

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 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 not only helps prevent a wide range of diseases but 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.

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*.

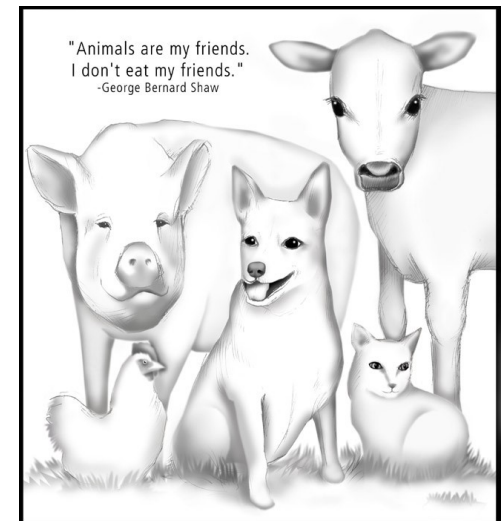
Vegfest, the largest vegetarian food festival in the United States, is held at the Seattle Center in the Spring of each year. It is a celebration of healthy vegetarian food including cooking demonstrations, talks by doctors, a giant vegetarian bookstore, and a huge variety of free food samples to try.

Members receive a free vegan cookbook when they join. Our high-quality e-newsletter covers local news and events.

Learn More at VegofWA.org

Vegetarians
OF WASHINGTON

Caring for the Animals



Those who care are not alone

If you care about the animals and value their lives, you're not alone. Caring about animals has never been more popular in America. A government study found that two thirds of Americans believe that an animal has a right to live free of suffering, and a third of Americans are worried that existing laws are inadequate to protect animals.

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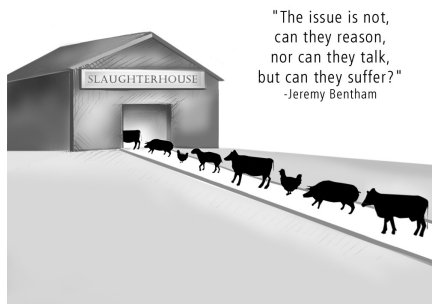
Why should I care about farm animals?

Many people feel a little sad about having animals killed for their food, especially once they discover that a vegetarian diet can be a tasty and healthier alternative. A lot of people become vegetarians for this reason alone.

Does it make any sense to care so much for cats and dogs, but to let a cow, sheep, or chicken live a harsh life on a factory style farm, and an early death in a slaughterhouse? Just like cats and dogs, farm animals are sensitive to pain and want to live full, happy lives.

We're not saying there's no difference between animals and people. However, many people feel that killing innocent animals violates their sense of justice, and because animals are innocent they deserve our mercy.

Being killed for food is no fun. There's a saying that if slaughterhouses had glass walls, we'd all be vegetarians. We don't see them being killed for our consumption, we only see the neatly packed cuts of meat in the butcher's shop or grocery store, which no longer look like they were ever a living animal. But that doesn't mean it isn't happening.



Do animals really feel pain?

Just ask yourself this question: if animals can't feel pain, then why do researchers test pain medication on them? Not only have scientists confirmed that mammals such as cows and sheep can feel pain, but now even fish have been found to have pain receptors in their brain.

What exactly is a factory farm?

Factory farms, where most farm animals are raised, treat animals as nothing more than machines in a factory. The animals are raised for profit and efficiency of production. They are raised in very cramped conditions, fed an unnatural diet, and deprived of everything that would make their lives normal. Unfortunately, many instances of abuse have been documented.

Will consuming eggs and dairy still result in animal suffering?

If you cut out meat, but still consume eggs and dairy because they do not directly kill the animal, you have taken a great first step. However, given modern farming practices more may be needed.

At one time, it was not that hard on an animal to supply eggs or dairy, but with factory farming that is no longer the case. The objective of a factory dairy or egg farmer is to produce as much milk or eggs as possible for the least possible cost, so they give very little thought to caring for the animals, except to ensure that they continue to produce.

Are organic and free-range farm animals treated better?

Some farmers in this category do treat their animals with a bit more compassion, but many do not. Often free-range animals, while not technically caged, are crammed into sheds so tightly it almost amounts to the same thing. Still, if you're not ready to give up meat, choosing organic or free-range meat is a step in the right direction, albeit a small one.

Do fish have it any better?

Fish suffer too. Individual fish enjoy a normal life until they're caught, but the fishing industry makes no effort to minimize the trauma fish experience when caught.

One in three fish are thrown back into the sea, dead or dying, because they have no commercial value. The long nets used to catch fish also catch sensitive sea mammals such as dolphins, porpoises and seals, which become additional casualties of the fishing industry.

Fish farming involves raising fish in huge pens, where they are fed concentrated protein pellets to encourage fast growth. These fish cannot swim freely, and suffer from overcrowding. Diseases and parasites can run rampant in densely packed fish farms.

What can I do?

Go veg!. When you choose vegetarian food, based on fruits, vegetables, grains and legumes, you can take comfort from the knowledge that no farm animals were harmed in the production of your meal. In fact even just one vegetarian meal matters when it comes to the animals.