

It's Easy Being Green!

By Heather Moore
Senior Writer
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals

Albert Einstein is often quoted as saying that, “Nothing will benefit human health and increase the chances for survival of life on Earth as much as the evolution to a vegetarian diet.”

Studies have shown that vegans, who consume no animal products whatsoever, are far less likely to die of heart disease or cancer than meat-eaters. Jeff Prince, the vice president of education for the American Institute for Cancer Research, even touted the benefits of phytochemicals, or plant chemicals, which knock out carcinogens and fight inflammation, in *USA Today* in August. Since we need a variety of phytochemicals for optimal health, Prince believes that, “[t]hat’s why many nutritionists no longer stress individual ‘power foods,’ but instead promote a ‘plant-based’ diet of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, and nuts.”

Evidence suggests that diets high in animal fats may contribute to Alzheimer’s disease, but the protective properties of plants can help reduce your risk for the disease. Plant foods are also less likely to harbor dangerous contaminants such as *E. coli*, listeria, salmonella, and other unwanted bacteria.

Unlike meat, eggs, and dairy products, plant-based foods are cholesterol-free and generally low in fat. Most vegans never have to worry about obesity and obesity-related diseases, like diabetes.

The health benefits of a vegan diet are outstanding, but, for many, the best thing about a vegan diet is that animals don’t have to suffer and die for people to eat nutritious, environmentally-friendly, great-tasting food. If you haven’t switched to a healthy, humane vegan diet, what’s stopping you? Changing your diet isn’t nearly as inconvenient as enduring a heart bypass operation, suffering paralysis from a stroke, or facing chemotherapy and radiation treatments for cancer!

It's Easy to Adopt an Animal-Friendly Diet

It’s best to base your diet on grains, vegetables, fruits, and beans, and all the healthful foods made from them. Many of the meals you eat are likely already vegetarian or can be made that way with minimal effort. Replace the meat in chili, tacos, sloppy Joes, and other traditionally meat-based dishes with soy protein, such as Morningstar Farms Burger Style Recipe Crumbles or Boca® Ground Burger. Try burritos with beans or grilled vegetables instead of beef. Use crumbled tofu instead of ricotta cheese in manicotti and lasagna. [E\[* File contains invalid data | In-line.JPG *\]xplore plant-based foods that have been popular in other countries for many years, like hummus, vegetable curries, falafel, tempeh, seitan, and more.](#)

Instead of eating meat and potatoes most every night, vegans can feast on a variety of animal-free ethnic foods, such as Indian, Thai, Chinese, Mexican, Japanese, and more. Don’t be afraid to try new things.

Veganism is more “mainstream” than ever before and a plethora of vegan foods are available in health food stores, supermarkets, and restaurants.

Many veggie burgers, veggie dogs, and other vegan products taste close enough to the “real thing” to fool any die-hard carnivore. Others aren’t meant to replicate meat or other animal products, but instead have their own pleasing flavor. It’s always best to try several different brands before you decide which one is your favorite.

For example, instead of ice cream, try frozen desserts like Tofutti, Soy Delicious, Soy Dream, or fruit sorbets, and ices. Opt for chocolate, vanilla, or plain soy milk, rice milk, or almond milk in place of cow’s milk. Choose vegan soy cheese—Tofutti makes vegan cheese that is great on sandwiches or melted in casseroles—instead of dairy cheese, or make a creamy “cheese” sauce using nutritional yeast flakes. It’s simple to replace butter; you can sauté vegetables in water, wine, or vegetable broth and cook with vegetable margarines and oils. Many health food stores and some grocery stores offer Veganaise or other great-tasting alternatives to mayonnaise.

Substitute Ener-G Egg Replacer powdered mix in place of eggs in cakes, cookies, and other baked goods. Moistened bread crumbs, mashed potato, avocado, or rolled oats are great for binding homemade veggie burgers and loaves and crumbled and seasoned tofu makes delicious morning scrambles.

Many people aren't aware that gelatin is made by boiling cows' hooves and pigs' skin, but, fortunately, simple substitutes, such as agar-agar or kosher "gelatin" can be used instead. Hain's Super Fruits, a vegan gelatin that comes in four flavors, is perfect in place of Jello.

Make a habit of reading labels to make sure you're buying products that are healthy and humane. Skip products with dairy-derived ingredients like casein, whey, and lactose. Seemingly safe items like crackers may contain lard, rice mixes may contain chicken fat, and other products may include honey or other animal ingredients you'll want to avoid. It won't take long before choosing vegan products will be second-nature and you'll be telling your friends, family, and co-workers how easy it is to be green!

Remember, you're never too old to go vegetarian. Marion Cunningham, an 82-year-old author of two meat-based cookbooks, credits her decision to go vegetarian to the pigeons she feeds every morning. Said Cunningham, "Once in a while I would allow myself to think about what I was eating when I ate meat. One day I thought, 'Why am I eating the thing I'm trying to save?'"

Popular Product Picks

In addition to all the fabulous food mention above, these popular products win rave reviews among vegans and carnivores alike. They can usually be found in most supermarkets or at local health found stores.

Gardenburger Meatless Breakfast Sausage – Healthy herb spiced soy sausage patties. You won't miss meat at all.

Silk Soymilk – Available in plain, vanilla, chocolate, and a variety of other flavors, including vegan nog during the holidays. Silk is so popular that it's the official soymilk of Starbuck; ask for it instead of cow's milk in your latte.

Boca Burgers – This grocery-store staple is not only good for you, its great grilled, fried, or microwaved. Be sure to choose the original or roasted onion flavors, which are vegan.

Smart Dogs – This fat-free frank goes great with vegetarian baked beans or topped with meatless chili

Tofutti Better than Cream Cheese ® — In addition to tasty non-dairy frozen treats, Tofutti makes a variety of other dairy-free products, including soy-based cream cheese in Plain, French Onion, Herbs & Chives, Wild Berry, Smoked Salmon, Cheddar, Garlic & Herb, and Garden Veggie flavors.

Tofurky Deli Slices – These top-selling vegan sandwich slices come in tempting faux turkey flavors and more.

Worthington Foods Chick-ettes – Perfect for chicken-free salads, sandwiches, pot pies, and other recipes you would normally use chicken flesh in.

Yves Veggie Cuisine Canadian Veggie Bacon – Don't worry, even though these taste just like "the real thing," they are 100% pig-free, guaranteed.

Worthington Foods Tuno – Like tuna, but without the tuna fish. Great made with veganise, celery, green onions, and carrots.

Vegetarian-Advocacy Organizations & Resources

GoVeg.com is People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals' (PETA's) informative Web site for anyone wanting to switch to a wholesome, cruelty-free vegan diet. Visitors can request free vegetarian starter kits filled with tempting recipes, nutritional information, and helpful cooking and shopping tips. (The kits are also available in Spanish on PETAenEspañol.com). Those with a sweet tooth will enjoy the "I Can't Believe It's Vegan!" feature—a list of cookies, candies, frozen pies, and other mouth-watering vegan products made by mainstream food manufacturers. PETA also

offers three vegan cookbooks, *The Compassionate Cook*, *Cooking with PETA*, and *The PETA Celebrity Cookbook*, as well as various videos, DVDs, cassettes, and CDs about vegetarianism.

% PETAMall.com is a vegan shopper's paradise. Consumers can order animal-friendly apparel, cruelty-free health and beauty essentials, and fabulous vegan food and a percentage of every purchase goes to PETA. Mall vendors include Pangea, a "vegan super store" with a tremendous selection of food, clothing, shoes, and much more; May Wah, a wonderful place to find faux lobster, scallops, citrus ribs, and other one-of-a-kind selections; Moo Shoes, which offers a variety of stylish alternatives to leather products; Kiss My Face, a well-known leader in non-animal tested bath and skin care products; Delicious Choices, perhaps the absolute best place to find decadent vegan cheesecake in a variety of mouth-watering flavors, and many others.

% VegSource.com boasts of "friendly support 25 hours a day, 8 days a week for your healthy vegetarian lifestyle." The site also offers forum boards for vegetarians and vegans to discuss various veg-related issues with one another.

% VegDining.com is an "online guide to vegetarian restaurants around the world." Visitors can also order a VegDining Card that entitles them to discounts at select vegetarian restaurants around the world, including ones in the United States and Canada.