

During World War I (1914–1918), British vegetarianism transitioned from a niche, often health-focused, movement into a practical, state-recognized dietary choice forced by wartime shortages. Jewish dietary needs and the broader vegetarian movement faced unique challenges and opportunities in this period, particularly with the introduction of formal rationing in 1918. [[1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)]

Vegetarianism in Britain During WWI

- **Wartime Rationale:** The Vegetarian Society saw WWI as an opportunity to promote meatless diets, educating the public on preparing meatless meals as food shortages escalated, especially following the German U-boat blockade.
- **Rationing Adjustments:** By 1918, when formal rationing was introduced, special provisions were made for vegetarians. According to a circular from the Vegetarian Society dated October 24, 1918, vegetarians could surrender their meat and lard coupons in exchange for extra butter, margarine, or "nut butter".
- **"Meatless Mondays" and Voluntary Action:** The government promoted meat conservation through initiatives like "Meatless Mondays" (or "Wheatless Wednesdays"), encouraging citizens to reduce consumption of meat, which was in short supply.
- **Health and Diet:** The shortage necessitated diets high in potatoes, porridge, and brown bread. Some vegetarians in Britain at the time were criticized by contemporary reformers for consuming too many dairy products and not embracing a more plant-based approach, which was seen as sustainable. [[7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#), [12](#)]

Jewish Dietary Concerns in Britain/Europe During WWI

- **Kosher Food Challenges:** Maintaining a kosher diet was difficult, particularly for Jewish soldiers and those interned in Europe. While the British government initially funded a program for kosher food for its interned citizens, it stopped this funding in late 1915, reflecting both logistical challenges and wider skepticism about the place of Jewish minorities within the state.
- **Vegetarian Alternatives:** While not directly linked to widespread religious vegetarianism, for many, the necessity of avoiding forbidden meats in rationed environments forced a shift towards vegetable-based foods.
- **Ethical Considerations:** The concept of *Tza'ar ba'ale hayyim* (prevention of animal suffering) has long been a part of Jewish tradition, and early Jewish vegetarian advocacy was linked to these ethical principles. [[14](#), [15](#), [16](#), [17](#), [18](#)]

Key Trends and Developments

- **Growth of Veganism Precursors:** Between 1909 and 1912, a trend away from dairy and eggs emerged in Britain, with a cookbook, *No Animal Food*, published in 1910, reflecting a movement that would eventually form the Vegan Society in 1944.
- **Propaganda and Food Habits:** Propaganda was used to manage the nation's food, with vegetarian literature developing as a form of "propaganda" to encourage meat-free, nutritious meals.
- **Legacy:** The experience of managing rationing in WWI laid the groundwork for 更 (more) comprehensive, immediate rationing systems during World War II. [[1](#), [10](#), [19](#)]

All responses may include mistakes.

- [1] <https://faunalytics.org/no-animal-food-the-road-to-veganism-in-britain-1909-1944/>
- [2] <https://www.superprof.co.uk/blog/the-history-of-the-vegetarian-diet/>
- [3] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I
- [4] https://vegstudies.univie.ac.at/fileadmin/user_upload/p_foodethik/Yeh_H.-Y._2013_Boundaries_Entities_and_Modern_Vegetarianism.Examining_the_Emergence_of_the_First_Vegetarian_Organization_Qualitative_Inquiry.pdf
- [5] <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/2/article/805401>
- [6] <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/za-U7R9jtcQ>
- [7] <http://borthwickinstitute.blogspot.com/2013/10/vegetarianism-in-world-war-one.html>
- [8] <https://www.veganviews.org.uk/vv79/vv79war.html>
- [9] <https://www.happycow.net/blog/world-war-i-era-preparing-for-veganism/>
- [10] <https://jminnow.wordpress.com/2017/03/06/vegetarian-propaganda-and-the-great-war/>
- [11] <https://medium.com/roseleigh/food-shortage-recipes-culinary-adaptations-in-wwi-britain-130a17c0402d>
- [12] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meatless_Monday
- [13] <https://wp-research.aber.ac.uk/nsrefugeeswales/history/life-for-refugees-in-wales/food/>
- [14] <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02619288.2020.1786368>
- [15] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343527309_Keeping_Kosher_in_the_Camp_Feeding_Interred_British_Jews_during_the_First_World_War
- [16] <https://www.quest-cdecjournal.it/tzaar-baale-hayyim-jewish-animal-rights-advocacy-and-vegetarianism-from-rabbi-avraham-yitzhak-ha-kohen-kooks-a-vision-of-vegetarianism-and-peace-to-jonathan-safran-foe/>
- [17] <https://theforkfront.com/hello-world/>
- [18] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zbx6rmn>
- [19] <https://www.jewswww.uk/rationing-and-food-shortages-1171.php>