

By Dhishna Chaudhary and Kirat Cheema

So, it's a new year and a new term. You've decided to make some changes in your life and want to become a vegetarian. All you have to do is give up meat, that sounds easy enough right? Well, not quite. When it comes to making a change in your lifestyle, you need to realize that maintaining balance is the most important thing. Vegetarian or vegan lifestyles are difficult to maintain without initial preparation and the support and understanding of the people around you. Figuring out what to include in your diet and how to order food when you go out to eat are just some of the hurdles you will need to overcome. You're taking the first step by reading this article, and will only get easier from here!

For vegetarians, the main concerns are getting adequate vitamins and minerals, such as, iron, vitamin B12, zinc, vitamin D, protein and calcium. These are needed for optimal functioning of the body and there are many ways to get these nutrients without having to eat meat; it just takes some pre-planning and research.

For vegans, finding a balance in your diet is a little more difficult, but it can be done. The benefits of a vegan diet can outweigh the difficulties, since they are free of cholesterol and low in saturated fats, thus reducing the risk of major chronic diseases such as heart disease. Many of the nutrients and food sources are similar to that of a vegetarian, but there are a few exceptions.

So, how does McMaster accommodate for the vegetarians and vegans on campus? McMaster University is actually recognized as the top vegetarian friendly university by PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals). On campus, we have great restaurants such as the all vegetarian Bridges Café, La Piazza, 1280 and many more. Recently, our friendly Hospitality Services have introduced many To-Go Vegetarian Sandwiches at locations like the Reactor and Mini-Mac. There are also several cuisines off-campus in Hamilton that have amazing vegetarian and vegan menus composed of Chinese, Thai, Indian and Mediterranean dishes. Many student hot-spots such as Boston pizza, Kelsey's and East Side Mario's are very open to replacing the meat in their non-vegetarian dishes with vegetables. So next time you go to Kelsey's ask for their Classic Shrimp Alfredo without the shrimp.

It is important to keep in mind that vegetarianism is not a diet but a lifestyle. Your reasons to become a vegetarian or a vegan should be because of health, ethical or environmental issues not for dieting or losing weight.

So go ahead...SPICE UP YOUR DIET!

(See charts below for what and where to eat)

WHAT?

Vitamins and Minerals	Vegetarian Diet	Vegan Diet
<p>Iron: Helps carry oxygen in your blood to energize your body. To maximize iron absorption from your diet, have a combo of iron and Vitamin C-rich foods (citrus fruits, kiwis, canteloupe, strawberries, sweet peppers, cauliflower)</p>	<p>Tomatoes and eggs, Tofu and red peppers V-8 juice with a bean salad</p> <p>Black tea and coffee with meals decreases your iron absorption – so choose other beverages such as juice, water or herbal teas. Have your caffeine between meals instead.</p>	<p>Dried beans and dark green leafy vegetables Orange juice and Raisin Bran Blender drink of orange juice, banana and tofu Mixture of nuts, seeds and apricots</p> <p>More good sources: Potato (baked with skin) Dried pumpkin seeds Cooked Cream of Wheat cereal</p>
<p>Vitamin B12: Essential for red blood cell formation and functioning of your nervous system. Found only in animal products and fortified vegetarian foods. You need at least 2 –3 B12 rich foods a day to meet your body's needs.</p>	<p>Eggs Cheese and other milk products. Fortified vegetarian foods (soy beverages, veggie dogs and burgers). Red Star Vegetarian Support Nutritional Yeast</p>	<p>Vitamin B12 fortified soy milk and veggie “meats” (check labels) Red Star Vegetarian Support Nutritional Yeast – sprinkle 1-2 tsp on your vegetables, soups or potatoes – tastes cheesy! Vitamin B12 supplements (Speak to your health care provider.)</p>
<p>Calcium: You need to ensure that calcium fortified drinks and foods are included in your diet if you are not consuming milk products.</p>	<p>Low-fat dairy products – milk, cheese, yogurt Green leafy vegetables (spinach, broccoli), Legumes (hummus and kidney beans) Salmon with bones, sardines</p>	<p>Dark green leafy vegetables (Bok choy, Kale), Broccoli Figs Tahini (sesame seed butter) Firm Tofu made with calcium Calcium fortified soy milk and orange juice</p>
<p>Protein: Maintains muscle mass and strength With either diet the key is to eat a variety of foods to get enough protein and energy (calories).</p>	<p>Nuts and seeds Legumes – beans, peas and lentils Tofu and milk and egg products</p>	<p>Lentils, chickpeas, tofu, peas, peanut butter, soy milk, almonds, spinach, rice, whole wheat bread</p>
<p>Vitamin D: Helps you absorb calcium to strengthen bones & teeth, and helps control heart & nervous systems.</p>	<p>Eggs, milk Fortified soy beverages or margarines Just going out into the sun. (Our bodies make it from sunlight.). Vitamin D supplements are recommended during our Canadian winter months.</p>	<p>Not found in vegan diets. Make sure to get your 15 minutes in the sun 3 times a week/and your Vitamin D supplement in the winter. Food sources include vitamin D fortified orange juice or soy milk Fortified, ready-to-eat cereals</p>

WHERE?

Restaurants	Description	On-Campus	Off-Campus
Bridges Vegetarian Café	Many distinguishable dishes, ranging from organic quinoa in a tangy tomato reduction to vegetarian chili on flat bread.	In the Refectory Building beside Wallingford Hall	
1280	A great menu that includes breakfast, lunch and dinner options. There are several vegetarian dishes including the feta greek salad, three-cheese quesadilla, garden tofu vegetable burger, roma style penne and Irish style nacho fries.	In the basement of the Student Centre	
La Piazza	Has several venues including Creation X, Tomasitos and Piller's Deli. At Tomasitos you can choose from a variety of fresh vegetables to add to your pasta. There is also a center set-up with fresh fruits and vegetables.	In the Student Centre	
Affinity Vegetarian Restaurant	Oriental vegetarian cuisine and buffet. Offers an assortment of appetizers, Asian style mockmeat dishes, combo meals, stirfrys and assorted tea drinks. Some of their top dishes include the spicy soy chicken kung pao, vegetarian shrimp, sweet and sour soyapork, and crispy veggie balls.		87 John St. South
Mahal Restaurant	Pakistani & Indian Cuisine. Offers a variety of vegetarian options such as, vegetarian samosas, aloo tiki roll, falafel sandwich, chana masala and shahi paneer.		22 King St.
Basilique	Mediterranean style cuisine. Ovo-lacto vegetarians can choose from pizza, salad, calzones, wraps, pasta, and falafel. La Salutisa pizza, eggplant parmesan sub, fattoush salad and falafel pitas are just a few of their delicious options.		1065 King St. West