

## Vegetarians are NOT Crazy

One of the things that often holds up a lot of people from considering a lifestyle of vegetarianism is a negative stereotype of vegetarians that is really not at all accurate. Of course there are extremists in any discipline and the same is true of vegetarians or vegans. Its good to dig a bit deeper and put any preconceptions on hold that might be holding you back from what would be a wonderful lifestyle choice.

It is true that the vegetarian way of life can be part of a larger spiritual discipline as well. But you can get a lot of good from a life of vegetarian eating even if it is not part of your religious or moral life. So if you are hesitant to explore making a switch to a vegetarian diet, you don't have to also join a new religious or social community to get just as much out of it as anyone.

When you begin to explore the work of vegetarian disciplines, you will find a wide variety of types of people who enjoy the lifestyle. The vegetarian "community" is a diverse population with cultures of people who are at various levels of commitment to the vegetarian lifestyle. There is not reason to have guilt or fear that if you wish to start out slowly. In fact, starting out just easing into a vegetarian way of life is a good way to find out where in the discipline you feel comfortable.

The first myth about becoming a vegetarian to overcome then is the idea that as soon as you make a commitment to start cutting meat from your diet, you will necessarily become part of some strange eastern cult that will change your beliefs and your way of life. The huge majority of people who make a vegetarian lifestyle their own are normal people just like you.

It might surprise you if you found out that its very likely that many of your neighbors and coworkers are quietly enjoying a lifestyle of vegetarian living. And becoming a vegetarian does NOT "turn you into" some kind of obnoxious wild eyed religious fanatic. In fact, you can enjoy all the benefits of being a vegetarian and live happily among others who are not following your diet choices. And you can be a vegetarian and develop a reasonable diet that still allows you to get your protein from cheese, fish and other traditional sources as you cut out the more conspicuous sources of protein such as beef and chicken.

Just as it's a good thing for you to get over the idea that becoming a vegetarian is some kind of strange or "bizarre" idea, you should discard quickly any fears that you will be seen as odd or peculiar when you inform your friends and loved ones you have made this lifestyle choice. There is no "coming out of

the closet" to becoming a vegetarian. As long as it is as natural as switching to low fat milk from whole milk to you, it will be natural to your friends and loved ones.

The people you know well will watch your behavior closely to see if there is any reason to worry about you in making this change. If they detect you are going to be angry at them for not following you into vegetarianism or that you are going to become "an evangelist" for living without meat, then they will become nervous and avoid you, especially at meal time.

But if your vegetarian lifestyle is a choice you can make without disrupting the lives of others and one you can live in harmony with others who are not vegetarians, you will demonstrate to them that it is no problem that you just eat different things than they do and that above all vegetarians are NOT crazy.

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Word Count 646