastfeed use a soy based formula to ensure that the newborn gets all the necessary nutrients. Do not just use regular soymilk because a newborn needs all the nutrients that the soy based formula has been fortified with. Do not keep your newborn indoors all the time, make sure that you go out for walks or outing so the newborn can get vitamin D from the sun.

As Your Newborn Grows

When your newborn reaches four to five months, it is okay to start introducing them to other foods. Start by offering them pureed fruit like bananas, peaches, or applesauce. You can even try single grain cereal mixed with a little soymilk. Make sure when you introduce new foods to your newborn that you watch closely for any allergic reactions that may occur.

By the time your newborn reaches six months old, they should be ready for vegetables. Make sure that they have been fully cooked and pureed. Good choices to introduce at this time are pureed sweet potatoes, green beans, and carrots. By the time your newborn reaches eight months

old, you can introduce them to crackers and bread. Their rapid development will continue to astound you and by the time they reach a year old they should be getting nourishment from all of the four food groups and now is a good time to introduce them to soymilk that has been fortified with vitamin B₁₂. These ages are a guideline to follow, do not be worried if your child does not want fruit at four months or vegetables at six months because all children develop at different rates and when your newborn is ready you will be sure to know it.

Older Children

If you decide to wait until your children get older to introduce them to a vegetarian lifestyle there are some steps that you can follow to make the transition easier for you and your children. Do not try to convert your children over night into being vegetarians. Start by slowly removing meat from their diet. You can still let them have some of their favorite foods, pizza, for example but instead of topping it with pepperoni or sausage, choose green peppers, onions, or a combination of vegetables. To replace the protein that will be lost by not eating red meat, introduce more beans into their diets, which are a good source of protein.

Don't Rely on Gimmicks

One of the things that parents do when they are changing their children from omnivores to vegetarian is to smother their food with cheese. As you have already read, some vegetarians consume dairy products so it is not cheating but it is not a great idea to rely on this too much. While cheese can be a nutritious part of a vegetarian diet, it is also high in saturated fat and has a

lot of sodium in it, which can be harmful to your child's diet and thus undoing the good that you are trying to do with a vegetarian diet.

Children are Different than Adults

It is important for parents to remember that children are not small adults. Their nutritional needs are different from what adults need. Serving children vegetarian foods that are high in fiber is not a good idea because children cannot digest fiber as well as an adult can. In addition, children have smaller stomachs than adults do, so when you are changing their diet to vegetarian they might need to eat more than three times a day. If you find this is the case with your children try to serve them smaller more frequent meals to ensure they get all of the recommended daily servings of the four food groups.

Important Nutrients for Children

A child's body is a living breathing machine and in order for it to function and grow properly it needs the proper fuel to make it happen. It is the job of the parent to make sure that their diet contains the appropriate amounts of green leafy vegetables, legumes, whole grain, and fruit. By doing this the parent will ensure that their child will get all the necessary iron, calcium, protein, and zinc. Parents also need to be proactive and make sure their children do not sit in front of the television playing video games or facebook and get outside to soak in some vitamin D. Vegetarian children will probably also need to take a vitamin B₁₂ supplement in order to meet their body's requirement for growth.

Chapter 11

Helpful Tips for Parents

School Lunch

When changing your children's diet parents are bound to come across some obstacles. One of these for parents of school age children is the school lunch. Children that are changing to a vegetarian diet are bound to face some peer pressure from their friends who find it either weird or strange to be a vegetarian. It is important for parents to sit down with their children and explain what the benefits of being a vegetarian diet are.

Packing a lunch, with input of the child, can help avoid any slips away from a vegetarian diet. Parents can make sandwiches with hummus with tomatoes or avocado. Peanut butter sandwiches and pretzels are an easy alternative to lunchmeat. Parents can send a hearty vegetable soup or stew in a thermos as well as leftover pasta with a vegetarian spaghetti sauce. For something on the side send raw vegetables with a vegetarian dip, whole grain muffins, soy based yogurt, or fresh fruit.

Having Friends Over

One challenge that parents of vegetarian children will face is what to do when their friends come over to play, birthday party, or other event. However, do not fret parents; there are many options

available from which to choose that will make you, your children, and their friends happy.

Vegetarian hamburgers are widely available at all supermarkets and you can include everyone by allowing them the opportunity to choose their own condiments, whether that is just ketchup and mustard or avocado, lettuce, onions, and tomatoes. Additionally, vegetarian hotdogs are also widely available at your local supermarket and unless you know that it is vegetarian, the taste is just about indistinguishable from the meat variety. Pizza is another good standby to choose, just make sure that the toppings are vegetarian instead of meat. If your child is having friends over during the warmer months, fruit smoothies are a refreshing treat that not only fun but also healthy.

Family Members

Just because your part of the greater family is vegetarian does not mean that the rest of your family is or is knowledgeable about the vegetarian lifestyle. To help your child stay on the right track, do not beat around the bush with family members and with parents of your child's friends. Being upfront with them will ensure that they know where you stand and there will not be any misunderstandings when it comes to your child visiting friends and family. To help make things easier when your vegetarian child visits friends and family send along a dish with them to avoid putting any undue burden on anyone. If you have good relationships with family and your child's friends give them a list of what foods a vegetarian can eat, just try not to be too pushy with it so nobody gets hurt feelings or feel as if you are telling them what to do.

Plan Ahead

With most households now either having to have both parents work or headed up by a single parent time is of the essence, so it is important to plan ahead. Get some cookbooks that have recipes for quick, nutritious meals. You can have a cook day, include your children, and make several meals that you can freeze and use throughout the week. This is a great way to get your children involved in the vegetarian lifestyle and a great way to learn what they really like and what they would rather not eat. Incorporate leftovers into other dishes to avoid being monotonous and add variety. In addition, try to keep a good supply of fresh fruit available for snacks.

Advantages of being a Child Vegetarian

Getting a jump start on a healthy lifestyle by becoming a vegetarian at an early age will benefit children as they grow into adulthood. With childhood obesity becoming more and more of a problem in society being a vegetarian will dramatically decrease the chances of that happening. Being a vegetarian early in life will also lessen the risk of developing cardiovascular disease, some forms of cancer, and lower chance of suffering a heart attack or stroke. In addition, in some studies vegetarian girls have been shown to start menstruating at a later age than girls who are omnivores, by starting their menarche at a later age studies have shown that it decreases the risk of breast cancer.

Along the health benefits of turning to a vegetarian diet at a young age, studies have shown that vegetarian diet may actually boost brain function. The brain is not weighed down with animal fats that are present in the average omnivore diet so it can function and develop at a faster rate.

Some studies have shown that children who are vegetarians have shown mental capacity up to a year above their actual age.

Chapter 12

Vegetarianism and the Elderly

The elderly population is turning to vegetarianism in greater numbers in recent years. For people who have been omnivores for most of their lives it is important for them to change their diet gradually so not to shock their body. For the elderly it is important for them to see a physician before they make any drastic dietary changes to ensure that they are healthy enough to take on something new. As people grow older, dairy products are less tolerated and meat becomes harder for the elderly to digest. This is one reason why you are never too old to switch to a vegetarian diet. Vegetables, legumes, and fruit are easier to digest for the elderly and if like some of the elderly population who have trouble chewing and swallowing these foods are easily pureed.

Health Benefits for the Elderly

The elderly can suffer from all types of maladies ranging from hypertension, cardiac disease, diabetes, and osteoporosis. By making the switch to a vegetarian diet the risks of these ailments can be lessened somewhat. While it will not reverse years of damage caused by eating a diet high in fat it will help to lower their cholesterol and if they suffer from diabetes it can help bring their blood glucose levels into a more acceptable range. Like with most vegetarians, the elderly

should probably take a vitamin B₁₂ supplement to ensure they are receiving the recommended daily dosage.

Chapter 13

How to Properly Cook Vegetables Common in Vegetarian Cuisine

Broccoli

When you go to but broccoli at your local supermarket, look for it to have firm spears that are dark green with a high floret to stem ratio. What is great about broccoli is that it only takes a few minutes to cook, about four minutes in a microwave or it can be steamed in only five minutes. To prepare broccoli, trim the ends off each stalk a couple of inches below the florets. If you want to eat the stalk as well, it is recommended that you remove the outer layer with a vegetable peeler and then cut into the desired size. The individual florets should then be trimmed from the head of the broccoli stalk. The broccoli is then ready to be cooked by whatever method you choose.

Eggplant

When you are choosing an eggplant at your local supermarket you want to choose one that is nice and smooth with a shiny skin, the eggplant should not have any soft spots and its skin should be wrinkle free. The best way to prepare eggplant is to cut into slices about a ½-inch thick, remove the skin lightly salt it and place the slices in a strainer and let it naturally drain for

twenty to thirty minutes. You can then either cut the eggplant into the size that you want for your dish or keep the larger slices. Eggplant is a versatile vegetable and can be prepared in different ways. If you choose to fry the eggplant, only use a small amount of oil because eggplant can act like a sponge and soak up excess oil, frying eggplant usually takes about six to eight minutes depending on the thickness of the eggplant. Eggplant is also great on a grill, before you place the eggplant on the grill lightly oil both sides, it is usually ready in about eight to ten minutes depending on the thickness of the eggplant. Eggplant is ready to eat when it has a tender texture.

Lentils

Lentils are a staple of most vegetarian diet and provide a good source of iron. You can easily find lentils prepackaged at your local supermarket. When preparing lentils it is good to remember that two cups will serve four people. The first thing that you want to do when getting ready to cook lentils is to wash them with cold water. Measure the amount of lentils that you want to cook put it in a strainer and run cold water over them to ensure that they are free of any excess dirt or grit. When cooking lentils you want to make sure that you use a pot that has some depth to it because lentils expand when they are cooked. The general rule for cooking lentils is to use two cups of water for every cup of lentils you want to cook. To spice up your lentil dish you can get creative and add spices, vegetables, or turn it into a hearty soup. Lentil recipes are only limited by your imagination, get a cookbook that specializes in vegetarian cuisine and you will be sure to find a plethora of recipes that include lentils.

Black Beans

Beans of all varieties play a large part in vegetarian cuisine. Black beans are a good source of protein, iron, thiamin, and folate. Before you start to cook black beans it is best to inspect them for any dirt or grit and to make sure that there are not any beans that are cracked or are shriveling. Black beans can take up to two hours to cook depending on their freshness; the fresher the beans are the less time is needed to cook them because they have more moisture inside of them. For the best results when cooking black beans it is recommended that they be soaked in water overnight, when doing this it is best to have at least two inches of water covering the beans. When cooking black beans do not add anything to the pot such as salt or vegetables until the beans are almost finished cooking. Black beans are a wonderful addition to rice dishes and be sure to include your favorite vegetables for a wonderful meal.

Red Beans

Like black beans, red beans are also used quite a bit in vegetarian cooking. Red beans are a good source of protein, iron, folate, and dietary fiber. As with black beans, the first thing you should do before preparing red beans is to inspect them for dirt and grit. In addition, if there are any beans that are discolored discard them. If you choose to soak the beans overnight before cooking them it will decrease the cooking time, just be sure not to soak them for longer than twenty-four hours as this could lead to the beans beginning to ferment. When you are ready to start cooking, drain the beans from the water that they were soaking in and give them a good rinse. Change the water and cover the beans with water and bring them to a boil, as soon as the water begins to boil reduce the heat and cover the pot. Let the beans simmer for one to three hours depending on the

amount of beans you are cooking. You will know when the beans are done when they soft and can be mashed easily. Red beans are great as a side dish by themselves or with rice.

Homemade Veggieburgers

Just because you have decided to become a vegetarian or have been one for as long as you can remember, it does not mean that you have to give up on having a tasty burger. The great thing about veggieburgers is that there are all different kinds made from all types of vegetarian ingredients. For example, veggieburgers can be made from a combination of black beans and potatoes. To make these great tasting veggieburgers you will need one cup of canned black beans, ½ an onion, three medium sized potatoes, two scallions, and ½ cup of corn. To prepare the ingredients, you will want to dice the onion, grate the potatoes, and chop the scallions. Then mash the black beans and then add the other ingredients mixing them well together. Then shape them into patties just like regular hamburgers add a couple of tablespoons of oil to the pan and cook about four minutes on each side. To add to the veggieburger top it with fresh avocado, tomatoes, or another of your favorite fresh vegetables.

Zucchini

When you are inspecting zucchini at your local supermarket you want to make sure that it does not have any soft spots or any breaks in its skin. Zucchini is favored by vegetarians because it is a great source of vitamin C, and is low in saturated fat and cholesterol. Moreover, zucchini is a versatile vegetable that can be cooked and served in numerous ways. You can cut it into slices approximately a ⅓ inch thick brush with oil and cook on the grill for about three to four minutes

each side. It can be roasted in the oven at the same size as on the grill at five hundred degrees for approximately ten minutes with it being turned over once halfway through. One of the most famous dishes that zucchini is a part of is ratatouille.

To prepare ratatouille, you will need two eggplants peeled and cut into approximately one-inch cubes sprinkle with salt and place in a strainer and let it drain for two to three hours. Then cut two large zucchini into the same sized cubes toss the eggplant and zucchini cubes together with a couple of tablespoons of oil place in a baking pan into an oven that has been preheated to five hundred degrees. Roast the eggplant and zucchini mixture for about forty minutes or until they are tender and brown. When the mixture is almost done, in a large pot heat a couple of tablespoons of oil and add one onion that has been chopped and sauté until it starts to soften and brown. Then add a couple of cloves of minced garlic along with two tomatoes that have been chopped and cook for an additional five minutes and finally add the eggplant and zucchini mixture and cook for five more minutes.

Tofu

Tofu is a staple of many vegetarian diets. Tofu is made by making curd from soymilk instead of milk from cows. Soybeans are an important part of a vegetarian's diet because it has all eight essential amino acids. Although tofu is relatively new in western culture it has been used in China for over a thousand years. You will be able to find tofu in the refrigerated section of your local supermarket and it comes in different varieties. You will be able to choose from extra firm, firm, soft, and silken. It is best to stick with the type of texture of tofu of whatever recipe you are following calls for. The different types of tofu are used for different kinds of recipes. The

firm and extra firm types of tofu are good to use on the grill or in Chinese stir fry. Vegetarians like to use the soft variety as a substitute for cheese. The silken variety is used to add protein to pasta sauce, smoothies, and soups.

Cauliflower

When picking out cauliflower at your local supermarket you want to make sure that the head of the cauliflower is tight, white or purple in color without any brown or yellow spots. Cauliflower is popular with vegetarians due to it being a good source of vitamin C, with one serving of cauliflower you can get seventy-seven percent of the recommended daily allowance.

Cauliflower, like many vegetables can be prepared in many different ways from steaming, braising, and roasting. One way that cauliflower is now being used by vegetarians is as a puree. This is used to replace the starch of potatoes and can add a nice alternative and add that little something extra to your meal.

Chapter 14

Do not be Afraid of New Things

As you have read, being or becoming a vegetarian is something that is never too late in life to do. The health benefits that you will get from switching from being an omnivore to a vegetarian are almost countless. If you are suffering from hypertension, cardiovascular disease, or diabetes

being a vegetarian can help you battle back against these maladies and can perhaps give you a better quality of life.

Being a vegetarian does not have to mean that your food has to be bland and boring. Today more and more recipes are coming out that makes vegetarian cuisine fresh, vibrant, and exciting. The days of being a vegetarian and sitting down to a salad and a bowl of rice is no longer necessary as you have read. When you have made the decision to become a vegetarian go to your local bookstore and get several vegetarian cookbooks and take the time to experiment with all of the recipes so you learn what you like and what you would rather not eat.

Remember, the vegetarian lifestyle has been around for thousands of years, so there must be something to it, otherwise it would have been long gone by now. Whether it came about through religion or out of necessity is not as important as the benefits that it brings to those who choose to live a vegetarian lifestyle. That is not to mention it helps people live in harmony with the animals and the nature that surrounds us and not being a part of the unnecessary slaughter of livestock and poultry can help us live with a clearer conscious.