



PLANT POWER!

If you follow food trends, you've surely noticed that plant-based foods, recipes and restaurants have been getting a larger share of the spotlight lately. Does this mean that more of us are becoming vegetarians? Should we be?



Why more plants?

Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, peas, nuts and seeds are key features of some of the healthiest diets in the world. Plant based foods are a common theme in the Mediterranean Diet, the DASH Diet and most dietary guidelines. The balance of health promoting nutrients with moderate calories and less of the stuff we should be limiting make plant based foods an easy fit for most people. Looking beyond personal health, to the health of our planet, plant based foods tend to more sustainable and less taxing on the environment.



What is a flexitarian? Or a pescatarian?

With the expansion of plant foods on our plates has come an expansion of how we refer to the way we eat. Vegetarian still refers to people who don't eat meat, fish or poultry, but there are many other variations as well. Vegans are vegetarians who don't eat any animal products at all, so they skip dairy, eggs and honey too. Pescatarians are typically vegetarians who include fish and seafood occasionally. Flexitarian has become a term associated with people who skip meat meals in favor of vegetarian ones periodically.



Bottom Line

If plant foods are so good for us, does this mean we should all become vegan? Not necessarily. We could, however, all benefit from incorporating more plant foods into our daily menus. Try to avoid seeing "meat eater" and "vegetarian" as the only two options. Plant foods can and should be a big part of all of our diets, with or without meat. Vegetarian meals have moved far beyond just a plate of steamed vegetables. Grilled cauliflower steaks, chick pea stews, mushroom Bolognese and other plant based dishes appeal to both vegetarians and meat eaters alike.

REFERENCES:

1. Rizzo, Nico S. et al. Nutrient Profiles of Vegetarian and Nonvegetarian Dietary Patterns. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, Volume 113, Issue 12, 1610 - 1619

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