

Why go Vegetarian?

Growing in popularity, following a vegetarian diet has now gone mainstream. Polls show that there are now about eight million Americans following a vegetarian diet. Also growing in popularity are the dishes produced by the many new vegetarian food companies and restaurants. In fact, vegetarian is America's trendiest cuisine, attracting the most gifted and creative chefs. Even the finest cooking schools now feature training in vegetarian cuisine.

But there's also a growing awareness of the many profound health advantages of a vegetarian diet. There's a reason that, on average, vegetarians live several years longer than non-vegetarians. As study after study shows, a health-promoting vegetarian diet helps prevent many common diseases, including heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, some forms of cancer, and diabetes, just to name a few. It also helps those already suffering from disease to get well again.

Health advantages are seen at all ages and for all demographic groups. Vegetarians have a lower risk of heart disease, diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, asthma, constipation, gall stones and certain forms of cancer such as colon and prostate cancer.

We can make a real improvement in the quality of our own lives and those of our families by choosing a vegetarian diet., and we'll be helping heal the environment and save the lives and suffering of animals as we do. After all, good planets are hard to find!

What to Eat?

A healthy vegetarian diet is based on vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and legumes (beans, peas, lentils), with small amounts of nuts and seeds, and plenty of water. Add a one-a-day multivitamin for nutritional insurance. See our website for more ideas. *Changes to your diet should only be made after consulting your doctor.*

How we can help you!

Whether you're already vegetarian, or just thinking about it, we're here to help. Vegetarians of Washington is an independent, 501(c)3 nonprofit organization of people from all walks of life who are interested in a vegetarian diet for a variety of reasons: health, environment, compassion for animals, spiritual, and more.

You don't have to be a vegetarian to join. We encourage people to discover the advantages and experience the pleasures of vegetarian food. We suggest that you proceed at your own pace and do the best you can.

Our **Monthly Dining Event** includes a catered multi-course buffet-style dinner each month. All are welcome to attend. Members of Vegetarians of Washington receive a special discount price.

Free classes are offered on the many benefits of a vegetarian diet at various local venues throughout the region. These include practical information on shopping, cooking and nutrition.

Vegetarians of Washington has produced several **helpful books**, including our latest: *In Pursuit of Great Food: A Plant-Based Shopping Guide*.

Vegfest, the largest vegetarian food festival in the United States, is held at the Seattle Center in the Spring of each year. It is a celebration of healthy vegetarian food including cooking demonstrations, talks by doctors, a giant vegetarian bookstore, and a huge variety of free food samples to try.

Members receive a free year's subscription to the **Vegetarian Times**, a popular magazine packed with nutritional advice, articles, and recipes. Our high-quality e-newsletter covers local news and events.

[Learn More at VegofWA.org](http://VegofWA.org)

Vegetarians
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Eating Green: How a Vegetarian Diet Can Heal the Environment

There are over 60 billion farm animals in the world today—over eight times the human population. With that many animals in livestock agriculture, massive environmental problems are sure to follow. Farm animals require an enormous amount of feed, fresh water, medicine and fossil fuel. Over two-thirds of the crops we grow in the US are fed to farm animals. Raising livestock produces greenhouse gases, emits water pollutants from the wastes, and requires ever-more living space, resulting in ecological destruction.

A vegetarian diet promotes sustainable agricultural practices and can help heal the environment and preserve it for future generations.

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A vegetarian diet is a fundamental first step in solving the global environmental crisis.

FOSSIL FUELS AND MEAT

Agriculture uses 17 percent of all the fossil fuel in the U.S., with meat production responsible for the majority of that portion. To grow the crops required to feed all the farm animals, large quantities of fossil fuel are required to produce fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, to fuel irrigation pumps, and to run the farm machinery needed to apply the fertilizers and pesticides, plant and harvest the crops.

Once the crops are harvested, they are transported to where the animals are being raised. The animals are eventually trucked to slaughterhouses, and then their flesh is kept in refrigerators and freezers while being stored and transported to stores. All this takes even more fossil fuel.

Just as some people make their transportation choices with fossil fuel conservation in mind, many people are also making their food choices with fossil fuel conservation as a priority.

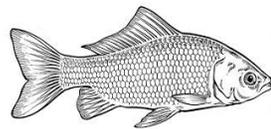
The fact is that getting protein from animals is very costly and inefficient. It takes much more oil to produce a unit of animal protein than it does to produce a comparable unit of plant protein. The same is true of calories: for instance, corn gives 60 times more food energy than beef per calorie of fossil fuel used in production.



WATER POLLUTION

There are 9 billion farm animals in the U.S. and each year they excrete 130 times more waste than humans do. In 1997, poultry, swine, beef, and dairy facilities produced a total of 291 billion pounds of animal feces and urine.

Much of this untreated waste ends up in rivers and streams; it is one of the largest sources of water pollution in the U.S. It often results in massive fish kills. Farm animal waste can also contaminate groundwater and raise nitrate levels, creating a serious public health threat—high nitrate levels near large farm animal operations have been linked to miscarriages and cancer.



Aquaculture, or fish farming, also generates a lot of waste. Fish waste and uneaten feed smother the sea floor beneath

these farms, generating bacteria that consume oxygen vital to bottom-dwelling species. Disease and parasites can run rampant in densely packed fish farms.

Scientists expect the commercial ocean fisheries to collapse by midcentury if current industrial long net fishing continues. Not only are commercially desirable species caught, but so are many other species vital to the food chain resulting in massive ecological disruption.

The many problems of animal waste are a natural consequence of raising so many animals for food. The volume produced is straining the environment and making future catastrophes inevitable.

GLOBAL WARMING

Many people don't realize how much animal agriculture contributes to climate change. According to a 2009 study by the World Watch Institute, livestock and their byproducts account for 51% of annual worldwide greenhouse gas emissions, as measured in CO₂ equivalence. In addition to the use of fossil fuels, methane, a byproduct of animal digestion and waste lagoons, is 21 times more effective than CO₂ at heating up the atmosphere.

A switch to a vegetarian diet would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 3,267 pounds per person per year.

Raising cattle is also the primary cause of soil erosion in the US, and the clearing of the Amazonian and Central American rainforests, further contributing to global warming, soil erosion and ecological destruction.

It's important to note that grass-fed beef is actually even more harmful to the environment than industrially raised beef.

