

## Why go Vegetarian?

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Growing in popularity, vegetarianism 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, vegetarianism 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.

People who follow a vegetarian diet have much lower rates of many common diseases, including heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, cancer, and diabetes, just to name a few. Advantages are seen at all ages and for all demographic groups. Vegetarian children have a much lower rate of childhood cancers; women have lower rates of disease such as osteoporosis; men have lower rates of prostate cancer; seniors have lower rates of Parkinson's disease and dementia. The list goes on and on.

We can make a real improvement in the quality of our own lives and those of our families by choosing a vegetarian diet.

## How we can help you!

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If you'd like to start making changes to your diet, we're here to help. We encourage you to discover the advantages and experience the pleasures of a vegetarian diet. We welcome everyone, whether you're an experienced vegetarian, a beginner or just curious. You don't have to be a vegetarian to join.

Vegetarians of Washington is an independent, 501(c)3 nonprofit organization made up 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.

Our Monthly Dining Event includes a multi-course buffet-style dinner catered by a different local restaurant or chef 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 members can obtain discounts from a wide range of restaurants, businesses, and services. Check our website for the latest listing.

Vegfest, the largest vegetarian food festival in the United States, is held at the Seattle Center in March of each year. It is a celebration of healthy vegetarian food including cooking demonstrations, speakers, many cookbooks, and a huge variety of free food samples to try.

Members receive a free subscription to *Vegetarian Times*, a popular magazine packed with nutritional advice, articles, and recipes. They also receive our informative e-newsletter, *the Vegetarian Page*.

Become part of the fastest growing  
community of vegetarians in the country.  
Join Vegetarians of Washington today!



# Buddhism and the Vegetarian Way

Buddhists around the world have been proponents of following a vegetarian diet since the inception of the religion, both as an enlightened way of life and as a way to attain better Karma.

Four of the major principles that run throughout Buddhism are the importance of great wisdom and great compassion, the interconnectedness of all living beings, and the importance of generating good Karma. In this brochure, we'll briefly show how each of these principles supports following a vegetarian diet.

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## Great Wisdom

A vegetarian diet is a wise choice because it has been shown to result in a much lower rate of common diseases, and in increased longevity. People who follow a vegetarian diet have a 75% reduced risk of both heart disease, which is the number one cause of death, and diabetes. They also have a reduced risk of many cancers. In fact, those people who have followed a vegetarian diet for at least half their lives, live on average 13 years longer than those following a meat centered diet.

A vegetarian diet is also wise because it is more environmentally sustainable. Raising livestock is one of the largest sources of water pollution in the United States and is responsible for 85% of the soil erosion. It is also the main reason for burning down much of the world's rainforests. The methane gas generated by cattle, together with all the fuel used to raise their feed, transport and refrigerate the meat, cause more global warming than all the cars, trains, planes and ships in the world put together. When all these factors are taken into account, it is clear that raising livestock is an unsustainable practice, which is damaging to the earth.

## Great Compassion

A vegetarian diet is compassionate because it helps alleviate global hunger. It turns out that farm animals are a very wasteful way to obtain food. They actually function as food factories in reverse. For instance, for every 100 calories of feed fed to a cow, only 4 come out as beef, and for every 100 grams of protein fed to a cow, only 10 grams come out as beef. This inefficiency becomes even more important when we consider the amount of food we feed to farm animals. For instance, 70% of all corn grown in the US, and 80% of all soybeans, are fed to farm animals. If this, and all the other crops we grow to feed to farm animals, were used to feed people directly, the

United States alone would have enough to feed the entirety of the world's hungry.

A vegetarian diet is also compassionate because it reduces animal suffering. The days of farm animals living freely in a pasture are long gone. Most animals raised for food in the United States are raised in what are known as factory farms. Conditions on factory farms are particularly harsh. It has often been said that if slaughterhouses had glass walls, many more people would see that following a vegetarian diet is an act of compassion.

The eminent authority on Buddhism, D.T. Suzuki says "Buddhists must strive to teach respect and compassion for all creation—compassion is the foundation of their religion."

## Interconnectedness

Buddhist thought has always regarded animals as sentient beings, different in their intellectual ability than humans but no less capable of feeling suffering. Moreover, Buddhism stresses our interconnectedness with animals through the doctrine of rebirth (reincarnation) which holds that any human could be reborn as an animal, and any animal could be reborn as a human. In fact, the Buddha expounded that sentient beings currently living in the animal realm have been our mothers, brothers, sisters, fathers, children, and friends in past lives. Thus to many Buddhists eating meat is understandably objectionable on those grounds.

## Good Karma

According to Buddhism, Karma can be of two varieties: wholesome karma or good karma and unwholesome karma or bad karma. Now, since Buddhism regards animals as sentient beings, and therefore capable of suffering, killing them for food would bring bad Karma. On the other hand,

following a vegetarian diet, which is kinder to animals, the world's hungry, as well as our own health, would bring good Karma.

Buddha's admonition not to eat meat couldn't be clearer when he says in the Mahaparinirvana Sutra that "Whoever consumes meat extinguishes the seed of great compassion." Other Buddhist Sutras (scriptures) contain several statements about the importance of not eating meat. For instance the Lankavatara Sutra says that "meat eating in any form, in any manner and in any place is once and for all prohibited". The Dalai Lama advocates a vegetarian diet, saying, "I do not see any reason why animals should be slaughtered to serve as human diet when there are so many substitutes. After all, man can live without meat."

So through our wisdom and compassion, remembering our interconnectedness to all living beings, maintaining good karma, and following the wise advice of the Buddha, we can see that the vegetarian way is the best choice for a Buddhist to make.

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For more information about Buddhism and Vegetarianism, see "*To Cherish all Life*" by Philip Kapleau.

For further information on the benefits of a vegetarian diet, see our book:

*The Vegetarian Solution: Your answer to heart disease, cancer, global warming and more*, by Stewart Rose. Summer 2007

Also by Vegetarians of Washington:

*Vegetarian Pacific Northwest: A Guide to Restaurants and Shopping*. 2008

*The Veg-Feasting CookBook*, 2005

