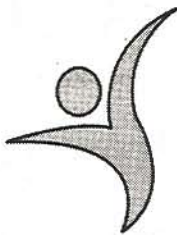


Compassionate Living



Tammy Lee, Bay Area Vegetarians

Choosing vegan

I moved to Montara eight years ago from the paved urban sprawl of Concord. Not only are the roads different in Montara, but so was the old white animal being walked slowly by a woman — not a dog, but a horse! The woman politely asked if her horse could eat the tall grass that bordered my house and the street, and I was quite agreeable — I had never viewed it as anything more than a weedy thatch of crabgrass.

But that difference in perspective is common in my life, now. Whereas I once found the aroma of sizzling bacon to be tantalizing, now I find it a taunting reminder of how disconnected I was in avoiding the realization that bacon, ham, and pork comes from pigs. I now realize that pigs and other animals commonly raised for food are as inquisitive and capable of feeling happy and content, or depressed and in pain, as my four adopted felines are.

While the practice of not eating animals has been noted as early as 6th century BC with the Greek philosopher Pythagoras, I didn't make the distinction between animals that are pets and animals that are dinner until 15 years ago. But decades before my birth, others had already trotted down the strict vegetarian path of eschewing meat, and avoiding dairy and eggs. The word vegan (pronounced like "vee-gun") emerged in 1944 to represent the growing contingent of individuals steadfast and happy in eating entirely plant-based foods. I still look like the same person I was before I became vegan, and I am still that same person. It's just that being a vegetarian invites a larger world perspective beyond what I choose to eat, and I've gone exploring. Nobel-winning writer Isaac Bashevis Singer says: "This is my protest against the conduct of the world. To be a vegetarian is to disagree — to disagree with the course of things today. Starvation, world hunger, cruelty, waste, wars — we must make a statement against these things. Vegetarianism is my statement and I think it's a strong one."

Many people choose vegetarian foods to take a stand against what meat-eating represents — intensive confinement and cruel practices to animals, high injury and exploitive working conditions for slaughterhouse workers, inefficient use of natural resources, and destruction of the rainforest for cattle grazing. Many others choose to eat plant-based foods for compassion, spiritual or health reasons, concerns over contamination of meat, or simply the economical nature of living lightly on grains, vegetables and beans.

There is a growing interest in vegetarianism, here on the Coastsides and throughout the world. I talked to Amy Lynn Caplan of Pacifica, about why she chose vegetarianism: "I became vegetarian in 1976 after making the connection between my food choices and animal suffering. I did not want to participate in the killing of animals. I became vegan in 1999 after finally realizing that animals endure great agony in all stages of food production, not only those aspects of production that lead to slaughter." With this new monthly column, let's explore the how, why, and where of vegetarian living. The local Coast Veg group will be holding a special event in Pacifica in March in honor

of Great American Meat-Out. See the event calendar at <http://bayareaveg.org> for details. To complement any writing on vegetarianism, we need a good recipe or two.

Split Pea Soup

2 cups split peas, rinsed
6 cups hot water
1 cup carrots, sliced or diced
1 cup celery, sliced
1 medium onion, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/2 tsp each: marjoram, basil
1/4 tsp each: cumin, black pepper
1 tbsp salt or to taste, pinch cayenne
Rinse split peas, and then place them

in a large kettle with the remaining ingredients. Bring to a simmer, then cover loosely and cook until the peas are tender, 1 to 2 hours. Crockpot method: Place all ingredients in a crockpot. Cover and cook on "High" for 3 to 4 hours, until the peas are soft and the vegetables are tender. Serves 6 to 8.

Maple Mustard Dressing

2 cups safflower, olive or canola oil

1 cup Dijon mustard
1/2 cup maple syrup
1/2 cup apple cider vinegar
1 tbsp salt, 1 tsp pepper
2 tbsp dry mustard
1 cup water

Mix well in a blender, or in a bowl with a whisk. Taste and add salt if you prefer. This makes a very large batch. It keeps well in the fridge, but you may wish to make half the recipe. (Recipes: Soup - The Peaceful Palate by Jennifer Raymond; Dressing Recipe by Alex Bury.)

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