

How to Not Miss Meat

Even if your reasons for turning toward a vegetarian lifestyle are moral, ethical or religious, it is common to miss the taste of meat especially when you first start your walk as a vegetarian. The first rule to enforce is not to feel guilty about that. Just loving meat doesn't make you a bad thing. After all, most of us are raised eating pork, chicken, beef and other meats and if our parents did not have scruples about meat consumption, you have that as part of your upbringing.

The good news is there are lots of substitutes for meat and wonderful recipes you can use so you can eliminate meat from your diet and not feel like you are "going without". The added benefit is that vegetarian eating is much healthier for your body than a diet where meat is a common ingredient. Meat carries such a higher incidence of calories and fats that are harder for your body to digest and assimilate that you are doing your body a big favor switching to a meatless lifestyle.

One way to still enjoy some of the aspects of meat but eliminate the actual animal part is to go with meat substitutes in traditional meat meals. Many restaurants serve veggie burgers where you get the good taste and familiar meal that we all like about hamburgers but you are still staying totally vegetarian. By shopping at markets and groceries that are supportive of the vegetarian lifestyle, you can often find other traditional meat meals prepared entirely without actual meat to help you get past missing that source of protein.

A staple of vegetarian diet planning is Tofu. Tofu is made from Soya beans so it is totally natural and a good fit to your vegetarian meal planning. But it is full of proteins and it is a very flexible ingredient for vegetarian recipes because it reflects the flavors of other foods and herbs and it works well in dishes that use sauces so it can almost be mistaken for a meat dish.

As you set about building your library of vegetarian recipes that are designed to take meat out of the equation, you will often find Tofu as one of the ingredients. That is because it works so well in lots of different recipes and responds well to grilling, baking or any other preparation method. Just be sure you take the time to dry your Tofu by putting it on a towel and removing the excess moisture before using it.

If your commitment to vegetarian living also means the elimination of animal products such as milk and cheese, soy milk has become increasingly popular in the last few years with vegetarians and meat eaters alike because of its health and diet benefits. Not only is it delicious to drink as a beverage, it can

replace milk in recipes just as successfully.

To eliminate animal based cheese from your diet, you might try a product called Tofutti. They offer many varieties of vegan chesses including cheddar and mozzarella so you can enjoy that flavor with a clear conscience. You can even find good substitutes for yogurt that is made from tofu or soy milk so you don't have to cut popular tastes from your diet entirely.

Tofu is such a great meat substitute and an outstanding nutritional source that you can even use it in traditional egg dishes such as quiches, custard, omelets or any other meals that would emphasize an egg taste. If you mix pureed tofu with your recipe, you could virtually serve an egg dish even to a meat lover and they would not be able to tell that you had them eating vegetarian.

As you continue to explore vegetarian cooking, there are a number of other meat replacements that do well in various cooking contexts. Tempah comes from a soy bean that has been fermented. Tempah works well once you braise it in a sauce for about an hour. Once prepared it can be fried in flower and served with a sauce for flavor and be very satisfying.

One of the big projects of making the change to a vegetarian lifestyle is learning ways to substitute healthy alternatives such as we have discussed to take meat and meat products out of your diet. It will take some learning but that learning can be fun as you reinvent cooking and shopping to fit your new passion for vegetarian eating.

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