

Getting Restaurants in on the Act

Its one thing to move into a vegetarian discipline when it comes to preparing your meals at home. But things get more complicated when you go out to eat because you must be prepared to order appropriately at a restaurant so you get good foods but foods that are in line with your vegetarian way of life.

The first order of business that should rank high on your priorities early in your vegetarian career is to find and try all of the vegetarian restaurants in town. This list will come in handy when enjoying some social time with like minded vegetarians or to eat on the run or from work. Also these will be the kinds of restaurants where you can learn what kinds of recipes to look for and what you like in a vegetarian order.

But you won't take all your meals with other vegetarians. If you are like most of us, you share your life with friends, loved ones and coworkers who are not part of the vegetarian lifestyle. So learning to find good vegetarian alternatives in all of the restaurants is one of the skills you will become adept at the longer you remain a vegetarian which is hopefully for life. One trick is that if you have a vote in the kind of restaurant to choose, go for Chinese or Italian. Chinese restaurants often have some great meatless offerings already on their menu so you can order vegetarian and not even raise anyone suspicions.

Similarly because you find so many dishes in an Italian restaurant that are pasta only, you can order a veggie pizza or just pasta with a nice sauce or maybe some broccoli and enjoy a fine dinner that is totally in step with your vegetarian rules. Any restaurant that already has a good selection of meatless dishes that are not set apart as vegetarian are a good choice because you can dine with your non-vegetarian friends and family members and not call attention to the differences between you and them. And since most restaurants have a good salad menu, that is always a fall back in any restaurant situation.

If your vegetarian regimen is vegan so you must also avoid milk, eggs, cheese or anything cooked in chicken or meat stock, you will have to kick your vigilance up a notch. The good news is that the vegetarian movement has become so large and wide spread that many restaurants want to accommodate their vegetarian customers.

By letting your waiter know of your diet restrictions, he or she can guide you to the items on the menu that fit your requirements. It is not uncommon to see the manager or chef of the restaurant come to the table to help you make a choice. Restaurants are in the business of satisfying customers so they want to

make sure you are happy with their menu offerings. And by enlisting the aid of your restaurant staff in a cooperative and friendly way, you send a positive message to your dining companions that you can live a vegetarian lifestyle and still be a happy member of the community in which you live.

Most of us have a short list of restaurants that we frequent often. But every restaurant you go to wants to be on that short list and make you a valued customer. So network with your vegetarian friends and do your homework up front to find out which restaurants do well at accommodating the lifestyle of their vegetarian or vegan customers. Then develop your strategy for handling any situation where you find yourself eating out so you can come out of that experience with a good meal that fits your lifestyle and not miss out on the great social times that we associate with the eating out experience.

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